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**The enhancement of counsellor training
through Person-Centred Expressive Therapy.**

A submission by

Patricia Harvey

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Durham

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Volume 1: Text

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Abstract

This qualitative study, within a constructivist paradigm, researches the experience of one cohort of trained counsellors in the Centre for Counselling Studies at the University of Durham.

Person-Centred Expressive Therapy, as developed by Natalie Rogers, was introduced into a humanistic integrative course with a strong Person-Centred ethos.

The literature search encompassed both counsellor training and the expressive arts.

Data was collected through semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group and analysed thematically. A second set of data emerged from immediate audio-taped feedback and journal entries following three Expressive Therapy sessions. It was analysed thematically and presented as narrative, using an ethnographic approach of juxtaposing 'episodes' and 'positioning'.

Tentative conclusions suggest that Person-Centred Expressive Therapy enhances all aspects of counsellor training, including the experiential learning of theory.

Dedication

For Rik, Jenny and David, Tracy and Charlotte

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I thank my husband Richard for unwavering support and encouragement as well as his practical skills of computing and chauffering to and from libraries.

I acknowledge with gratitude the contribution and patience of all my family.

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I acknowledge Dr. Geof Alred's considerable help in the early days of my research prior to his retirement.

Chapter 1

Introduction

My training as a generic counsellor culminated in 1995 with writing an M.A. dissertation entitled “The use of the client’s imagination”. This research had stimulated my own imagination and I was drawn towards further training as an art therapist. I thought it would be rewarding to work therapeutically with my clients’ images. Unfortunately, potential courses in art therapy, I discovered, required some artistic ability and I am no artist!

As a result of attending a circle dance week-end in Cumbria I received a brochure advertising a lengthy part-time course in what was termed ‘Person-Centred Expressive Therapy’ (PCET). It was organised and validated by the Person Centred Expressive Therapy Institute, Europe (PCETI). I felt excited; here was a course which incorporated all the creative arts, which was based on Person-Centred principles (the basis of my counselling practice) and which stated in the brochure “*No need to be an expert in the arts*”! I began the intensive training which involved residential periods of 7 – 10 days over the next four years.

I discovered, through expressive therapy training, new aspects of my personality and saw difficulties in my life from a fresh, creative perspective. I had experienced its relevance to counselling, which involves greater self-awareness and ability to cast new light on our experience and behaviour (Egan, 1975, 1990; Culley, 1991).

Since 1991 I had been a counsellor trainer at Durham University and I was eager to pass on to students my learning in expressive therapy. I was inspired by Silverstone’s research (1997) with a cohort of students on her Person-Centred art therapy course. The idea began to formulate of researching the impact on counselling students at Durham as I introduced them to PCET as part of their Post-Graduate training.

I planned to submit the research, when completed, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, although initially this goal seemed far distant. I have always enjoyed academic work. As a child I wrote copious stories and later enjoyed constructing essays. A day researching in an academic library is for me a pleasure.



My motivation for introducing PCET to students training to be counsellors was more complex. I have been a teacher from early childhood, initially in my imagination as I arranged black and white draughts in rows to represent boys and girls sitting in class. I taught Latin to the boy next door in exchange for woodwork lessons and English to a Spanish girl who worked with me as a waitress. It has always been natural and enjoyable for me to pass on anything useful that I have learned.

I was aware that my bias as a teacher, my desire to pass on knowledge and see it working was potentially at odds with my researcher role. I had to be open to seeing what was unsuccessful as well as successful.

Since birth I have been connected to the Church, being employed by the Ripon Diocese for seventeen years as a community development officer as an alternative to ordination. Person-centred values correlate well in my view with the way Jesus accepts, empathises, and encourages a person to grow into fullness of life - "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*" (St. John, 1983). Counselling is for me a mutual ministry between client and counsellor. In enabling us to express our deepest selves and access personal and universal knowing the arts contribute strongly to the spiritual dimension of life.

I describe myself as an integrative rather than a person-centred counsellor. From my experience as client and counsellor I see the therapeutic conditions and non-directivity as crucial in therapy yet I feel comfortable in *offering* approaches such as sub-personality or two-chair work in a way which respects my client's autonomy.

The part-time counselling course at the Centre for Studies in Counselling (CESCO) was based at the School of Education, within the University of Durham. Since 1996 it had been accredited by the British Association for Counselling (BAC), now the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Since 1988 the BAC scheme for recognition of counsellor training courses has ensured that potential students, employers and clients can have confidence that accredited courses

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has ensured that potential students, employers and clients can have confidence that accredited courses provided “*an effective and recognised form of training*” (BAC, 1996c, p. 3). One requirement of accreditation is that a course “*should provide a coherent grounding for the student in a core theoretical model of counselling*” (ibid., p. 7). In its submission to the BAC for accreditation of the CESCO part-time course the Durham Faculty of Social Sciences, on behalf of CESCO, described the aims of training as follows:-

“The courses aim to provide a theoretical foundation and practical training in an integrated eclectic approach to humanistic counselling” (Durham University, 1994, p. 4).

The BAC submission document (p. 7), as did the CESCO course handbook for 1998-1999 (Durham University, 1998), also stressed the importance of a person-centred rationale throughout the training. The person-centred approach to counselling was developed by Carl Rogers, a highly influential American psychologist living between 1902 and 1987.

I chose to conduct my research with a cohort of students during the two years of their post-graduate counsellor training (Post-Graduate Certificate year and Post-Graduate Diploma year). Students already had a basic knowledge of humanistic counselling and the person-centred approach. They had practised counselling skills with each other and a few were already employed as counsellors. During post-graduate training they were all required to have supervised practice placements. On successful completion of the Certificate year students moved automatically on to the Diploma year. Success in this year entitled them to practise professionally as counsellors and to continue, as many did, onto a fourth, research year.

As a humanistic counselling course involves intensive personal work and a time-consuming level of tutor input, our cohorts usually numbered only 16, with two tutors always present. The cohort I researched began with the unusually large number of 26, of whom 21 completed the course. They were mature students with ages ranging from the early twenties to the late fifties, many of whom had no recent academic experience. There were seven men on the course. This large cohort required three tutors – a male Course Director, a female tutor who was eager to become a co-researcher, and me, all experienced counsellors and trainers. Students attended the part-time course one evening a week, usually after a full day’s work, a challenge in itself to tutors. Additionally there was a compulsory residential week-end each year.

In 1997 nine basic elements of training were included in assessment of courses for BAC recognition, whatever the underlying theoretical model. These included professional and self-development, theory, skills training, and client work. I had a hunch that PCET would strongly enhance the students' experience, particularly in the area of self-development. I wondered – could I teach theory using creative media?; could the arts deepen awareness of counselling issues such as sexual abuse?; what impact would creative methods have on their counselling practice? As a trainer practitioner I didn't know and I wanted to find out. My research question was straightforward- *“In what ways does Person-Centred Expressive Therapy enhance counsellor training?”* In order to answer this I planned to give students an experience of PCET as well as using it as a vehicle for introducing aspects of theory such as non-verbal communication and sub-personalities, and topics like sexual abuse and dreams. PCET training is lengthy and I had no expectation that students would become practitioners of PCET. The experience might, however, inform their counselling practice. I recognised that the person-centred approach as developed by Carl Rogers emerged from a life time of practitioner research and I wanted to follow my own practitioner quest. I began to read about Practitioner Research (McLeod, 1999) *“Practitioner research is about what you need to know in order to do the job better”* (p. 2).

The BACP, in its Ethics for Counselling and Psychotherapy framework (2002), strongly supports research which informs practice.

Practitioner research is often conducted by counsellors who are asking practice-related questions about their work with clients (Rogers and Stevens, 1968; Rennie, 1998). The key characteristics of practitioner research as described by McLeod (1999, pp. 8-9) fit equally well with my research as a trainer working with students. Training, like counselling, is a practical activity and my research seeks to develop what McLeod calls *“knowledge – in context”* (ibid., p. 41). Research of this nature is closely allied to Action Research (Reason and Bradbury, 2000).

In 1999, when my research began, relatively little had been written about counsellor training (Dryden and Thorne, 1991; Connor, 1994; Dryden and Feltham, 1994; Dryden, Horton and Mearns, 1995; Johns, 1996 and 1998; Wheeler, 1996; and Mearns, 1997) in comparison with the wealth of literature on counselling models and issues. I knew only about my own training experience and how training had evolved at CESCO. I wondered - could my research improve my practice as a trainer?; could I add to the knowledge of how trainees best learn to be counsellors? By introducing PCET into the course I was already challenging the status quo, albeit with the interested support of our tutor team.

The implication of adding a new method of teaching was that change might be beneficial. Coghlan and Brannick, (2001, p. 8), in describing the tradition of Action Research, emphasise that “*research itself is a force for, and an agent of, change*”. Rowan (1981) suggested that research can make changes “*to the researcher, to those who come to know about the research, and it makes a difference to whatever or whomever is studied*”. That was certainly the outcome but my initial approach to this research was more in the spirit of an exciting experiment. I began also to read about research into the arts in general (Payne, 1993, Silverstone, 1997, McNiff, 1998, and Grainger, 1999). I hoped that I could learn more about the psychological processes underlying the use of artistic media in therapy.

In chapter 2 I position the Durham course in its historical, social and theoretical context. I describe my understanding of the core theoretical model in the context of the literature on counsellor training. In chapter 3 I focus specifically on Person-Centred Counselling, and Person-Centred Expressive Therapy as a development of that. Chapter 4 places my research into a constructivist paradigm. I assess how practitioner research fits alongside other well-established research traditions. I describe the research methods which I borrowed or invented and ethical dilemmas such as my dual tutor/researcher role. In both Practitioner and Action Research the researcher is personally involved, making oneself transparent to the reader at all stages of the research. “*My own self-awareness, closeness to the issues, how I frame the issues and so on, are critical first-person processes of which I have to be aware and to work on consciously as part of the research project*” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2001, p. 106).

In chapter 5 ‘A Theoretical Perspective on the Arts Therapies’ I explore further literature. This places my research into a different context, the established field of the Arts Therapies. This leads well into my presentation of two sets of data which emerged from introducing Expressive Therapy (ET) into a counsellor training course. These are presented and discussed in three complementary chapters (chapters, 6, 7 and 8). Finally, in chapter 9 I provide the reader with tentative conclusions, examine the strengths and limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

“*Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher*” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p. 183). Throughout the research process I therefore kept a Journal as a reflective aid in which I recorded my feelings, perceptions and learning. My Journal consisted of a file combining personal and professional, verbal and non-verbal entries, enabling me to keep track of my thinking and to monitor my learning. I have included excerpts for the reader, to demonstrate my research process and

to illustrate points of discussion. In chapter 8 the researcher's voice is heard through six journal entries. My journal helped me to reflect in my final chapter on my learning as a person, as a trainer and as a researcher. I present my learning in metaphorical form, as a picture and a poem.

Confidentiality

As agreed with participants, in quoting from their data, I have not disclosed their identity. Where I have quoted individual voices in poems (chapter 6) I used pseudonyms. In retelling stories (chapter 8) I differentiated between them with false initials. Participants agreed to be photographed for research purposes. My co-tutor and those students who read my results and conclusions agreed that their identity could be disclosed.

Language

In this study I have endeavoured to avoid sexist language.

I use the abbreviations PCET, PCETI and ET throughout. I have already indicated that PCET is an abbreviation for person-centred expressive therapy, which I learned at PCETI, Person-Centred Expressive Institute (Europe). My research participants generally shortened PCET to Expressive Therapy (ET), even occasionally to Expressive!

In this practitioner research I describe myself both as a tutor (the common parlance at CESCO) and as a facilitator, which indicates my belief that I enable others to learn rather than just to impart knowledge.

As a tutor I had a two-year relationship with students. To a much lesser extent, in my subsidiary role as researcher, I had a relationship with participants. I have attempted to separate these appropriately but may not always succeed. At CESCO our trainee counselors were described as students and I have generally used that term. Where I quote directly from interviews I use the term interviewee, focus group member and co-tutor.

Fonts

Italics indicate verbatim quotations. I have used a different font to indicate excerpts from my Journal.

References

After twenty years as a counsellor I have inevitably been influenced by innumerable ideas from books and articles, lectures and discussions. After this process of intellectual osmosis I am no longer certain of the origin of some of my ideas. I give credit wherever I am sure. Where I have learned about a concept from a particular author I give credit to that person. For example, I am indebted to Rowan (1990) for my understanding of sub-personalities although I am aware that the phrase was first coined by Assagioli (1965, p. 74) while the concept of multiple selves goes back into ancient times.

Chapter 2

Counsellor training

Introduction

This chapter sets the Durham course in its historical, social and theoretical context.

Gergen and Gergen (2000, p. 1032) refer to “*situated knowledge*” or “*truth located within particular communities at particular times*”. They stress that “*the intelligibility of our accounts derives not from the world itself, but from our immersion within a tradition of cultural practices we inherit from previous generations*” (ibid., p. 1026).

I explore the literature to trace the origins, purpose and nature of counsellor training. I then focus specifically on the Durham course, describing its core theoretical model and outlining the method of teaching prior to my research.

.....

Any focus on counsellor training needs, firstly, to describe the aim of counselling and the nature of the counsellor’s role. There is considerable public confusion about both, while levels of counsellor training are as varied as the contexts in which they work. As I write, in 2007, counselling and counsellor training remain unregulated, with the result that anyone can legally describe him or herself as a counsellor, whether trained or not.

If I use my imagination I can easily envisage a scene many centuries ago where an elderly man, acknowledged by his peers to have special healing powers, is sitting on a rock outside a hillside cave. He is listening intently to a younger man who is clearly distressed. Then the healer speaks and draws something with a stick in the damp earth. The young man bows and leaves, walking tall and purposefully away down the hill.

Was this kind of scene the origin of the activity of counselling? My imagination has conjured up an expert who speaks words of wisdom to some-one in distress. There has been a meeting, a relationship of sorts. The young man has been apparently helped, something has changed for him. He has talked,

listened to the response and taken it on board without question, having faith in the helper. Intriguingly, the wise man has communicated his message both verbally and non-verbally.

I compare this image of a helper with Russell's definition (1993, p. 3) of a therapist as "*any worker who engages in a relationship with a client where the stated aims are to help that client alleviate psychological distress or to enhance self-understanding, with a view to changing something in the client's life*". She describes the therapeutic process as a "*talking one*" which can be augmented by alternative forms of communication, for example visual or tactile. Here there is a 'worker', not necessarily an expert, and the aims of the relationship are stated explicitly.

Through practice and research, theory gradually developed which questioned and clarified the aims and methods of therapy, the specific nature of a therapeutic relationship, and the degree of direction which was required or acceptable. In 1988 Masson angrily denounced all therapy as being directive and an abuse of power by therapists. "*What we need are more kindly friends and fewer professionals*" (p. 12). I still hear counselling criticized as being little more than 'tea and sympathy', a view which Howard (2000) strongly refutes - "*The notion that the counsellor is just a pair of ears and a warm heart is a dangerous illusion that has much more currency than it deserves*" (p. 413).

De Board (1998) imagined, in a sequel to *Wind in the Willows*, that Toad was suffering from depression. Toad certainly expected to be told what to do when his friends insisted that he see Heron, a counsellor - "*The Heron entered, looking tall and wise, and sat on the chair opposite Toad. He wished Toad 'good morning' and then sat quietly looking at him. Toad, who had become used to people talking at him, waited for the lecture to begin. But nothing happened. ... Finally Toad could stand it no longer. "Aren't you going to tell me what to do?" he asked plaintively. "About what?" answered Heron*" (de Board, 1998, p. 12).

This widespread belief that the counsellor is an expert and will have the answers to the client's problems was dismissed by Jung as early as 1935. "*If I wish to treat another individual psychologically at all, I must for better or worse give up all pretensions to superior knowledge, all authority and desire to influence*" (Jung, 1966, p. 5).

The aim of counselling was defined in the British Association for Counselling's Code of Ethics (BAC, 1992) as:- "*to provide an opportunity for the client to work towards living in a more satisfying and resourceful way*" (Section 3.1). Wessely (1996) dismissed this definition as a mission

statement rather than a description of what counsellors actually do. Tyler (1969) pointed out that it is difficult “to analyse what good counsellors do” as “the essential components are attributes rather than skills” (p. 33).

The International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling (IRTAC) used a similarly broad definition of counselling as “a method of relating and responding to others with the aim of providing them with opportunities to explore, to clarify and work towards living in a more personally satisfactory and resourceful way” (Hoxter, 1998, quoted by Bond and Baron, 1999, p. 29).

The 1992 BAC Code of Ethics and Practice for Counsellors clarified the objectives of counselling and the counsellor’s role more specifically - “the term counselling involves work with individuals, pairs or groups of people, often, but not always referred to as clients. The objectives of particular counselling relationships will vary according to the client’s needs. Counselling may be concerned with developing issues, addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with crisis, developing personal insight and knowledge, working through feelings of inner conflict or improving relationships with others. The counsellor’s role is to facilitate the client’s work in ways which respect the client’s values, personal resources and capacity for self-determination” (Section 3:1).

There continues to be confusion between counselling and other helping roles such as giving guidance, giving advice, and befriending, despite the clear differentiation made by Russell, Dexter and Bond (1992). The BAC (1985, Section 1) defines a professional counsellor as a person who “offers, or agrees explicitly to offer, time, attention and respect to another person or persons temporarily in the role of client”. Counselling differs therefore from the incidental use of counselling skills (e.g. good communication skills) in the course of another role such as nurse, teacher or health visitor. This BAC definition introduces the quality of respect into the relationship and the notion that it is time-limited.

Whereas, I believe, most counsellor trainers might agree with these very general definitions of counselling and the role of a counsellor, there are wide varieties in the methods used to train future practitioners, even within the same theoretical model. My own humanistic counsellor training at Durham University, in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, focused much more on acquisition of discrete skills than the CESCO course on which I taught. Within the same broad theoretical guidelines students can have very different training experiences, often dependent, in my experience, on the skills and interests of individual trainers.

Counsellors can receive initial or additional training according to the context in which they work, particularly those working, unpaid, in the voluntary sector. Organisations such as the North East Council for Addictions (NECA), Relate, and Place 2 B offer training specific to their organisational aims – in the case of Place 2 B after completion of training to Diploma level in another institution (source - personal communication).

For trainees requiring training as generic counsellors, which will enable them to work with a wide range of issues and client needs, courses are plentiful in Colleges of Further Education, Universities, private and voluntary organisations and in some health organisations.

There are wide variations in the levels and length of training, course content, method of teaching and accreditation practices. Qualifications attained also vary considerably. Keighley College, for example, offers a two-year course from a person-centred perspective which leads to a BTEC Professional Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling. The two-year training at Thanet College, also from a person-centred perspective, leads to a NCFE Level 4 Diploma in Counselling, which equates to an NVQ Level 2 (source – College prospectuses).

Since 1986 the British Government had wanted to devise National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) for all occupations. Concerned about the variation in counsellor training which confuses the public, provides little protection for them, and undermines the ‘profession’, in 1992 the Government expressed interest in developing a National Vocational Qualification in Counselling; this would measure competence by nationally agreed standards. The BAC was represented by its Vice-President on the Lead Body for Advice, Guidance and Counselling which was subsequently set up by the Department of Employment in 1993. In 2000 (when the BAC became the BACP) psychotherapy was added to its remit. With the help of experts in writing NVQ level 3, competencies were agreed and contracts given to Awarding Bodies. In September 2004, however, Sally Aldridge, the BACP Head of Professional Studies, expressed concern (Aldridge, 2004) about the usefulness of national standards and NVQs. There had been little demand for a NVQ Level 3 in counselling and she believed *that “the future of national standards in counselling is very unclear”* (Aldridge, 2004, p. 2). If NVQs were to continue *“there should now be separate standards for counselling and psychotherapy”* (ibid.).

Basic competencies agreed by the Lead Body are quoted by Rowan (2005, p. 22):

A1 Establish contact with client

- A2 *Establish working relationship with client*
- A3 *Operate within agreed Code of Practice*
- A4 *Monitor and evaluate own work*
- A5 *Identify, monitor and review progress with client*
- A6 *Develop and monitor interaction with client*
- A7 *Operate referral procedures*
- A8 *Manage the process of referral*
- A9 *Collect, process and manage information*

As Rowan points out, training at this ‘instrumental level’ has advantages; it enables therapists to be held accountable for their actions and ensures comparability between training courses.

In ‘Therapy Today’ (Vol. 18, 1, February 2007) BACP requested comments from its members on an independent report commissioned from the University of Leicester which identifies core competencies for counselling/psychotherapy.

Mearns (1997) was critical of “*competency driven schemes*”. Surface relational competencies could be measured such as the ability to clarify, ask open rather than closed questions but not, he believed, high level therapeutic skills.

Jenkins (1995, p. 205) questions the value of teaching such skills. “*I often think that the whole process of counsellor training is really a journey of discovery rather than one of being taught, that is, an uncovering of existing attitudes and skills, not a process of instruction*”. Certainly many renowned therapists of the past, including Freud, Rogers, Perls, Berne, Assagioli, were self-taught discoverers.

There have been many other attempts to assess the competencies which trainee counsellors require in order to be ethical and effective practitioners (Crouch, 1992, McLeod, 1993a, 1993b, Connor, 1994, Wheeler, 1996). McLeod (1993a, p. 124) for example, suggests six areas of competence required by professional counsellors :

- Interpersonal skills
- Personal beliefs and attitudes
- Conceptual ability
- Personal ‘soundness’

Mastery of technique

Ability to understand and work within social systems

I contrast these requirements with the “*somewhat hesitant, bumbling image*” of the person-centred counsellor as described by Mearns (1994, p. ix). Mearns is aware that a counsellor in the person-centred tradition might appear this way to a layman as he seeks to track his client and check his understanding, without interpretations or advice. Rogers (1957) had stated his belief that it was the personal qualities of the counsellor which he communicated to his client which mattered most, not acquisition of particular techniques. “*Most other approaches to counselling and therapy are much more exciting for the counsellor and perhaps also for the client with the practitioner playing a dashing role exhibiting mastery of sophisticated skills of analysis, interpretation and near mystical insight into the client’s condition and requirements for change*” (Mearns, 1994, p. ix).

The BACP, since its inception as the BAC in 1976, has worked steadily towards establishing professional and ethical standards for its ever growing membership. The Association supports statutory regulation of counselling and psychotherapy which will be regulated by the Health Professions Council. The BACP and the UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) are currently undertaking a mapping exercise of all current training and qualifications in both counselling and psychotherapy. Standards of practitioner competence and relevant training will be enforced by law, possibly by 2008, until when the struggle to identify what makes a competent counsellor continues.

Since 2000, when the BAC became the BACP, the overlap between counselling and psychotherapy has to some extent blurred (Jacobs, 2001b). These two responses to human need originated from two very different sources. Psychotherapy has been associated with the medical model of a mentally ill patient, whereas the origin of counselling springs from “*educational and spiritual understandings of human dysfunction, growth and development*” (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne, 2000, p. 469). Wheeler (1996, p. 2) differentiated between psychotherapy as “*the term more often used when client work is concerned with inner experience*” and counselling, which focused more on “*external events*”, the implication being that psychotherapists work at a much deeper level than counsellors. By 2000 Dryden, Means and Thorne were disagreeing – “*The core activity of counselling is the same as psychotherapy*” (p. 469). Mearns and Thorne (1988) pointed out that the processes involved between client and counsellor are the same in both counselling and psychotherapy.

In predicting the future of counselling and psychotherapy training Rowan (2005) emphasises the importance of a transpersonal approach to therapy. *"The boundaries between therapist and client may fall away. Both may occupy the same space at the same time, at the level of soul"* (p. 5). Of particular interest to my research is Rowan's belief that *"students need to be initiated into the whole idea of the superconscious, as described by Roberto Assagioli. This is the realm of intuition, creativity, altruism and the transpersonal in general"* (ibid., page 36).

Despite all the confusions and contradictions prevalent around counselling (and counsellor training), counsellors remain very much in demand. A report from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2005) called for an increase in counselling provision as an alternative solution to anti-depressants to the one in eight young people suffering from depression. Public funding is likely to increase for counselling in primary care and there is a growing demand for counselling in the work place where Employment Assistance Programmes are now widely used to minimise mental ill health and absenteeism. The benefits of counselling in the workplace were clearly shown in McLeod's overview of eighty research studies, representing work with ten thousand clients over a period of forty-five years. (McLeod, 2001).

Counsellor Training in Britain with particular reference to the creative arts - a review of the Literature

Like Rogers, many years earlier, Carson (1999) stresses the urgent need for creative human beings. Runco and Pritzker (1999, p. xv) note that since 1960 *"over ten thousand research articles on creativity have appeared in hundreds of journals and books"* and that *"over six hundred books about creativity have been published in the 1990s"*. Despite this, Carson (1999, p. 396) comments that *"notions of creativity have generally been scarce in the counselling literature yet creativity appears to be more intimately interwoven with the counseling process than perhaps many clinicians or researchers have realized"*. Carson (ibid.) quotes Frey, who wrote, as long ago as 1975, that counselling is itself a creative activity *"within which client and counselor combine their resources to generate a new plan, develop a different outlook, formulate alternative behaviors, begin a new life"*. Carson believes that getting 'stuck' in the counselling process *"may often reflect a lack of ... creativity"* (ibid.).

I wondered whether I would find any connections in the literature between counsellor training and the creative arts and began with a search of Research papers. I have not commented critically on all of these but have listed them to provide a comprehensive review for other researchers.

For example, I reviewed the titles of papers presented at the Annual Research Conference of the BACP between 1999 and 2005. Surprisingly, only twenty-four out of three hundred and seventy three related in any way to counsellor training. I observed that very few of these seemed relevant to my own research. Silverstone presented a paper (2004) on 'Art therapy and the person centred way' which is not linked to generic counsellor training. There is no direct reference to working creatively in counsellor training although Speedy implies this in her use of storytelling (2002) and mythology (2005) with counselling research students. I found some of these papers useful, however, in discussion of my research results - for example Mat-Amin (2003) who researched the effect of current life experience on trainees. Of most direct relevance was research into the value of personal development groups (Rennie, 2001 and 2005; Robson 2003 and 2005).

Periodicals

In the last decade the specialist BACP journal (which changed its name from 'Counselling' to 'Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal' (CPJ) in 2001, and from September 2005 to 'Therapy Today' has carried twenty-two articles of some relevance to training. During 2001 and 2002 there was a regular column on training issues, in response to an article (Coate and Murdin, 2001, p. 28) requesting the readership for contributions to the question "What do counsellors need to know?" This was the only article of relevance to my research that year. Moore's answer (2001, p. 29) was "*What counsellors really need to know first and foremost is themselves*", highlighting the importance of self-awareness and personal development in counsellor training. Although none of the articles in the regular column on training refers to the arts, I found two references in them to creativity. Jacobs, (2001, p. 6) in writing about the variable quality of counsellor training, advocates "*If I had to say anything it would be don't set up structures that stifle creativity*". Gabbi and Minikin (2002, pp. 38-9) wonder whether examinations and academic training reduce the diversity of applicants and the creativity of trainees.

From 2003, with a change of editor, Counselling and Psychotherapy Journal no longer had a section which focused specifically on counsellor training.

During 2003 training was mentioned in five articles. For example, Murray pleaded for more emphasis on Bowlby¹ during training while Rose wrote about personal development groups. In addition, in August 2003 there were articles on sand play (Rabone) and art therapy (Schaverien); these were the only two articles of any relevance to the arts throughout the decade, and these were not linked to training. I was interested to notice that there was more focus on creativity in short courses advertised in the journal. The BACP requirement for forty hours of continuing professional development for accredited counsellors encouraged courses on poetry in therapy, creative counselling, art therapy, creative writing in therapy, and sand play. If creativity has been bypassed in initial counsellor training it is available as an add-on extra!

McKenzie-Mavinga (2004) addresses black issues in counsellor training while Wakefield and Wakefield (2005) explore the suitability of videotaping for trainee person-centred counsellors. There were articles relating to the arts in therapy (Rabone, 2003, Pointon 2003 and Wright 2003), but these are not related specifically to counsellor training. Of most relevance to me were articles by Allen (2004) on the benefit of writing poetry during counsellor training, articles about personal development groups (Rose, 2003; Worlsey, 2003) and an article on investigating values during counselling training (Patrick, 2003).

Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, a recent publication, contained, between 2001 and 2004, few articles relating directly to counsellor training and none to the arts in counsellor training. Hill (2002) discusses the role of community meetings on counsellor training courses while Coldridge and Mickelborough (2003) address the issue of access to counsellor training.

'Counselling Psychology Quarterly' contains five articles between 2000 and 2006 which relate to training, but only three to counsellor rather than psychology training. Wheeler (2000) analyses ways in which trainers "*construe good and bad counselling trainees*". Keri (2003) reports on the correlation between learning styles and the age and gender of counselling trainees. Truell (2001) gives voice to six recent graduates as they comment on their experience of learning counselling.

Mearns (1997) points out that in the first eleven years of the specialist journals for person-centred counsellors - 'Person-Centred Review' and 'The Person-Centred Journal', there were only two papers on the training of client-centred therapists – Combs, 1986 and Thayer, 1987. Between Autumn 1999

¹ Bowlby emphasizes the importance throughout life of a secure emotional base, formed initially through attachment to the mother.

and Autumn 2004 (when it ceased publication) 'Person-Centred Practice' carried one article specifically on the arts - 'Person-centred sand tray therapy' by Schwarz and Schwarz (2000). Only eleven articles have relevance to training, with the main emphasis being on aspects of large and small group work within specifically person-centred courses (Moore, 2000, Mountford 2000 and 2001, Vincent 2001, Draper 2002). Two articles raise awareness of the body-mind connection (Winter 2002, Hedley 2002).

'British Journal of Guidance and Counselling'

In the past decade there have been nine articles which relate directly to counsellor training (Morrison, 1997; Webb, 1997; Berry and Wolfe, 1997; Wiseman, 1998; McLeod and Mackin, 1998; Hollanders, 1999; Dryden, Mearns and Thorne, 2000; Parker and Schwartz, 2002; Donati and Watts, 2005). The most relevant article I discovered (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne, 2000) charted the development of counselling and counsellor training in the United Kingdom since its emergence as a profession with the founding of the BAC in 1976. Prior to that date minimal training had been provided for counsellors working as volunteers and none was considered necessary for paid counsellors already trained in nursing, teaching or social work. Counsellor training was first introduced in the 1960s at two of the 'new' universities, Keele and Reading. Full-time training was offered for counsellors to work in education. By 1988 BAC had introduced standards of training to acquire course accreditation. Dryden et al. focus also on the future of counselling as accreditation and registration become requirements for professional counsellors. They include more emphasis in counselling, and therefore in training, on research and evaluation, on the interdisciplinary nature of counselling and on using technological developments. There is no mention of nurturing creativity.

Using the keywords - 'counsellor training' and 'research', and, 'training of counsellors' and 'research' (with the variants counselor, counselling and counseling) I searched three on-line periodical indexing databases - 'ASSIA', 'International ERIC', and 'Ingenta' for details of relevant articles. Although the 'ASSIA' database concentrates on the Applied Social Sciences there were only twenty-one relevant articles listed between 1987 and 2006. The British Education Index, part of the 'International ERIC' database, contained only ten records from 1976-2006, but, surprisingly, the Australian Education Index, the other part of the database, contained fourteen in the same period. 'Ingenta', a database containing over twenty million articles, chapters and reports, had, at twenty-one, the same number of references as 'ASSIA'. Although these databases listed many of the articles referred to in the preceding paragraphs under individual journal titles, only three articles appeared in more than one database - indicating the wide spread of sources indexed by them. From these different sources only

one article, however, that by Payne (2002), made any mention of using the arts, and that in dance movement therapy training. It can be seen, therefore, that the amount of periodical literature published in the United Kingdom during the last thirty years on the topic of research into the training of counsellors is very sparse, and that of research into the use of the arts in this training practically non-existent.

Books

I then turned to reviewing books written about counsellor training in Britain.

Inskipp (1996) highlights the key influences on the development of counsellor training in Britain, building on the American foundations. The earliest writers on counsellor training were American, reflecting the introduction of counselling in the United States prior to in Britain. (Carkhuff, 1969a, 1969b, Egan 1975, Gilmore 1973).

Although Rogers researched the observable skills of effective counselling, the earliest training of Rogerian counsellors was provided by Carkhuff's 'Human Resource Training' which integrated theory, skills and personal development. The core conditions, identified by Rogers as necessary and sufficient for therapeutic change were paramount in Carkhuff's training but discrete therapeutic skills were gradually identified. By 1969 concreteness, self-disclosure, confrontation and immediacy were taught, what Egan (1975) was later to call the challenging skills. Scales were developed to measure the level at which trainees communicated the core conditions.

The earliest diploma training courses in Britain were client-centred, focusing on the core conditions but not on the way to communicate them to the client. Connor (1994) writes - "*Strange as it may seem now, the word 'skill' was not in the vocabulary at that time*" (p. 3). In the mid-sixties at the new Universities of Keele, Reading, Birmingham and Exeter the courses were academic and taught mainly by American tutors as there were as yet no trained British counsellors. Connor herself, a Geography teacher, was seconded for a year's full-time diploma course at Keele. She recalls that "*Ideas about experiential learning had not really taken on in universities and so almost every session was a lecture, where we took copious notes, followed by discussion*" (1994, p. 3). On reading this I remembered the words of a student in my research cohort. His expectation had been "*Somebody speaks, you listen you learn*". Connor observes that as the first trained counsellors began to train others the context of the course was influenced by their professional background in such fields as

teaching and social work. Gradually it was realised that training needed to incorporate specific skills tuition as well as lectures on theory.

Inskipp (1996) describes the contribution of Ivey to the development of counselling skills in Britain, which were first taught at Keele University from 1970. Believing that there was no need for lengthy psychological training for counsellors Ivey systematically taught specific behaviours such as attending, reflecting, summarising and self-disclosure.

Egan's (1975) three-stage model consolidated much of the earlier thinking on what constituted effective counsellor training. 'The Skilled Helper' was highly influential in Britain, gradually evolving from a three-stage to a five-stage model over several editions. Culley (1991) developed a simpler three-stage skills model, dividing the counselling process into three identifiable stages with relevant skills.

I recognise the influence of all these American writers on my own counselling training and on my early experiences as a trainer in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Durham. The belief was that novice counsellors needed a foundation of systematically taught counselling skills. The recognition that good communication skills could be immensely beneficial required a definition of what differentiated the use of counselling skills from the activity of counselling. As I have mentioned, Russell, Dexter and Bond (1992) went further, to separate other helping roles, such as befriending, from counselling.

The implications for counsellor training is that different levels of training are required to meet the diverse needs of trainees. A health visitor, for example, might require basic counselling skills to use in her existing job while another student might require training to Masters degree level in preparation for becoming a professional counsellor.

By the late 1980s concern was expressed about the focus on skills training or 'micro-counselling', resulting "*in a mechanistic approach to counselling training*" (Connor, 1994, p. 8). I agree with Connor that an initial, thorough grounding in counselling skills is of value. The student moves from 'unconscious incompetence' to 'unconscious competence' (Clarkson and Gilbert, 1988), no longer focusing on getting the mechanics right. A developmental model of training provides a foundation of counselling skills on which students at diploma level can build and acquire a style which reflects their developing selves.

During the 1990s Dryden and his colleagues were particularly influential in raising issues about counselling and professional counsellor training across all theoretical models (1991, 1994, 1995, 1996a, 1996b).

In 1995, despite the BAC course accreditation scheme, Dryden, Horton and Mearns were aware of the wide variation in the quality of counselling courses - *"the present haphazard state of affairs in Britain, which, in part prompted BAC to initiate its course recognition procedure means that one student may receive excellent training ... while another might receive training of lamentable quality"* (p. 20). The authors provide a comprehensive overview of what they believe constitutes a professional training. There is a brief mention of creativity - *"a brainstorm ... can generate creative ideas about the topic being studied"* (p. 84).

Johns (1998) describes the complexity of counselling training which she likens to a series of 'balancing acts'. From her experience as a trainer in a University context she refers to the need to respect both left and right brain modalities. *"Many universities are developing innovative, creative curriculum design, teaching methods and assessment"* (p. 5). The contributors to Johns' book certainly reflect a lively, creative spirit. I noticed that nine out of the eleven contributors are women and wondered about the significance of gender difference in using creative training methods. Baer (1999) explores the connection between gender and creativity. Research into gender difference and creativity is inconclusive although there is *"a considerable amount of evidence in gender differences in creative accomplishment (my emphasis) in a wide variety of fields"* (Baer, 1999, p. 753). It is possible that social and educational factors account for greater male accomplishments in musical composition, science and painting. I found it interesting that Baer attributes greater gender equality in musical performance, writing, dance and drama to the easier access to resources for these activities.

I have read several articles or papers which question the current adequacy of training around specific issues such as self-harm (Hann, 2006), attachment (Murray, 2003), black issues (McKenzie-Mavinga, 2004). The implication is that trainees need to be prepared for every eventuality in counselling practice. Mearns and Thorne (2000) challenge this 'problem-centred' approach which sits uncomfortably with their emphasis on working with the person. They see this as one aspect of the steady move towards professionalisation of counselling. To some extent they appreciate the impact of increasing professionalisation on training for

person-centred counsellors. The involvement of key person-centred trainers such as Rennie, Barrett-Lennard and Bozarth influenced, for example, the former practice of self-selection for person-centred training. They warn, however, against a potential move from functionalism to structuralism. Functionalism allows for a divergence of solutions rather than prescribing solutions. The BACP ethical framework (2002), in replacing the more prescriptive codes of ethics and practice (1989, 1992, 1996a, 1996b), is fortunately a move from structuralism to functionalism, encouraging counsellors to work in awareness of ethical principles rather than prescribed rules. Mearns and Thorne (2000, p. 212) describe "*the creeping tendency towards institutionalisation (which) has created a prevailing climate where many practitioners are fearful rather than courageous*", less willing to take risks and to experiment in case they are legally challenged.

Personal development

Finally, I decided to focus a search on the literature about personal development. Before analysing my results fully I had a sense that it was in the area of personal development that PCET had made a major contribution to students in training. Personal development is also of crucial importance in the training of counsellors whose focus is on the quality of therapeutic relationship. I wanted to study how personal development occurs without using the arts. Research articles over the past decade reflect a general interest in personal development issues.

Since the early days of counsellor training personal development has been a key course ingredient and is a BACP requirement of accredited courses. Books on counsellor training have included a section on personal development but it was not until 1996 that Hazel Johns provided a comprehensive overview in 'Personal Development in Counsellor Training'. She writes "*Personal development has been the least acknowledged and most intangible element of counselling training, yet, I will argue, it is the most essential*" (p. 4).

Johns builds on what has been written earlier, for example by Gilmore (1973) and Dryden, Horton and Mearns (1995) questioning the nature of personal development and the means of achieving it within a counselling training environment. Gilmore, and Dryden, Horton and Mearns address the issue from a trans-theoretical approach, while later Mearns (1997) focuses specifically on the training of person-centred counsellors. Gilmore suggests exercises to increase a trainee's self-understanding and self-acceptance. She defines self-understanding (1973, p. 189) - "*A person is said to understand himself when he can describe himself as he sees himself and others see him, when he can talk about*

what and who he is ... when he can explain how he got that way and how different aspects of himself are inter-related ... when he can predict what he will be like and how he will act in the future". She describes self-acceptance as *"a process of prizing, valuing, affirming the significance of yourself as a complex and unique person"* (ibid., p. 213) - a definition with a distinctly Rogerian flavour.

Connor (1994, p. 29) sees intra-personal development, through self-awareness and self-acceptance, as helping *"the trainee to get in touch with all the different facets of self and indeed to befriend their different selves, including their shadow side (Jung, 1968)"*. This resonated for me with Natalie Rogers' work to give expression to our 'shadow side'.

A competent counsellor, Gilmore believes, is able to acknowledge her personal limitations as well as her personal power, and is able to share herself with others (cited in Johns, 1996, p. 48). Johns also writes about limitations, the need for counsellors to accept the limitations of human control. She highlights van Deurzen-Smith's warning of the danger of *"a fierce absorption in the personal"* which can blind us to existential and ecological issues (1993, cited in Johns, 1996, p. 131). I agree that personal development training needs to enable trainee counsellors to take a broad and realistic view of life.

Although Dryden, Horton and Mearns (1995) take a trans-theoretical approach to counsellor training they focus briefly on the specific personal development needs of person-centred counsellors. These are linked to person-centred theory and are more comprehensively described than by Mearns (1997). Dryden, Horton and Mearns (1995, p. 98) suggest four main areas which need to be addressed: self-structure, self in relation to others, self in relation to clients and self as a learner.

Mearns (1997) has a more general aim of providing learning contexts in which trainee counsellors are enabled to work with clients at relational depth. *"The free-flowing congruence of the worker is a prerequisite to meeting the client at relational depth"* (p. 94). To achieve this level of congruence the trainee needs to become aware of his fears, to understand his fears and to experiment with *"increasingly fearless relating"* (ibid.). The person-centred counsellor has to feel safe enough to forgo *"the security of portrayal"* (ibid.), taking the risk to be fully present and vulnerable.

Johns (1996, p. 8) distinguishes between personal development and personal growth. *"Development ... involves some sense of purpose, directionality, continuity, planned activity in the direction of more*

effective living and working in counselling. ... Growth ... one might define as the product of all this - as an end in itself".

Williams and Irving (1996) suggest that personal development and professional development are inter-related, particularly for counsellors whose main therapeutic tool is Self. They believe that the relationship between the two is complex and that it changes as a counsellor moves from novice to experienced practitioner. They also differentiate between personal development and self-awareness. Mearns (1997) describes self-awareness as initiating a process of personal development which needs to be followed by self-understanding and self-experimentation.

Johns (1996) also highlights awareness of self and others as "*the cornerstone of counselling training*" (p. 4). Like Gilmore, and Dryden, Horton and Mearns she emphasises that trainee counsellors need a broad perspective of personal development as life is an interplay between community and individual experience. She likens a counselling course to "*a complete drama or opera with a large cast, an improvised plot, shifts of power and influence amongst characters, backstage politics, tantrums and so on*" (ibid., p. 42). Students and trainers bring to the drama all their previous life-histories and their complex personalities. All the 'characters' change and develop inevitably through the interchange and happenings within and outside the course. 'Extras' appear on the stage from time to time as Johns points out. I have seen, for example, the unsupportive partner make his entrance, the unborn child, the critical teacher from primary school days and the parent who demands endless attention. The material for personal exploration and change is rich and diverse, although complex and emotionally demanding. The ages and life-stages of staff and students play an important part in the unfolding drama (Johns). A sense of transition is experienced simply by becoming a student on a lengthy and demanding course, and within a large cohort other transitions occur such as new jobs, different partners, pregnancy, redundancy and bereavement.

All the literature, however, suggests that while personal development occurs naturally and inevitably during the life of any training course there needs to be a planned and structured approach to the personal development needs of trainee counsellors. These fall into the categories of personal journals, personal development groups, personal or training therapy and, of particular relevance to my research, structured exercises. Additionally, considerable personal development occurs in client work and clinical supervision outside the course.

Adding to the complexity of designing a course in which personal development needs are met is the requirement for each student's unique needs to be respected and catered for. Mearns (1997) advocates a multi-method approach to personal development which, as Connor (1994) and Johns (1996) emphasise is ultimately for the benefit of clients not *"as an excuse for narcissistic absorption in self"* (Connor, p. 58). Jenkins (1995, p. 3) expresses concern that on a humanistic course a gain in self-awareness might be seen as an end in itself *"irrespective of any demonstrable change in behaviour or benefit to clients"*.

McLeod (1993a, pp. 194-195) suggests six areas of competence in terms of a trainee counsellor's personal development and emphasises the relationship between the trainee's needs, beliefs and attitudes and their work with clients. The trainee needs, for example, the capacity to tolerate strong or uncomfortable feelings as they listen to clients and to have an absence of prejudice and authoritarianism. Awareness of ethical and moral choices influences their sensitivity to clients' values. A belief in the client's potential for change is crucial and this springs from their own experience of making changes, for example by becoming more assertive in relationships, less governed by habit and outdated introjects. Mearns (1997, p. 100) highlights the fact that personal development learning is *"intimately tied to the self-concept and change is not easily achieved"*.

Mearns (1997) and Johns (1996) consider the relative benefits and disadvantages of the various methods of formal encouragement of personal development. Johns is skeptical about the value of personal learning in the large course group, a method which Carl Rogers strongly favoured. She notes that some students are too fearful to risk self-disclosure and self-experimentation in a large group although it has the potential of being a powerful forum. The unpredictability and lack of containment make it a less productive forum than the much smaller, more intimate personal development group. Studies (Irving and Williams, 1995; Robson, 2003, 2005) show, however, that students are often ambivalent about the value of these smaller groups too. *"This should raise some salutary questions for trainers who assume that a) personal development must 'happen' in a group and b) that groups offer the same learning potential for all members"* (Johns, 1996, p. 130). In CESCO there was a high reliance on personal development groups, which caused me concern. As in personal therapy sessions students can easily avoid issues, especially in a personal development group which emphasises support rather than balancing support with challenge. Mearns (1997), Dryden, Horton and Mearns (1995), Johns (1996, 1998) and Gilmore (1973) all emphasise the need for students to move beyond self understanding into action. For example, a student who discovers strong racist attitudes might decide to do voluntary work in a playgroup for Asian children. Expansion of life experience is

strongly advocated by Mearns as the greatest aid to personal development. Counsellors are required to continue both personal and professional learning for as long as they are in practice and the excitement of the quest needs to begin during training. *"The counsellor's obligation to go on growing is, in fact, a glorious invitation to live life to the full"* (Mearns and Thorne, 1988, p. 38).

Most relevant to my research is the focus in the literature on structured exercises which promote aspects of personal development. Johns (1996, p. 100) outlines the benefits of these experiential and active forms of learning. They involve the whole course group, are usually enjoyable and are much less tutor-dependent than a lecture format. Inevitably the differences between people naturally emerge and any resistance to participate can be explored. *"Most of all, the gains of structured, interactive activities lie in the contribution to the 'climate' of any course. This is absolutely key in the success or failure of training, the promotion of trust, the opportunities for communicating and extending empathy, acceptance and genuineness and the possibility of a mutuality of involvement of all members of the course community"* (ibid., p. 101).

Johns (ibid., p. 104) highlights the importance of sensitive debriefing of exercises, suggesting four levels of exploration. Feelings about the activity are important as well as exploration of thoughts and ideas about the processes involved in the exercise and its relevance to counselling. The value of the exercise to contexts outside the course can be probed. Deeper meanings might emerge later as the student reflects on the exercise at home. Exercises can be directed at personal attitudes or community issues. For example, students might be encouraged to explore their attitude to authority or to focus on an issue such as abuse or oppression. Areas considered crucial to training can be highlighted rather than left to chance discussion in a personal development group. Any issue explored will have the dual benefit of raising general understanding and awareness of personal attitudes.

In 2005 Donati and Watts remarked that *"Despite its widely acknowledged importance to effective therapeutic practice across theoretical orientations it has been suggested that counsellor 'personal development' remains a poorly defined area of training, and that the concept is itself endowed with numerous implicit meanings"* (p. 476). They believe that training courses need to be more explicit about the goals of personal development, and how they might be achieved and assessed.

Person-centred therapy has a flexible approach to boundaries, for example, which can be criticised for encouraging therapist over-involvement and client dependency. Rigid boundaries imply more of a parental role in both counselling and counsellor training.

Mearns and Thorne (2000, pp. 17-53) devote a chapter to the question “*Is therapy losing its humanity?*” They describe a world in which every-one is in a hurry, a time of technological transition in which it is very easy to lose one’s sense of identity. In the previous chapter (p. 6) they say “*There is little time to play and not infrequently the performing arts struggle to retain a foothold in the school curriculum against the pressing claims of literacy, numeracy, science and information technology*”. The implication is that there is little time for creativity in today’s world and that this contributes to impoverishment of self. Is this the reason why so much has been written about the necessity for creative thinking and creative people while creative approaches are in practice largely excluded from education, including much counsellor training?

It is against this confusing, yet hopeful, background that counsellor training at Durham finds its place.

Counsellor Training at Durham

Three main strands informed counsellor training at Durham. Firstly, the University context required a high academic standard. Durham has national status as a university catering for highly achieving students; in September 2005 it was awarded the accolade of University of the Year in the new Sunday Times annual guide to universities. The Vice-Chancellor, Sir Kenneth Calman, said that this had resulted mainly from academic achievement in teaching and research. CESCO students expected, and mostly achieved, the required academic standards.

Secondly, the core theoretical course model influenced not only the content but also the process of the course, including the manner in which it was taught. Although the course aimed to teach “*an integrated eclectic approach to humanistic counselling*” (Durham University, 1994, p. 4), it was so rooted in a person-centred rationale that students often spoke of themselves as being person-centred counsellors, a belief which I often challenged in tutorials. I believe that most students practised in “*a person-centred approach, rather than the person-centred approach*” (McLeod, 1993a, p. 77). I wanted them to be aware of the difference.

Feltham (1999, p. 184) argues against adoption in training of a core theoretical model, although this is a requirement for BACP accreditation of courses to ensure coherence between theory and practice. Casement (2004, p. 13) believes that “*the more single-minded any position of training is, the more people seem to see things just that one way*”. He argues that counsellors can make connections too

quickly between their theoretical model and the client's issues. Feltham (1999, p. 184) believes there is more value in focusing on the common denominations of helpful therapeutic practice such as *"the simple components of acceptance, being listened to, having some-one interested in them"*. He believes that no theory can adequately explain human beings in all their complexity. *"Core theoretical models infantilize and zoologise us and our clients – that is, deny us our autonomy, cage, shrink and dehumanize us. At least, that's my theory - for now"* (p. 91).

Prochaska and Norcross, in contrast, value the teaching of a core theoretical model to guide practitioners through a potentially bewildering array of possible responses to clients. *"A psychotherapy theory describes the clinical phenomenon, delimits the amount of relevant information, organizes that information, and integrates it all into a coherent body of knowledge that prioritizes our conceptualization and directs our treatment"* (1994, pp. 3).

I agree with Feltham (1999) that with several hundred models of counselling from which to choose there is inevitably a great deal of overlap and that many counsellors, although they follow one particular model, eventually develop their own particular brand of it. Nevertheless I believe that trainee and novice counsellors are helped by a 'map' of the territory which a core theoretical model provides. They can be encouraged to try other models alongside for comparison and discover from experience what works for them and for their clients. The model I learned in training, the problem-solving approach of Gerard Egan, was initially useful but adjusted later as I began to value a more person-centred approach, although not a pure person-centred model.

Jenkins (1995) differentiates between two approaches to the training of counsellors. An inductive approach emphasises process and suits models like the CESCO course which focus on the therapeutic relationship. A deductive approach, however, focuses on the acquisitions of skills and techniques, as Egan does. I believe that trainee counsellors initially benefit from a deductive approach as a foundation.

Humanistic Counselling sprang from the humanistic Psychology movement of which Carl Rogers, an American psychologist, was a highly influential leader. Humanistic psychologists shared a philosophy which, from the 1930s onwards, challenged the two dominant therapeutic theories of psychoanalysis and behaviourism (McLeod, 1993a). The key element of humanistic philosophy was a focus on the 'client's' current experiencing. In contrast, psychoanalysts treated 'patients' whose problems were believed to stem from childhood and often unconsciously manifested (Freud, 1917).

Freud's ideas were developed during and after his lifetime in a plethora of theoretical directions, many of which were briefly introduced to CESCO students. They learned, for example, about Jung's belief in the collective unconscious², sometimes accessed by dreams (1966), Grove's (1959) concept of the wounded inner child³, Erikson's life-stages⁴ (1950), Winnicott's work on transitional objects⁵ (1963), and Bowlby's attachment theory⁶ (1953, 1988). I believe that students need to be aware of the basic principles of counselling models different from the theoretical core model being taught. They can then make informed choices about which counselling model fits best into their understanding of the world.

In the present day counsellors working within a broad psychodynamic tradition continue to focus on childhood experiences, with therapy aiming to uncover unconscious mental forces and using techniques such as free association and dream analysis. The counsellor interprets what the client might be avoiding or distorting.

The cognitive - behavioural tradition has been another powerful force in counselling. It emerged from the concepts of behavioural psychology (Pavlov) and (Skinner, 1953) and focuses on problem-solving and change, particularly through challenging the client's initial thoughts. (Ellis, 1989, Beck, 1976, and Dryden and Golden, 1986). Although many CESCO students worked within health-oriented contexts, in which the cognitive -behavioural model has been influential, e.g. in the treatment of depression, I noticed little general enthusiasm amongst students or staff for practising its methods. *"The cognitive behavioural orientation is more of a technology than a framework for understanding life"* (McLeod, 1993a, p. 61). The 'quick-fix' approach sits uneasily with humanistic beliefs.

As early as 1942 Rogers challenged the intellectual and diagnostic methods of the psychodynamic approach in which a counsellor *"discovers, diagnoses and treats the client's problems"* (Rogers, 1942, p. 115). In 1956 he also challenged the beliefs of the behaviourist school of counselling, notably in a series of debates with B.F. Skinner. Rogers understood the nature of human beings very differently. Stevens (1989) describes the field of psychology as a *"wasteland"* prior to the humanistic

² *"An unconscious psychic function"* (Jung, 1966, p. 50) common to every-one. Recognised by symbols which represent universal aspects of human experience

³ Grove's concept of a traumatized child stuck at the moment immediately before trauma and carried somatically within the adult

⁴ The life-span divided into seven stages, each with a maturational task to achieve

⁵ Objects such as child's comfort blanket temporarily used to represent mother in her absence

⁶ The process of making and sustaining attachments with key figures to provide a psychologically 'secure base'

movement. “Essentially there was Freud or Behaviourism, and both were pretty pessimistic” (new preface, page unnumbered).

Humanistic beliefs about therapy

Cook (2003) describes the specific elements of humanistic theory. It is phenomenological, that is it relies on the primacy of each person’s perception. The implication for counselling is that the counsellor cannot be the authority on the client’s life. The counsellor needs to work hard to understand the client’s world as it is perceived. It is holistic, acknowledging each person as a whole and the relevance of the whole person to therapeutic movement. Therapy engages not just the client’s intellect, but his/her whole being. There is also awareness of each person’s dynamic process as he/she moves towards ‘becoming’.

In the following chapter I describe how Carl Rogers, influenced by humanistic thinkers such as Maslow and Rank, developed what came to be known as Person-Centred Counselling. I explore the further development by his daughter of PCET

Eclecticism versus Integrative

Eclectic therapeutic practice could be described as a ‘pick-and-mix’ approach whereby counsellors try any approach which they know about in the belief that it will be useful for their client, or perhaps because they are uncertain how to help a particular client. There is no organising principle and counsellors and clients could become very confused. For example, the humanistic principle that the client and not the counsellor is the expert on the client’s life is contradicted by interpretation or direction.

Integrative practice, in contrast, combines therapeutic approaches which share the same underlying principles. The importance in Gestalt therapy of the client’s here-and-now experiencing, for example, sits comfortably with Rogers’ valuing of the client’s subjective experience. Mearns (2005) points out that despite the origins of Gestalt in Perls’ very directive practice present day “*Gestalt can be practised in a fashion that would appear to be virtually identical to person-centred therapy*” [on-line].

At CESCO the description of our course as “*an integrated eclectic approach to humanistic counselling*” (Durham University, 1994, p. 4) implied that students were encouraged in their practice to consider underlying humanistic principles. In my view these were:

Each person is inherently worthy of respect

The subjective experience of a client is paramount

The relationship is of fundamental importance

The relationship is characterised by acceptance, empathy and congruence (Rogers’ core conditions).

It is important to value the client’s autonomy, to offer not to impose or to direct

The client has a vast reservoir of inner resources

The client is on a journey towards achieving their full potential

The imbalance of power in the relationship needs to be minimised

Counsellor need to be very aware of and to use their Self in the relationship

These principles informed my own counselling practice as well as my attitude as a tutor towards students.

With these principles in mind students were encouraged to try a purely person-centred approach, or, for example, to incorporate Gestalt experiments⁷, to explore the client’s dreams and metaphors, to work with Grove’s ‘clean language’⁸ (1998), to practise Gendlin’s focusing⁹ (1978).

Unusually amongst therapists of all schools of thought, Grove dismissed the importance of the relationship, describing himself as information-centred rather than person-centred. CESCO students were encouraged to incorporate his ideas while employing them from a humanistic perspective, i.e. from within a respectful, empathic relationship. Gestalt experiments, such as two-chair work, were offered to, rather than imposed upon, clients. When moving beyond a purely person-centred approach manner and intentionality were crucial.

The third strand which informed the course on which I taught was the gradual consensus, since the 1960s when counsellor training began in Britain, about the ingredients of a good counsellor training course.

⁷ Exercises mutually devised between client and counsellor to help the client to amplify his current experiencing

⁸ Use of the client’s exact words and questions which don’t contaminate his metaphors

⁹ A method of working with the client’s bodily ‘felt sense’ rather than verbalised accounts

Initially, as Johns (1996) describes, in courses within Institutes of Higher Education there was a high emphasis on theory and examinations in order to make the study of counselling acceptable in academic circles. Theory continues to be valued but alongside the acquisition of skills and the high emphasis on personal development. Johns (1996, pp. 17-18) says “... with Brigid Proctor (1978), I believe that “every counsellor needs a theory” - indeed theories - to make sense of all that we do”. I agree that it is important that counsellors are able to have a conceptual map of what they are doing and why. Casement (2004) warns against over-reliance on theory which can restrict the counsellor’s thinking and responses. “I see theory as being useful to me in a similar way to the rope that climbers use to catch them when they fall. The climber has to be able to reach out beyond where their rope is” (p. 13).

In contrast, personal development or the acquisition of skills was the main focus of training in the voluntary sector where there was no need to prove academic respectability.

Johns (1996) believed that “*the provision of an integrated, interconnected, rigorous learning process interweaving personal work, practical skills and theory is the soundest basis for counselling and counselling skills training*” (p. 18). She points out the need for balance between these three key ingredients. At CESCO each evening of training generally followed a consistent pattern of one and a half hours of theory followed by a half hour break. After an hour and a half of skills practice the evening ended with an hour of personal development. It would seem from this division of time that personal development was considered of least importance. The rationale was that personal development occurred across all areas of training, not just in the designated hour.

Theory was generally taught in a lecture format, although there was a high level of student participation through discussion and experiential exercises. The programme for each term was an amalgamation of key theoretical topics decided by the tutor team and topics chosen by students (Appendix A). The tutors took it in turns to facilitate theory sessions.

In the research cohort the group was divided into three smaller groups, for skills practice and personal development. Each tutor was responsible for one small group throughout each academic year.

On reaching the level of postgraduate counsellor training our students were already sufficiently skilled in counselling to be able to take up counselling placements. They were able to stay in the

client's world or frame of reference. They could refrain from interrupting, from asking too many questions and from directing the client.

What other skills did they need to learn over the next two years? Bozarth (1998) suggests that "*One of the greatest sources of misunderstanding of the person-centred approach is that of focusing on how to do it. The focus then shifts to technical responding and leads to the emphases on such conceptualizations as reflecting, client-centred communication and so on. The understanding of the client's meaning in a varied and deeply personal manner as conveyed by Rogers is distorted*" (p. 99). Rogers was one of the first psychologists, in 1942, to test optimum therapist responses by analysing tape-recorded sessions (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, pp. 211-219). From this research and through his own experience he concluded (1957) that the personal qualities which the therapist communicates to the client are much more important than any procedures or techniques he has learned. Truax and Mitchell (1971) point out that these attitudinal qualities, encapsulated in the core conditions, have sometimes been considered to be skills, implying that they can be learned.

Bozarth (ibid., p. 100) believes that "*therapists' responses may be idiosyncratic to the client, therapist and the unique relationship*". He believes that intuitive responses arise when the counsellor has "*uncontaminated dedication to the frame of reference of the client*" (ibid.).

'Relational depth' was a term first introduced by Dave Mearns in 1997 to describe a way of working with clients which enabled them to work at psychological depth. Encouraging students to work at relational depth was one important aim of skills sessions on our course. The client often tells a 'story' about her life which initially is concerned mainly with facts. Without the skill of the counsellor the story can stay at a surface level, perhaps go round in repetitive circles, and the client makes little progress. There is a working relationship but it consists of two people responding to each other as if from a psychological distance. In contrast, Cooper describes relational depth as occurring "*when two people are able to receive the essence of each other's being*" (2005b, p. 18). When counsellors are working at relational depth the core conditions are consistently high, but more than that. It is as though they are blended together in what Cooper (ibid., p. 17) calls "*a single way of being.*" Rogers described this, towards the end of his life, as 'presence'. "*I find that when I am closest to my intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness in the relationship, then whatever I do seems to be full of healing. Then simply my presence is releasing and helpful ... At those moments it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other*" (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 137).

Working at relational depth goes beyond this concept of 'presence' to involve both client and counsellor in a "*touching of souls*" relationship (Cooper, 2005a, p. 92) or "*co-presence*" (p. 94). Training involves encouragement to listen holistically, tuning in to the client, being fearless about what one hears and one's own reaction. Students receive feedback on the degree to which they use their selves in the relationship. Working at relational depth feels satisfying for students who often describe themselves as 'privileged' to have worked with clients who have trusted them with their deepest selves.

Using oneself appropriately in the counselling relationship can involve intuitive sharing of aspects of one's inner process. This has clear implications for self-awareness and personal development. Unless students have worked through their own traumas and discovered their own blind spots and prejudices they can feel vulnerable in such a deep counselling relationship. The counsellor's self, her main counselling tool, is more complex than students may initially realise. They need to have explored and accepted what Mearns and Thorne (2000) describe as 'configurations of self' and Rowan (1990) calls 'sub-personalities' in order to meet the corresponding inner 'parts' of their clients. Jones (1996, p. 3) differentiates between general personal growth and professional personal development which is "*a purposeful process, within the overall aim of professional development, in the service of clients and within the ethics and practice of counselling*". Wilkins (1997) believes that personal and professional development cannot be separated as professional practice always involves the use of self and therefore the learning about self. Buchanan and Hughes (1999, p. 23) describe the emotional baggage which trainee counsellors bring with them into training as "*the collection of side effects, fears, memories and habits we have accumulated from disagreeable experiences, or often, simply life itself*". Wilkins (1997) defines personal growth as "*the process of attending to our own needs in such a way as to increase our ability to be with our clients in a way that is not only safe for both parties but which incrementally improves our effectiveness*"(p. 9). For this reason the BACP requires from its accredited counsellors on-going personal and professional development. As Mearns (1994, p. 40) points out, we can fortunately be effective counsellors without having become absolutely perfect human beings!

At CESCO personal development groups were the designated place for gaining in the kind of self-awareness which working at relational depth requires. Personal development was unique to each person but membership of a small group, meeting consistently over an academic year, encouraged a sense of safety in which students were free to explore aspects of themselves without fear of criticism or ridicule. They also learned from each other's experience. The personal development group, the use

of which was often misunderstood in the initial years of training, became of increasing importance to students as they began placements, struggled with new theory and the demanding academic requirements of the course. In their small, safe groups they could explore the impact of training on their self-concept, on their personal relationships and feel supported in their lives within and outside the course.

By the stage of post-graduate training the role of the tutor in the personal development group was understood. I was a member of the group and modelled sharing of my self. I was not viewed with suspicion as an assessor of self-awareness and personal development. The belief at CESCO was that a student's level of personal development was visible in their practical work, which was regularly assessed.

As a tutor in the personal development group I aimed to provide a safe environment, paralleling that of the counselling relationship, in which students felt understood, experienced empathy and unconditional acceptance (the core conditions). In practice, when a group was successful, the core conditions were offered just as much to me. I also aimed to hold the boundaries, an important aspect of psychological safety, again paralleled in counselling relationships. For example, I managed the time as I would in a counselling session although in many groups this became a shared responsibility. The personal development groups were modelled on the 'encounter' groups or 'sensitivity' groups which were widespread in the 70s and 80s, particularly in America, as part of the growing humanistic movement. Rogers (1969) described encounter groups as intensive groups which could enable participants to interact with each other more openly and deeply than ordinary society allowed. A wide variety of such groups, operating along similar principles, had developed from the 'T' or Training groups established in industry to help managers to become more sensitive to the needs of their employees. At the University of Chicago Rogers established groups to help students preparing to be counsellors. He disliked the word 'training'. "*Training implies a person proficient in some trade or art or work which he can then use occupationally. But one cannot 'train' an individual to be a person*" (Rogers, 1969, p. 152).

Rogers' research into encounter groups (1969) confirmed his belief that, with person-centred facilitation, and gradual development of group trust, participants could meet themselves and each other at a deep level. The fact that "*individuals come to know themselves and each other more fully than is possible in the usual social or working relationships*" (p. 305) seemed to him to be "*one of the most central, intense, and change-producing aspects of group experience*" (ibid.). Rogers

observed and described aspects of group process which were similar to that of some personal development groups to which I have belonged. There was no agenda and students could choose their level of contribution. Most students became gradually more willing to share current feelings and issues of real importance coming out from behind defensive masks. They offered each other supportive feedback and gentle challenge. They grew close to each other and often kept in contact during the week and after the end of the course.

Criticism and angry confrontation can be experienced in personal development groups, with some students left badly hurt and retreating again behind their defences if the relationship conflicts are left unresolved. The level of potential growth can depend very much, I believe, on the skill of the facilitator and the particular mix of personalities within the group.

Students were required to keep a learning record and were encouraged to write a personal journal throughout the two years. Both encouraged the reflexivity which counsellors require in their practice. The learning record, which was seen regularly by tutors and handed in along with all assessed work for external examiners to see, was complemented by the personal journal in which students could explore their reactions, insights, and feelings privately. Both pieces of writing provided further opportunities for personal and professional growth. The potential for growth occurs across every aspect of a counselling course, from discussion in the coffee break, in tutorials and through private study.

I have so far described the counselling course prior to the introduction of Person-Centred Expressive Therapy.

Summary

The role of the professional counsellor and the purpose of counselling have gradually evolved, from early informal beginnings, with guidance in Britain from the British Association for Counselling (now the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy). Counselling differs from the use of counselling skills in other helping roles.

The literature on counsellor training communicates an evolving understanding of what constitutes effective counsellor training. There is minimal focus in the literature on the importance of creativity or the arts in training.

There is considerable variety in length and content of training courses to meet the growing demand for counsellors. The course at CESCO, University of Durham, is informed by the three strands of theory, internal and external counselling practice and personal development. It derives from humanistic philosophy, particularly Rogers' belief in the actualising tendency of every human being. The foundation of teaching is Rogers' understanding of a therapeutic relationship based on the core conditions. The course is eclectic, and integrative, drawing on counselling models which support humanistic values.

Skills taught include the ability to work with clients at relational depth. Weekly personal development groups supplement the self-awareness gained throughout the course.

Chapter 3

Person-Centred Counselling and Person-Centred Expressive Therapy

Introduction

In this chapter I place Natalie Rogers' work with the expressive arts, as she does herself (2000), into the context of person-centred therapy. *"The person-centred aspect of expressive arts therapy describes the basic philosophy underlying my work ... Carl Rogers' philosophy is based on a trust in an inherent impulse towards growth in every individual. I base my approach to expressive arts therapy on this very deep faith in the innate capacity of each person to reach toward her full potential"* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 3).

I provide the reader with my understanding of person-centred counselling and of how Natalie Rogers built on its foundation.

.....

In a BACP survey of members in 2001, 35.6% claimed to be mainly person-centred practitioners, demonstrating the influence of Carl Rogers' theory almost a hundred years after his birth. It has been of widespread international and interdisciplinary significance.

"The attitudinal values of the person-centred approach, while having therapeutic application, actually extend beyond that into all situations in which people are required to work together, where the forming of human relationships is a crucial part of a particular endeavour" (Bryant-Jefferies, 2004, p. 8).

In a review of Rogers' life and work on the one hundredth anniversary of his birth Kirschenbaum (2004) describes his journey over six decades, from a theological student taking supplementary psychology courses to an eminent leader of international workshops for peace.

Rogers acknowledged the influence of numerous psychologists on his thinking, for example Taft (1933)¹⁰ and Gendlin (1962)¹¹ but his theory developed as much from his extensive clinical practice

¹⁰ Taft's 'relationship therapy' focused more on the client's insights within the relationship than in exploring the past.

¹¹ Gendlin believed that the client has a 'felt sense' of a situation which we need to express symbolically; after accurate symbolisation a shift occurs in the felt sense. This is the basis of all therapeutic movement.

and research in the Universities of Ohio, Chicago and Wisconsin. He was the first person to record and publish complete client cases and conducted scientific research by classifying counsellor responses. Gradually he articulated in fifteen books and numerous articles his evolving thoughts about counselling and psychotherapy.

After establishing the Center for Studies of the Person in La Jolla, California, Rogers' influence spread more broadly into the fields of education, groupwork and relationships between nations. For this reason Rogers eventually used the term person-centred rather than client-centred to describe his work.

Students are often drawn to the Person-Centred approach to counselling after reading 'On Becoming a Person' (Rogers, 1961). In a very readable style Rogers presents a form of therapy which acknowledges the inherent worth of every client and his/her capacity for self-direction. This feels so different from the labelling of 'patients' as neurotic, psychotic, schizophrenic or paranoid, by a mental health expert. Other students have experienced Person-Centred Counselling from a client perspective and personally appreciated its effectiveness. They have experienced the warm respect of counsellors who have accepted their issues without judgement and supported them in finding their own solutions to their difficulties in living.

Carl Rogers developed what came to be known as Person-Centred Therapy throughout his working life as a psychologist. In his doctoral research, completed in 1931, he was already exploring his idea that a person could be understood from listening to his own perspective rather than from external observation and diagnosis. This was in strong conflict with the prevailing therapeutic practices of the time, both psychodynamic and behavioural. In 1940 Rogers first presented his new and controversial approach to therapy which he continued to research and develop until his death in 1987 at the age of 85 (Rogers, 1942, p. 444).

Initially known as Nondirective Therapy the focus was on the client's capacity to discover his own solutions and optimum direction for his life. This was the outworking of Rogers' humanistic belief in the inherent impulse of all living things towards reaching full potential, what Rogers calls 'the actualizing tendency'. The behaviourists' belief that a counsellor can help to re-programme a conditioned individual and direct him/her towards a more effective way of living was replaced by Rogers (1980) by a belief in the client's wisdom and his ability to choose his own destiny.

“The construct of the actualizing tendency for the human being is the clear foundation block in individual therapy” (Bozarth, 1998, p. 6).

If the counsellor really believes this construct, a non-directive approach towards the client is essential, the counsellor’s role being to facilitate the client’s actualizing process. The focus then becomes the method of achieving this.

Rogers wrote in 1942 *“This newer approach differs from the older one in that it has a genuinely different goal. It aims directly towards the greater independence and integration of the individual rather than hoping that such results will accrue if the counsellor assists in solving the problem. The individual and not the problem is the focus”* (p. 28).

The role of the counsellor in the person-centred tradition became more of a gardener than a teacher, the aim being to provide a therapeutic relationship, a fertile soil, in which the client’s own healing resources could be re-stimulated, and growth occur.

The practice of non-directive counselling was implicit although never formalized in Rogers’ writing and has been much misunderstood by his critics. How is it possible, they ask, for counsellors to be non-directive? Surely, even in choosing which part of the client’s statement to reflect, they are being subtly directive.

Brodley (2000) clarifies that non-directivity is an attitude, communicating respect for the client’s autonomy, rather than a behaviour. Furthermore it cannot be equated with lack of influence and passivity in the counsellor.. Person-centred counsellors are very actively involved and inevitably influential in the counselling process. *“The aim is not to control the process but to provide the conditions for its expression and to accompany it with humility”* (Merry, 2000).

Rogers’ main contribution to the practice of Person-Centred counselling was his research into the kind of relationship which would enable the client to release his own resources and to move in the direction of autonomy and full functioning (Rogers, 1957).

Rogers’ description of what constituted a therapeutic relationship was of far-reaching influence, not just in the world of therapy but across the helping professions and particularly into education. He believed that the quality of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students is crucial in

learning. “*The facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between the facilitator and the learner*” (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 305). The nature of the therapeutic relationship is based on the presence of six conditions. In 1957 Rogers most clearly stated these six necessary conditions for therapeutic personality change. Their importance in the teaching at CESCO was so great that I reproduce them in full (Rogers, 1957, p. 95):

- 1 *Two persons are in psychological contact*
- 2 *The first, whom we shall term the client, is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable and anxious.*
- 3 *The second person, whom we shall term the therapist, is congruent or integrated in the relationship.*
- 4 *The therapist experiences unconditional positive regard for the client.*
- 5 *The therapist experiences an empathic understanding of the client’s internal frame of reference, and endeavours to communicate this to the client.*
- 6 *The communication to the client of the therapist’s empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard is to a minimal extent achieved.*

Truax and Carkhuff (1967, p. 25) highlighted three of these (i.e. 3, 4 and 5) as central or core conditions, which they believed to be “*emphasised by all the bewildering array of theories*”. They called them:-

- Accurate empathy
- Non-possessive warmth
- Authenticity/genuineness

Rogers defined these three conditions more fully, clarifying that they refer to the therapist’s attitudes or way of being. “*Congruence is more a state of being (congruent or integrated) which is only communicated if appropriate ..., whilst UPR and empathy are states and experiencing which need to be communicated to or experienced by the client*” (Tudor (2000, p. 35). Tudor (ibid.) explains how the six conditions, although varying in degree within any relationship, develop as a relationship evolves, becoming co-created by client and therapist.

Rogers went much further than outlining the six necessary conditions for therapeutic growth. He made a huge and frequently challenged claim that if these conditions were present over a sufficient

period of time they were sufficient in themselves to achieve personality change in the client (Rogers, 1957).

Bozarth (1998, p. 104) makes it clear that Rogers' statement about the necessity of six conditions for therapeutic change to occur (Rogers, 1957, p. 95) refers to all effective helping relationships, formal and informal.

Many therapists dispute Rogers' claim that the six conditions are, of themselves, sufficient. Lazarus (cited in Bozarth, 1998, p. 4) believed that they were a useful starting point for therapy while Norcross (1992) agreed that they were necessary but seldom sufficient. Mearns and Thorne (1988, p. 2) criticised counsellors who describe themselves as person-centred while moving far beyond trust in the six conditions as sufficient, practitioners who *"seem to believe that by sticking the label person-centred on themselves they have the licence to follow the most bizarre promptings of their own intuition or to create a veritable smorgasbord of therapeutic approaches which smack of eclecticism at its most irresponsible"*.

As I have stated on page 37, the claim to be a person-centred practitioner is widespread, although, in my experience, this can mean many different things. Sanders (2000, p. 68) makes a useful distinction between primary and secondary principles of the person-centred approach - *"In order to be in the 'family' of therapies identified as 'person-centred', theory and practice must be based on all of the primary principles Secondary principles can be held as the basis for theory and practice as desired"*. Primary principles include a belief in the primacy of the actualising tendency, of a non-directive attitude towards the client's content, and all Rogers' conditions.

Ellis, a key Rational Emotive Behavior Therapist (REBT), challenges the widespread belief that the relationship between client and counsellor is always the main agent of change, putting his faith instead in theory and skills. He acknowledges the value of the relationship *"if the therapist has a specific theory and if he or she has workable techniques and skills, to bring to the therapeutic relationship"* (Ellis, 1999, p. 86).

He strongly disagreed that a close relationship between client and therapist was a *"necessary and sufficient condition of therapeutic personality change"* (Rogers, 1957, p. 95). *"Granted that these six therapeutic conditions are usually desirable, obviously thousands of therapists have considerably*

helped their clients when several of these conditions – or even all of them – did not exist” (ibid., p. 89). Counsellors, he believes, are not always empathic or congruent.

I find it difficult, however, to imagine how I might find a judgemental counsellor helpful or a counsellor who fails to understand my meaning. I know from experience how I have walked away from an incongruent therapist in whom I could have no trust.

From research which shows that the success rate across all schools of theory is similar (Luborsky, Singer and Luborsky, cited in Smith and Glass, 1977) comes a belief in the centrality of the therapeutic relationship. Ellis dismisses these findings, arguing that clients might feel better but questioning whether their symptoms have diminished or whether any psychological gains can be maintained over time. *“So relating well to clients is an important part of a therapists’ method. In regard to clients feeling better, both during and after therapy, it may well be the most important part. In regard to their getting better, it is still important, but not crucial or necessary” (ibid., p. 93).*

I notice how I react to the concepts of “getting better” and “success rates” which contrast strongly with Bozarth’s poem below (1998, p. iii):

“The Validity of the Moment

I know not what you will do or become at this moment or beyond;

I know not what I will do except stay with you

at this moment;

And be mother, father, sister, brother, friend, child and lover

at this moment;

I exist for you and with you

at this moment;

I give you all of me

at this moment;

I am you at this moment;

Take me and use me

at this moment

To be whatever you can become

at this moment and beyond.”

The person-centred counsellor has no desire to be an expert, no plan of action, but certainly, as I believe this poem shows, a great need for self-awareness and on-going personal development.

David Howe (1999, p. 97) argues that it is not just the presence of the therapist's qualities which are crucial but "*the mutual involvement and collaboration of both therapist and client*" or what is known as the therapeutic alliance. I believe that Rogers' condition of client and counsellor being in psychological contact implies the mutuality of their involvement. Howe elaborates on the meaning of the therapeutic alliance more than Rogers, however, pointing to a need for the client to have a reasonable IQ, to be motivated and willing to self-disclose. There is "*a willingness to be open about their issues and to be committed to the process and, certainly amongst counsellors, an acknowledgement of the client's readiness, or otherwise, for counselling which includes a willingness to be open about their issues*" (ibid.).

Interestingly, Mearns, a highly influential counsellor in the person-centred tradition, adds a fourth core condition to the three core conditions of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence, "*sufficiency of the therapeutic context*" (2003, p. 115). This refers to the level of the therapist's commitment for clients who need much more than the usual once a week 50-minute session, such as those with a high level of disturbance.

When students first learn about these three core conditions they tend to see them as separate counsellor attitudes which can be relatively easily learned. By the end of post-graduate training many have begun to understand their inter-relationship and how difficult in practice they are to achieve. Although volumes have been written about them by eminent therapists, I am choosing to describe them using Rogers' own words - Empathy "*means entering the private perceptual world of the other ... being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person. ... It means sensing meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover totally unconscious feelings*" (Rogers, C., 1980, p. 142).

The counsellor tries to experience the world as the client sees it, which is to become client-centred.

Rogers stressed that the counsellor needs to experience the client's frame of reference as if it were his own, not getting lost in the client's world and very much in touch also with his own experiencing.

Rogers frequently used a particular form of response to check and assist his level of empathy. This became known to Rogers' consternation as the technique of reflection, which can become almost a parrot-like repetition of the client's words. As Bozarth (1998, p. 61) explains: "*Repetition is not empathy. It is a way to help the therapist to become more empathic. Empathy is not reflection. Empathy is a process of the therapist entering the world of the client 'as if' the therapist were the client. Reflection is a technique that may aid the process*". In fact, empathy need not be verbally expressed at all, and yet experienced by the client.

Rogers (1978, p. 10) gives a description of unconditional positive regard, also known as acceptance or prizing. "*It involves the therapist's willingness for the client to be whatever feeling is going on at that moment – confusion, resentment, fear, anger, courage, love or pride. It is a non-possessive caring. The therapist prizes the client in a total rather than a conditional way*".

Freedom from judgement, a new experience for most clients, enables them to be less defensive, more open about their feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

Rogers' critics point to the impossibility of achieving unconditional positive regard for all clients. They misunderstand what Rogers is saying; to the extent to which this, and the other core conditions, can be achieved, therapeutic change will occur.

Transparency is one word which Rogers used to communicate his understanding of congruence, the core condition most controversial and difficult to conceptualise. "*The term transparent catches the flavour of this element – the therapist makes herself transparent to the client; the client can see right through what the therapist is in the relationship; the client experiences no holding back on the part of the therapist*" (ibid., p. 8)

Sanders (2006, p. 56) is helpful about what congruence means in practice – "*What I am talking about here is honesty in the way that I present myself, i.e. not pretending or making myself out to be something I'm not.*"

Rogers defined a congruent therapist as one in whom "*the feelings the therapist is experiencing are available to his awareness, and he is able to live these feelings, be them, able to communicate them if appropriate.*" (1961, p. 61)

Haugh (2001a), p. 117) believes that the definition of congruence as “*experience being available to awareness*” is “*overly simplistic*”, belonging to a different scientific era, a different paradigm. She believes that congruence “*depends on a person’s ability, learnt and developed, (original emphasis) to be open to their experiential field.*” (ibid., p. 127).

For me as a counsellor the crux is awareness of my inner process, which the arts, I believe, can help to develop.

The classic person-centred understanding of congruence is that it refers only to “*the therapist’s inner subjective state or condition while she (sic) is providing acceptant empathic understanding.*” (Brodley, cited in Bozarth, 1998, p. 74). There is no requirement to demonstrate congruence verbally, for example.

Wilkins (2003, p.82) shares this view – “*Being congruent is not the same as self-disclosure.*” In my view self-disclosure can be an example of congruence when what is disclosed relates to the co-constructed relationship. For example, I might occasionally offer an image which emerges strongly for me in response to my client. All self-disclosure needs to be used in a disciplined, aware manner for the benefit of the client which is inevitably a matter of judgement and dependent on the counsellor’s level of self-awareness.

In practice congruence means to me:-

- an awareness of my inner experience, especially when counselling.
- a resolve to be honest with myself.
- a desire to be authentic and open with others.
- a willingness to risk sharing experience arising from within the therapeutic relationship.

The concept of the core conditions represented, at the time of Rogers writing, an enormous challenge to the current power and control of the therapists. How different this was from Freud’s belief that “*The great majority of people have a strong need for authority which they can admire, to which they can submit. ... It is the longing of the father that lives in each of us from his childhood days*” (quoted in Rogers, 1977, p. 16).

CESCO tutors worked towards embodiment of these core conditions in their attitude to students, as well as in their clinical practice. I have noticed the way students blossom in a non-judgemental

atmosphere where tutors come across as open and real and acknowledge each person's experience as valid.

The importance of the core conditions, the quality of the therapeutic relationship, accounts for the high level of time spent on personal development in counsellor training courses at CESCO and on humanistic courses generally. A counsellor needs firstly to be in good relationship with herself (congruent) which comes about as she gains in self-awareness and in making an active choice about the direction of her life. *"With greater self-awareness, a more informed choice is possible, a choice more free from introjects (i.e. early influences, messages from parents, teachers), a conscious choice that is even more in tune with the evolutionary flow"* (Rogers, C., 1980, p. 127).

In learning person-centred theory students need to understand not only the centrality of the therapeutic relationship but also Rogers' understanding of how human beings flourish and fail to flourish. Rogers' belief in the actualising tendency process, the need which all people have to become what he calls 'fully functioning' adults, is accompanied by a belief that every-one needs to feel loved and valued.

How is it that, if a person's destiny is to become the best person that he can be, fully functioning, that he arrives for counselling confused, despairing, suicidal? If his experience is the touchstone of his life, as humanists believe, how is it that the client is out of touch with his feelings? What has gone wrong? Rogers' answer is that his deep need to be loved, beginning from birth when he is vulnerable and totally dependent on parents or other adults, over-rides his organismic experiencing of an event. Experience is distorted to maintain the self-concept. Rogers' belief in the actualising tendency, the natural motivation of human beings towards full potential, is accompanied by a belief that every-one needs to feel loved and valued. Carl Rogers (1969, p. 243) gives a simple example of a small child pulling his baby sister's hair. I like this example; I can imagine the child hating this tiny usurper; his angry feeling is valid, his action true to himself. I see the parents rushing in, hearing the baby's screams, furious with the small child. The child's satisfaction with hitting is replaced by a feeling of guilt as he introjects his parents' opinion of him as 'bad'. He has realised that his parents' love is conditional on him not pulling the baby's hair. He accepts this 'condition of worth' and believes that his gut feelings of hatred must have been wrong. So he learns to mistrust his gut feeling, a process which Rogers describes as adopting an external locus of evaluation rather than trusting his own values of what is right and wrong (internal locus of evaluation).

A constant barrage of introjects as he grows up gradually influences the child's 'self-concept' or understanding of his own identity. He believes wholeheartedly that 'I am this kind of person or that kind of person'. He believes himself perhaps to be generous and when he acts generously he feels comfortable, or congruent, with himself. If, however, he believes himself to be hardworking, as his parents demanded of him, and he is one day accused of being lazy he is defensive. The accusation threatens his self-concept; he becomes anxious, thinks less of himself, experiences incongruence. *"Thus from the time of the first selective perception in terms of conditions of worth, the states of incongruence between self and experience, of psychological maladjustment and of vulnerability, exist to some degree"* (Rogers, C., 1980, p. 239).

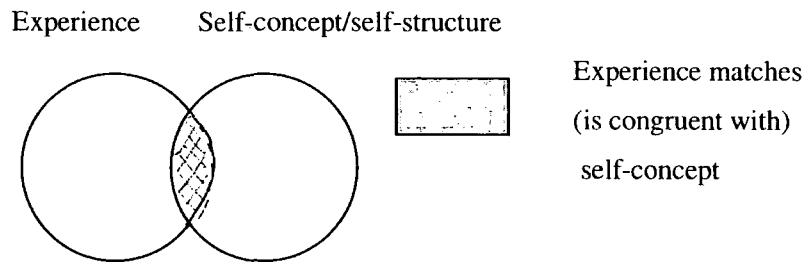
McLeod (1993a, p. 67) summarises *"Incongruence is the very broad term used to describe the whole range of problems which clients bring to counselling"*.

Trainee counsellors learn to recognise conditions of worth within themselves and their clients. Within a training environment or relationship characterised by unconditional positive regard, people are free to evaluate their values in accordance with their experience and rediscover their inner locus of evaluation. Their self-concept changes to some extent and people feel less defensive, more open to their experience as it really is. To the extent that they experience positive regard (for example, from tutors, peers, counsellors) they become more accepting of themselves and able to offer acceptance to others.

Purton (2000, p. 18) makes an important point. *"We don't introject attitudes except where there is an important emotional connection with a person who embodies the introjected attitude"*.

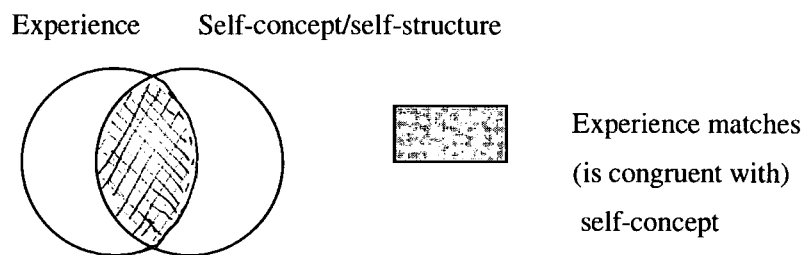
The self-concept, or self-structure, evolves only in part from conditions of worth imposed by family and cultural expectations and introjected into the self as part of our personality. Some of the ways in which we understand ourselves and our place in the world arise from personal experience. We experience life through our senses, internal feelings and bodily sensations. Whatever our experience, it is free from value judgement, being neither good nor bad.

Incongruence, or a feeling of psychological pain, arises when there is a clash between true experience and introjected values. (The following diagrams are adapted from Rogers, 1951, pp. 526-527).



In many clients there is only a relatively small area of the personality in which experience matches with the self-concept, therefore considerable psychological dis-ease.

Tolan (2003, p. 6) acknowledges the importance of the self structure's ability to distort or deny experience in order to survive as a child. She also emphasises the difficulty in changing long-held and strongly defended beliefs which are part of the structure of the self, some of which may no longer be in awareness. In a relationship in which there is a sense of psychological safety, freedom from threat, experience is less easily denied or distorted. The client can re-evaluate aspects of her self-structure. This can happen when people fall in love and experience being prized by their lover. Within a therapeutic relationship, characterised by Rogers' six conditions, incongruent aspects of our personality can very gradually change as the actualising tendency is accelerated.



There is now more overlap of experience and self-concept, a more congruent personality, less psychological pain.

Cooper (2005a, p. 91) challenges Rogers' belief in the influence of the child's need for positive regard- "*The development of the individual's concept of self is not primarily derived from positive regard considerations*". Negative beliefs about self can arise, for example, from comparing ourselves with others, e.g., "Sally is outgoing and makes friends easily. I am not like that." Rogers would argue that this is a fact derived from experience and therefore a congruent part of the self-concept. The notion that we have one self-concept is also challenged by Cooper (2005) as it has been by many theorists (configurations of self - Mearns and Thorne, 2000, sub-personalities - Rowan,

1990). Rogers himself mentions briefly the possibility of “*many specific selves in each of various life contexts*” (1959, p. 203). Most counsellors would, I believe, recognise the ‘part’ of the client which doesn’t want to change.

Rogers (1961, p. 131) describes seven stages of personality change which might illustrate a client’s gradual and subtle therapeutic process. The person-centred counsellor is aware, however, that each client’s process is unique and that each person needs to go at her own pace.

Tolan (2003, p. 116) stresses that there is a general direction to the process rather than fixed signposts to expect. Counsellors might notice, for example,

From:	To:
Rigidity	Fluidity
External	Internal
Blaming others	Accepting own responsibility
This is how the world is (facts)	This is how I perceive the world (constructs)
Believing in ‘the truth’	Accepting others’ opinions and constructs
Fearing feelings	Accepting feelings
Perceiving own feelings (if at all) as past	Experiencing feelings in the here-and-now
Not believing in own ability to change	Welcoming own capacity for change
Living according to others’ judgements (external focus of evaluation)	Living according to own values and first-hand experience (internal locus of evaluation)
Fearful of the unseen	Unthreatened by changed circumstances
Wanting quick fixes	Working towards long-term solutions
Preferring rules	Preferring flexibility
Set ideas about meaning	Searching for meaning
Predictable and constrained	Spontaneous and creative
Judging success or failure	Believing in growth through experience
Hiding	Being visible
Judging others	Respecting others
Preferring distance	Wanting intimacy

Table 1: The process of counselling (Taken from Tolan, 2003, p. 116).

For such a degree of personality change to occur clearly therapy needs to be long-term. Yet students working in very time-limited counselling placements, such as in G.P. practices (five to eight sessions recommended - Dept. of Health, 2000, p. 7) were able to see the process beginning and to recognise the value of the person-centred approach. Mearns (2003, p. 63) believes that brief work can be effective if this is what a client chooses and if the counsellor “*can manifest strong levels of the therapeutic conditions immediately and consistently*”.

Bryant-Jefferies, in writing about person-centred counselling within the National Health Service (2005) acknowledges another practical dilemma for person-centred counsellors who work with N.H.S. staff for whom a treatment plan has been devised. There is already an agenda externally determined.

Clients can very quickly move from ambivalence towards counselling to interest in self-discovery. Their description of external events and other people change to talking about their own feelings and thoughts as they experience how these are accepted and valued by the counsellor. Talking about their feelings can quite soon change to experiencing feelings within the session. Experiencing feelings can lead to a re-evaluation of a situation or person. I find a close link here with the Re-evaluation Counselling Theory of Jackins (1965) and Heron (2001); they share a belief that discharging feelings is not only cathartic but leads ultimately to re-assessment.

The person-centred approach has been criticised (by, for example, Wheeler, cited in Wilkins, 2003, p. 35) for:-

- 1) being light on theory or anti-intellectual - Rogers’ theory of child development, for example, is limited to his belief in conditions of worth. Wilkins, however, (ibid., p. 41) states his belief that Rogers’ theory of personality, although simply expressed, explains what we need to know about the human personality.
- 2) underestimating the issue of evil – in 1982 May challenged Rogers’ views on human nature as unrealistically optimistic. Rogers’ work to reduce conflict in groups and between nations shows his awareness of how destructive human nature can be. Bozarth (1998, p. 186) explains Rogers’ belief that evil arises from social conditions and from the way we react to introjected values of conditional love - “*The more one becomes what one truly is, the less evil one finds within and the more one*

permits evil feelings to surface the less potent and burdensome they become". Self-actualized people, Rogers believed, were able to stand firm against societal norms.

3) being the product of middle-class American values – Bozarth reminds us (ibid.) that Rogers' theory is organismic, natural and therefore universal. Wilkins (2003, p. 56) argues against the charge that person-centred theory is culture-bound since it has proved of relevance through time, across nations and different religious perspectives.

4) being unsuitable

5) for some client groups - Lambers (2003, pp. 105-109), for example, shows how mental states such as neurosis, psychosis and personality disorder can all be understood from Rogers' theory, even though person-centred counsellors are disinterested in diagnosing and labelling clients. The client's subjective experience is paramount.

Kirschenbaum (2004, p. 123) acknowledges the validity of some criticism "*for Rogers, like any other individual, was a product of his times, with personal and historical limitations*". He adds, "*Rogers' work continues to serve as a foundation for the counselling profession*" (ibid.). It certainly formed the foundation of counsellor training at Durham.

Person-Centred Expressive Therapy

"We can dance what we paint or paint what we dance" (Rogers, N., 1980, p. 194).

In mid-life Carl Rogers' daughter attended classes in both dance and art therapy in the course of what she called her emergence as a woman (Rogers, N., 1980). Once she had overcome her inhibitions she discovered how movement, in particular, could connect her with "*new feelings which can be expressed through art, writing, music or new forms of movement*" (p. 194). This combination of artistic media, which Rogers calls the 'creative connection' forms one foundation stone of what she termed person-centred expressive therapy, the other being her father's humanistic philosophy. "*My father, Carl Rogers, has always been the earth from which my philosophical roots have been nourished. He values the integrity of each individual not only in his words but in his way of being*" (ibid., p. 199).

Natalie Rogers found new ways for herself and for others of gaining the self-awareness which Rogers believed to be a vital ingredient of therapeutic growth. Through her dreams and guided fantasies she experienced images which, when explored, were deeply meaningful in her everyday life. Intrigued by their origin she learned to trust her experience *"How does one describe the presence of a reality that is not visible to the others around? ... If I write it off as false I am closing myself to the possibility that objects can actually become 'present' to us in ways other than our usual day-to-day experience. I wish to stay open to the notion that the rosebud was momentarily there"* (i.e. her image). *"If I trust my experience of it, it was there"* (ibid., p. 158).

Natalie had a more developed interest in the spiritual side of life than her father. LSD *"allowed me to open myself to my unconscious and perhaps awareness of an outer, cosmic consciousness ... Being newly aware of a different kind of energy I can get to that space without drugs - through meditation, dance and movement, sexuality and art"* (ibid., p. 166).

If, as humanistic counsellors, we meet our clients holistically, I believe this needs to include their experience of the spiritual.

As a therapist Natalie Rogers wanted to apply her personal discoveries to her professional work. *"Part of the psychotherapeutic process is to awaken the creative life-force energy. Thus creativity and therapy overlap. What is creative is frequently therapeutic. What is therapeutic is frequently a creative process"* (2000, p. 1). With her daughter she established the Person-Centred Expressive Therapy Institute, which established an international training programme in which the influences of Carl Rogers and Jung are clear. *"In developing a training programme in the expressive arts, my intention has been to offer psychotherapists, mental health professionals, artists, and educators methods that would enhance their work and a place where they could activate their creativity"* (ibid., p. 183).

My PCETI training had added the word 'creativity' to my counselling vocabulary. Although in 1961 Carl Rogers had linked the creative process to *"man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities"* (p. 351) I had not previously made a connection between the self-actualizing process, common to all organic life, and creativity. I now understood that although I was not artistic I was certainly creative. Rogers defined the creative process as *"the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people or circumstances of life on the other"* (ibid.). He believed (1963, p. 47) that

there was an urgent social need for creative individuals who could approach problems flexibly and co-operatively, to counteract cultural and social pressures to conform. Although Rogers was writing in the 1960s I believe that a similar pressure on many people to conform, to be a number, is prevalent today. Especially in the workplace their uniqueness as individuals is over-ridden in the interests of financial profit. (Johanssen, 2005). The freedom to be creative is important for students as people, as well as in their counselling work. In reading 'The Creative Connection' (Rogers, N., 2000) the concept of creativity became much more alive for me.

Natalie Rogers outlines the humanistic principles underlying person-centred expressive therapy:

"All people have an innate ability to be creative" (p. 7).

Many counselling students initially deny that they are creative because they identify, as I did, creativity with being artistic rather than as an expression of the life-force within us and all living things. *"In early times people knew well that dance, song, art, and story-telling were all part of the same process; that of being fully functioning and creatively human"* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. xiv).

"The creative process is healing" (p. 7.)

How can it be healing to paint a picture? I believe that it can be cathartic to express non-verbally what, sometimes, cannot be put into words. Sometimes, as a client notices what he has spontaneously drawn, there is a sudden insight. The insight might emerge only after exploring his painting verbally. At other times there seems to be no intellectual insight yet something has changed. The process of painting has been sufficient to make a difference, perhaps to transform the feeling of sadness or anger or confusion. Similarly, healing can come through movement or a piece of creative writing.

"Personal growth and higher states of consciousness are achieved through self-awareness, self-understanding and insight" (p. 7).

A student thanked me for helping her spirituality. I was amazed, not having overtly shared any of my religious views with her. Later I understood that she had connected with her spiritual self through the expressive arts I had encouraged on the course.

"Self-awareness, understanding and insight are achieved by delving into our emotions" (p. 7).

In skills sessions CESCO tutors encouraged students to focus on their client's feelings rather than the facts. It is how we feel about a situation which is crucial and the arts can very quickly cut through intellectualising about a situation to the underlying feelings.

“Our feelings and emotions are an energy source” (p. 8).

Certainly I understand anger to be a source of energy, fuelling such social movements as the abolition of slavery and apartheid. Guilt can propel us into behaving more in accordance with our own values. I am not sure that I agree that all our feelings are a source of energy.

“The expressive arts ... lead us into the unconscious” (p. 8).

Person-centred therapists generally prefer not to use the concept of the unconscious, a Freudian term which is “ill-suited to an organismic view of the world.” (Mearns and Thorne, 1988, p. 95). Natalie Rogers, influenced in her thinking by Jung has no such qualms. An exercise, for example, which I learned in my PCETI training involved discovery of our ‘shadow’ side, disowned or unknown aspects of ourselves which are powerful in our lives.

“Art modes interrelate in what I call the creative connection” (p. 8).

Each art form stimulates another so that an issue explored, for example, in painting can then be developed further in movement and even further through creative writing. I call this a layered approach to the arts.

“A connection exists between our life-force, our inner core, or soul - and the essence of all beings. Therefore, as we journey inward to discover our essence or wholeness, we discover our relatedness to the outer world” (p. 8).

Natalie Rogers has experienced clients who imaged cross-cultural symbols and believes, as did Jung, that these arise from a collective unconscious. She believes (2000, p. 199) that immersion in the creative process can lead people into an altered state of consciousness. As they become deeply immersed in painting or movement they no longer focus on everyday concerns. In this state they can go, she posits, “*beyond the personal*” into the impersonal (ibid.). She writes (p. 202) “*the creative process is a path to finding the divine self*” - a very strong claim.

Unfortunately, as Natalie Rogers acknowledges, there are blocks to our creativity. Carl Rogers believed that, in order to be creative, we need to be non-defensive, open to experience and to have an internal locus of evaluation, rather than a desperate need for the approval of others. Externally we need an atmosphere of psychological safety in which we feel understood and not judged. Often in childhood our singing or painting is criticized, which blocks our creative expression. We also need what Carl Rogers describes as psychological freedom. Some behaviours are frowned upon in society,

such as punching the person who angers us or stealing from a person we envy. As Natalie Rogers points out, there is no limit to symbolic expression through movement, painting or creative writing. To the need for psychological safety and psychological freedom Natalie Rogers added a third requirement for facilitating creativity in others “*offering stimulating and challenging experiences*” (ibid., p. 14). “*Psychological safety and psychological freedom are the soil and nutrients for creativity, but seeds must be planted*” (ibid., p. 17). Working alongside her father in person-centred workshops Natalie thought something was missing (ibid.). Creativity was discussed rather than experienced.

In my own person-centred arts training I experienced numerous “*stimulating and challenging experiences*” in the form of group exercises. Structure of any kind was frowned upon by some fellow students as being inconsistent with person-centred practice. The exercises were directive, imposed on us from the trainers’ agenda, they argued, rather than arising from our concerns. Yet, when we were presented with a structure I noticed that we all used it in our unique ways. Raskin (2004) addresses the issue of introducing direction into a person-centred approach. Not only Natalie Rogers but also Gendlin¹² (1978) and Prouty¹³ (1976) have been criticized by purist person-centred practitioners such as Bozarth and Merry. Raskin (2004) acknowledges that Natalie Rogers, Gendlin and Prouty are not forcing ideas or actions onto clients and that their intention is “*to further some goal which is seen as a desirable outcome of client-centred work*” (p. 239). In Natalie Rogers’ work her goal is to encourage greater creativity. Nevertheless, Raskin adds (ibid., p. 239) “*While these innovators believe they are being consistent with client-centred ideology and that they are furthering a client-centred process, other students of the approach believe that they do violence (my emphasis) to basic person-centred tenets*”.

Wilkins (2003, p. 7) makes a useful distinction between directing the content and process. There is a need, he believes, for “*processing of the non-directive attitude at the level of content but not necessarily at the level of process. It is permissible for the therapist to be an expert process-director*”. Warner (cited in Wilkins, 2003, p. 9) has identified five levels of therapeutic intervention, three of which he considers to deserve to be called person-centred. Level one is classic client-centred practice, in which the counsellor moves as fully as possible into the client’s frame of reference. At

¹² In Gendlin’s ‘experiential psychotherapy’ the client is directed towards an internal ‘felt-sense’ of a situation or relationship.

¹³ Prouty’s client-centred ‘pre-therapy’ enables clients, who find it difficult, to make contact with reality, other people, their own feelings. They are directed towards awareness of their experience through ‘contact reflections’.

level three *“the therapist brings material into the therapeutic relationship in ways that foster the client’s choice as to whether and how to use such material”*. Wilkins (2003, p. 11) places PCET at this level, *“well within the boundaries of person-centred therapy”*. *“‘Dance with me’ or ‘Draw with me’ seem to have no greater weight than ‘Talk to me’”* (ibid., p. 91).

I believe that teaching the expressive arts in a group situation necessitates exercises. Ideally, in counselling practice, when art materials are available, the client can choose to use them or not. In practice, however, I have discovered the client’s expectation to talk about their issues. Unless I took the initiative in introducing them they never used art materials. It was as if they needed permission. I agree with Natalie Rogers that introducing them into a counselling session requires practice, and a confident attitude. *“It takes practice to feel self-confident and to learn to be creative in quickly designing an experience that might be useful for the client”* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 110)

Natalie Rogers is acting in what she believes to be the client’s best interests yet there is a flavour of the expert in the devising of a suggested “experience”. This equates for me with the Gestalt ‘experiment’ of two-chair work which many counsellors, including me, invite clients to try. In my own practice I feel uncomfortable in devising experiences for clients, although I certainly introduce arts materials into sessions. Sometimes I begin to draw, explaining to my client that an image has come into my mind which might be helpful. Or I draw an image she has introduced, asking “Is it anything like this?” Often this gives my client permission to begin drawing. I might pick up an object from my collection of miniatures and invite my client to choose one which represents herself in her current situation. “And which miniature might represent your boss/father/daughter/abuser?” I might ask. I might offer the concept of ritual to a client who wants to let go of an aspect of herself or a relationship. With some clients intuition leads me to stay with words alone. Where I offer materials I am tentative and empathic with the client’s reaction. Where clients come to work specifically with the arts I feel completely free to work with a whole range of creative media.

The advantages of working with the arts far outweigh for me the discomfort of taking the risk to offer them and the criticism of straying from a purely person-centred approach. My research shows how these benefits manifested themselves through students’ experiences of working with the expressive arts. It also illustrates the many blocks to creativity which Natalie Rogers describes (2000, pp. 18-25) and which many students experienced.

Silverstone (1997) agrees with Natalie Rogers that 'talking about' is not always therapeutic. When a client talks about a problem she can stay in left brain mode, making no connection with repressed material on her right side. Integration between both sides of the brain can occur when images are made visible in art form.

This understanding of a dichotomy between right and left brain modes arises from Sperry's research (cited in Silverstone, 1997, p. 4), mainly at the California Institute of Technology, in which he showed that the two hemispheres of the brain each perceive reality differently. The left brain is concerned with logical thinking, analysing, judging and the use of language. In problem-solving we generally employ the characteristics of the left brain as we plan list, organise, prioritize. In contrast, from the right brain come our spatial, spontaneous, intuitive, creative, non-judgemental and non-verbal characteristics – abilities which are so apparent in children's play yet often dismissed as frivolous and unreliable as we grow older. "*Modern society discriminates against the right hemisphere*" Sperry wrote (quoted in Silverstone, 1997, p. 4). This particularly applies in education, even in primary education, where art, music and drama are relegated to extra-mural activities for the privileged few.

Silverstone's experience of incorporating art into person-centred therapy led her to write:

"It is my hope that ever more counselling courses may incorporate the creative therapies, of which art is one, in their training programmes as an invaluable means towards integration and growth." (1997, p. 9). She made a plea that the right side of the brain be incorporated into all aspects of counselling, including counselling training.

Jennings (quoted in Palmer, Dainow and Milner, 1996, p. 161) helped me to realise that the activity of counselling is in itself a creative act. "*All approaches that facilitate personal growth, insight, and change of any kind must perforce involve creativity*". Creativity seemed to be a key concept for students training to be counsellors, a concept of which I had been ignorant as both counsellor and trainer.

Carl Rogers was influenced by the emergence of play therapy as a means of helping children to work through emotional issues. Gomez (1997, p. 45) described the value of play therapy: "*Spontaneous play is the child's natural way of externalising his preoccupations and working through his anxieties, and offers a window on his psychological processes*". Person-centred expressive therapy uses many

of the materials provided by the play therapist for children, giving permission to people of all ages to play. I had not realised this connection prior to my research.

Different approaches to play therapy developed from the interpretative approach of Klein to Virginia Axline's focus on the therapeutic relationship and non-directive therapy (1971), echoing Rogers' beliefs (Hughes, 1999).

In writing about creativity Carl Rogers stressed the need for an "*ability to play spontaneously with ideas, colors, shapes, relationships – to juggle elements into impossible juxtapositions, to shape wild hypotheses, to make the given problematic, to express the ridiculous, to translate from one form to another, to transform into improbable equivalents*" (1961, p. 355).

The concept of 'play' in the counselling training arena, particularly within a University context, was something I had not experienced either as student or tutor until now! I saw that person centred expressive therapy could be a channel for reawakening the creative tendency in students who might have long since forgotten how to play. They could then take their playful creativity into the counselling arena. "*Without play, Winnicott suggests, there can be no therapy; when the patient is enabled to play, growth and development naturally follow*" (Gomez, 1997, p. 94).

Summary

I have described key concepts of person-centred counselling as gradually developed by Carl Rogers:-

- a belief in the client's actualising tendency
- the importance for therapeutic change of six conditions
- the centrality of the relationship
- the impact of conditions of worth and introjects

I have indicated some of the signs that a therapeutic process is occurring.

In exploring the origins of PCET I have described its foundations in the philosophy and practice of Carl Rogers. Within a facilitating environment PCET can be used to further personal growth and healing, to connect with the functions of the right side of the brain. The 'creative connection' describes using a combination of the arts in sequence, with an emphasis on process rather than artistic

product. While its use in counselling can be criticised as being directive, I have argued that the therapist influences only the process and not the content of the work.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

Over the past decade, as I have moved from being in my 50s to my 60s, I have become increasingly aware of the way in which everything and every-one influences each other. The way I understand and experience the world is influenced by every person I have ever met, each book I have read, every introject I have taken on board. That the meaning we assign to our experience is socially constructed has become unequivocally clear to me. (Gergen, 1999).

Carl Rogers was impressed by Kelly's personal construct theory. In the 1930s Kelly, an American clinical psychologist, wrote about man (sic) as a scientist trying to make sense of the world. The world can only be known through our constructions of it. A person's construct system represents truth as that individual sees it. It is therefore subjective, resulting from the person's experiences, reactions to them and on what has been prioritized from amongst them.

I am convinced, as Rogers was, that each student's, each client's experience is unique, and I can only understand that experience and the meaning they ascribe to it by listening with full attention to what they choose to share and empathising as fully as I can. (Rogers, 1957).

These beliefs gave me a direction for the type of work I wanted to undertake and part of the purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology I adopted in the context of other possible approaches.

It is not uncommon for writers on research methodology to distinguish between 'positivist' and 'constructivist' approaches. Burns (2000, p. 3) distinguishes between the "*scientific empirical tradition, and the naturalistic phenomenological mode*". Using a scientific method involves quantitative research methods "to establish general laws or principles." The naturalistic approach, which better fits my philosophy, uses qualitative methods to capture the subjective experience of respondents. Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 7) distinguish between an 'objectivist (or positivist) approach to the social world' and the more subjectivist (or anti-positivist) approach'; they describe advocates of the latter as viewing the world "*as being of a much softer, personal and humanly created kind*". O'Leary (2004, pp. 5-8) distinguishes between positivist and post-positivist approaches to

research, the latter denying that the world is knowable and embracing notions of ‘multiple realities’. However, in recent years, several writers such as Pring (2000a, 2000b) and Muijs (2004) have challenged this polarisation as being too simplistic. I propose to describe the traditional distinction which is reflected in many methodology books and books on counselling research before considering the challenges which have been made to this way of conceptualising research methodology.

Kincheloe (2003, p. 71) suggests that in research from a positivist stance society is viewed “*as a body of neutral facts governed by immutable laws*”. This is what Reason and Rowan (1981) describe as Old Paradigm Research, which sprang from the belief of Auguste Comte, a 19th century philosopher, that true reality is based on scientific understanding. In positivist thinking there was no distinction made between research in the physical sciences and the human sciences such as counselling. Anything which could not be proved and understood in scientific terms, such as religion, was considered to be nonsense. It was thought that the positivist researcher must aim to be objective, keep himself and his values invisible, what Giroux calls “*an impossible goal*” (cited in Kincheloe, 2003, p. 76). It is impossible because even when choosing a topic for research the researcher is expressing interest in it. He will already have preconceptions of the topic, have feelings and thoughts about it. “*We can only know the primary world through our interpretations of it and therefore we can never get free of our own interpretations in order to see it clearly*” (Kelly, cited in Kenny, 2004, on-line).

It was thought that in positivist research human beings were often treated as objects, since ethical concerns, based on values, were of no concern. As Kincheloe observes, Old Paradigm Research provided an external body of knowledge almost independent of human beings. “*Positivist culture, Giroux asserts, presents a view of research, knowledge and ethics that has no use for a world where humans decide their own meaning, order their own experiences, or fight against the social forces which crush their efforts to do so*” (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 77).

Kincheloe (2003) is critical of the positivist influence in education which has encouraged a top-down approach to standards, disregarding and often conflicting with the teachers’ experience. Teachers work, as do counsellors, from where people are, acknowledging that each person, each relationship and situation is unique and adapting creatively to it. There is little room for creativity and spontaneity in the traditional positivist approach. Predictability and order are paramount. Authority comes from above, undermining a sense of personal authority. The control, the locus of evaluation, is seen as external, a belief which clashes stridently with the Person-Centred belief in the client’s autonomy and the need for an internal locus of evaluation. As early as the 1700s Vico (cited in Kincheloe, 2003)

was urging a different method of analysing social and cultural phenomena, in which human beings are seen as more than objects to be manipulated.

Constructivism is often seen as an alternative to positivism because it is claimed that truth and meaning are created as people interact with the world. Our constructs are interpretations, opinions, not absolute fact. Constructs which evolved in infancy can be non-verbal. *“Our knowledge may include far more than we can tell”* (Polanyi, 1958, p. 133). Scientists, in what is known as New Paradigm Research (Reason and Rowan, 1981), invent the world as they construe it (Kelly, 1955). As human beings are in a continual process of change, so their constructs are potentially changing, according to life experiences. Kelly qualifies this by pointing out that core constructs, representing a person’s most deeply held values and principles, are unlikely to change, whatever his experiences, as the implications of change are too threatening. Some constructs are internally inconsistent, resulting in what Person-Centred counsellors would call incongruence. Rogers (1980, p. 115) believed that within a relationship characterised by the core conditions a client could reconsider the conditions of worth on which his incongruence was based. Similarly, Kelly believed that *“man can enslave himself with his own ideas and then win his freedom again by reconstruing his life”* (1955, p. 21).

Constructivist beliefs fit well with Rogers’ holistic approach to clients. *“It is the total human who constructs, not merely his brain or his guts”* (Kenny, 1984, on-line). Heron (in Reason and Rowan, 1981) presents a philosophical basis for research within the new paradigm.

As indicated above, this distinction between ‘positivism’ and constructivism’ is often repeated in texts on research methodology. However this polarity, as well as that between ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ methods, have both been challenged. Rowbottom and Aiston (2006, p. 137) comment: *“Educational research has been plagued by dubious bifurcations, the most significant of which is between positivism, according to which social sciences ought to be modelled on the natural sciences, and interpretivism”*.

They acknowledge that different terminology is often used to refer to this distinction, some writers using ‘scientific’ for ‘positivism’, others using the terms ‘interpretative’, ‘constructivist’, ‘emancipatory’ or ‘critical’ for the contrasting paradigms. One of the challenges comes from the view that the polarisation misrepresents science and scientific method. Wellington (2000, p. 16) argues that *“the view that the modern scientist is positivist (even if older science was) is totally false”*. He argues that there is no one scientific method and that there as many methods as there are scientists

(ibid., p. 11). Scientific research may be driven by hypotheses, experiments and controlling variables but that is not always the case. Despite his criticism of the mistaken views of science, Wellington does, in his introductory text book on educational research, provide a diagram which contrasts 'positivist' and 'constructivist' research approaches implying that there is still some value in the distinction.

One set of criticisms of the traditional dichotomy then is based on rejecting the implied view of science. Another set of criticisms comes from rejecting the philosophical assumptions which often underpin what is termed a 'constructivist' approach. These often hinge on rejecting notions of 'truth' and embracing what are seen by writers like Pring (2000) as extreme forms of relativism. Pring recognises the need for the interpretive and hermeneutic tradition in which 'we seek to understand the world from the perspective of the participants, or to understand a set of ideas from within the evolving tradition of which they are part'. However he suggest that such differences in how we understand reality are possible because there are stable and enduring features of reality, independent of us, which make such distinctions possible'.

Muijs (2004, p. 5) also questions 'the gross simplification' that often accompanies the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research. He challenges the common tendency to assume that qualitative researchers all hold the same philosophical views. *"Qualitative methods is an umbrella term for a large number of different research methods (such as participant observation, interviews, case studies, ethnographic research) which are quite different. They are used by researchers with quite different worldviews, some of which clearly lie towards the realistic end of the spectrum. To ascribe radical subjectivist views to all qualitative researchers is a fallacy"*.

Similarly he challenges the view that sees all quantitative research as being of the same kind- *"To label all quantitative researchers positivists is equally inaccurate. Quantitative researchers have taken up many criticisms of positivist views, and there are now a variety of epistemologies underlying theory and practice in quantitative research. I think it is true to say that very few quantitative researchers nowadays are radical positivists"* (ibid.).

Rather than subscribe in absolute terms to either a quantitative or qualitative approach to research it is probably more helpful to think in terms of fitness for purpose; from a pragmatic point of view, choice of methodology will emerge from the particular research questions being addressed rather than a restricted paradigm or set of philosophical assumptions. Also, it may be useful to recognise some

general principles associated with research which hold true whatever the particular approach. Neither quantitative or qualitative researchers presume that certainty is the objective – after all, statistical methods which are central to quantitative research are based on notions of probability, not certainty. That does not mean that it is unacceptable to talk about the pursuit of ‘truth’ even in qualitative approaches. All research in the social sciences, including quantitative approaches, are based on value positions in the way questions are formulated and priorities identified. All research needs to be as systematic and transparent as possible.

Although I have not considered myself to be a philosopher I accept Bateson’s view (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 33) that “*All qualitative researchers are philosophers in that universal sense in which all human beings ... are guided by highly abstract principles*”. The beliefs which I hold about the world and which inform my actions are described as a paradigm – “*All research is interpretative; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied*” (ibid.). The research questions I ask and the interpretations I make are influenced by the paradigm I adopt. My research demonstrates a constructivist paradigm as described by Denzin and Lincoln (ibid., p. 35). “*The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings) and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures*”.

In everyday life, for example, I demonstrate my ontological belief by respecting views which might differ hugely from my own. In my research I therefore value the opinions of all respondents. The personal values I espouse will also reverberate through my research. I value honesty, for example, and reflect this as a counsellor in my attempt to be congruent; as a researcher I aim to make my process transparent.

Research design

In my research, inquiry was seen as co-operative interaction between research and ‘co-researchers’. Just as the researcher is acknowledged to be a self-directing person, so are his co-researchers. “*We can only truly do research with persons if we engage with them as persons, as co-subjects and thus as co-researchers*” (Reason, 1994, p. 10). I needed to invite students to be my co-researchers, to become active in the research. There could be no requirement to take part, no use of my power as a tutor to coerce their participation. They were not co-researchers in what Heron describes as “*a process of co-operative inquiry*” (1981, p. 19); they did not contribute to all stages of thinking and planning. The

research was planned before the course began and my analysis of the data occurred largely after the course was completed. Heron (ibid., p. 22) argues that “*if the subjects are not privy to the research thinking, they will not be functioning fully as intelligent agents*”.

In the particular context and time-frame of my study I believe that co-operative inquiry, as Reason and Rowan (1981) describe it, or Participatory Action Research, which is similarly associated with shared ownership of research projects (Kemmis and McTaggard, 2000) would have been unrealistic. The purpose of the course was to train counselors, not to undertake research. I aimed to involve students in my thinking and evaluation and to invite their participation with respect, but I acknowledge my ownership of the research and my need to steer it.

There is no hypothesis to be presented and tested, rather an inductive approach which begins with practice and observes it over a period of time. (Anderson, 2004). Anderson refers to the ‘clean sheet’ with which the induction process begins. I don’t believe that there is ever, even with an inductive approach, a clean sheet. My prior constructs and the students’ constructs, are already there. The research story is yet to begin and yet there is already a context which will influence the telling.

In my approach there was no precise methodology that could be easily labelled, no series of sequential steps which needed to be taken for the research to be acceptable. Methods needed to be chosen which would complement my philosophy and best answer the research question. In writing about the choreography of qualitative research design Janesick comments “*Just as dance mirrors and adapts to life, qualitative design is adapted, changed and redesigned as the study proceeds, due to the social realities of doing research among and with the living*” (2000, p. 395). Question and method go hand-in-hand. The qualitative researcher chooses a question which cannot be separated from the method “*in the same way that the dancer cannot be separated from the dance or the choreographer from what is danced*” (ibid., p. 382).

I expected my data to be largely qualitative, concerned with language and meaning rather than with quantifying and statistics. I wanted to record data which reflected the students’ experience of Person-Centred Expressive Therapy (PCET) within their total experience of counsellor training. I expected verbal accounts, drawings or collages which represented experience non-verbally, not numerical data.

There are numerous methodologies which share the commonalities of a qualitative approach. (Tesch, cited in Dey, 1993, p. 2). These are, an interest in language and the meaning of words, descriptions

and interpretations of social phenomena and the building of theory. I expected to present rich description of the PCET experiments I introduced and of the students' reactions. This would be what Geertz (1973) calls a 'thick' description which takes account of the context. I also wanted to interpret the data, to make sense of it in order to inform my future practice.

I describe my study as Practitioner Research which McLeod (1999) calls research which makes an impact on practice. The 'practitioner' in counselling research is generally a counsellor who is asking a question resulting from her therapeutic practice. To discover an answer the research is carried out within a practice context so that the end result is, as McLeod describes, knowledge-in-context. The knowledge gained belongs to a particular context at a particular time, rather than being an attempt to discover any universal certainty. I was in practice as a trainer and asking a question about how PCET would impact on trainees in the context of a particular group of students.

Trustworthiness of the study

Questions are posed about the validity of such an approach. Well established concepts for judging quantitative/positivist research are clearly unsuitable for qualitative studies. McLeod (1994, p. 97) refers to the view of Lincoln and Guba (1985) that trustworthiness, consisting of the four elements of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, is the basis of evaluating validity in qualitative research. A credible study is one in which the exploration of the data is supported by evidence from different sources. The experience of this particular cohort of students is unique and therefore an exact replication of my experiment in introducing ET into their counsellor training is impossible. No other counsellor trainer, even with similar experience of ET, would introduce identical exercises at the same stages of a course, gather and analyse data in the same way. Yet what is very clear from my literature search and presentation of results is that my description of the students' experience echoes those of others who work therapeutically with the arts. For example, the restricting belief that one can only be creative if you are artistically skilled is documented by Charlton, an art therapist (1984). The value of having a witness to protect the boundaries of time and space as a student (or client) moves spontaneously is confirmed by Meekums, a dance movement therapist (2002). What my students experienced in risking self-expression and self-discovery through the arts is often similar to the experience of clients in the four established arts therapies, namely Art Therapy, Dance Movement Therapy, Dramatherapy and Music Therapy. Dependability refers to the quality of documentation of the research process (Anderson, 2004). Stake (1995, p. 109) suggests a useful question for the qualitative researcher - "*Would any-one who read the*

data come to the same conclusions as the researcher?" The term 'conclusions' could be seen to be a positivist assumption. Nevertheless in chapter 9 I do draw tentative conclusions from my study for the reader to consider. My dependability as a researcher is, I believe, reflected in the transparency of my methodology which incorporates excerpts from my reflexive journal. I share with the reader my anxieties, frustrations, ethical dilemmas and mistakes as well as my discoveries, learning and successes. As in the counselling relationship, where the counsellor's self is her most important tool, so in much qualitative research. The researcher self needs to be visible at all stages of the research. There needs to be a clear relationship between the knower and what is to be known. (Reason and Rowan, 1981).

My results are not transferable in any simplistic sense, although I believe that some of my findings will be useful to other trainers. McLeod (1994) suggests that the trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be judged by different criteria, all of which I have tried to fulfil:

- There needs to be a full and clear description of methodology
- The study needs to be well contextualised
- There should be varying interpretations of data which is rich and feels authentic

Accuracy of research findings can be authenticated by checking with co-researchers. This has been achieved to some extent with former students, and fully with my co-tutor (Appendix M). Janesick (2000, p. 393), in stressing the importance of participant review, acknowledges the practical obstacles such as participants having moved to another area or no longer wishing to be involved. I have also compared my findings with what has previously been described in the literature, another form of crystallisation. For example, the high level of students' inhibition, which took me by surprise, correlates with Natalie Rogers' own experience as she began to experiment with movement (Rogers, N., 1980, p. 52).

Some qualitative research, for example a phenomenological study, analyses data with the aim of producing a comprehensive picture of a phenomenon (Husserl, 1900/01 and 1913). Gray (2004, p. 21) points out that "*any attempt to understand social reality has to be grounded in people's experiences of that social reality*". The researcher lays aside current understanding of the phenomenon. By allowing the phenomenon to speak for itself a fuller meaning becomes apparent. Multiple and relatively structured methods are used to collect different views. In my research the phenomenon is using ET in a specific context.. "*When we move into the phenomenological attitude, we become something like detached observers of the passing scene or like spectators at a game ... in a very*

curious way. We suspend them all just as they are, we freeze them into place” (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 48). This suspension, also called ‘the *époche*’, or ‘bracketing off’, echoes the doubting attitude of Greek skeptics who refrained from judgement until evidence was clear. I had experienced ET as a student and was very active in facilitating it on the course yet I needed to suspend my expectations of how students would react. As a counsellor, however, I need always to ‘bracket off’ my own expectations of the client.

Other qualitative studies use grounded theory analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) to generate theory. The notion of my study generating theory seemed to me unlikely. The theory had been established by Carl Rogers and his daughter and I was experimenting with it in the context of counsellor training. McLeod (1999, p. 186) suggests that one of three ways to use theory in research is to test or extend it.

My research aims to give a full and clear description of the impact of PCET on students during their postgraduate counsellor training, but more than that. It analyses the data in order to provide tentative conclusions about the added value of incorporating PCET into counsellor training. *“Analysis aimed at describing situations or informing policy seems to me no less legitimate and worthwhile than analysis geared to generating theory”* (Dey, 1993, p.6). If, as I believed, PCET proved useful in counsellor training, CESCO practice might change to include it on all courses.

Practitioner research shares some of the characteristics of Action Research, which Coghlan and Brannick (2001) define as *“an approach to research which aims at both taking action and creating knowledge or theory about that action”* (p.xii). Action Research is often undertaken within educational establishments. A teacher might take on a temporary research role in addition to his usual teaching role. The purpose of Action Research is not just to understand something but to change it. Rowan (1981) identified three ways in which research can make changes. *“It makes a difference to the researcher, to those who come to know about the research, and it makes a difference to whatever or whomever is studied”* (pp. 96-97). I believe that my research did have an influence on two of these audiences. In my conclusion I summarise the difference which the research made on me and on the students involved in it. My hope is that dissemination of my results will impact on readers, particularly other counsellor trainers.

Action Research often begins with a problem or issue to be solved, which my research did not. I did, however, plan an action with my course director and co-tutor, take action and evaluate that action. Action Researchers often envisage a desired future when their organisational problem has been

solved. My research was more in the spirit of an experiment. There would be an impact of some sort on the students, on the other tutors and on me. Potentially the outcome might have a broader influence in the field of counsellor training. The outcome would not be measurable in any quantitative sense but more as Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 8) describe the outcome of educational research – *“Evaluation outcomes ... represent meaningful constructions ... created through an interactive process that includes the evaluator”*. As Pring (2000b, p. 46) explains, we make sense of situations *“through ‘constructing’ connections, meanings, frameworks through which experience is sieved and made intelligible”*. The students and I may not have been co-researchers in the full sense of the term but certainly co-constructivists in the ET research experiment.

Action Research often works through a cyclical process; as new knowledge informs the researcher more action is generated, which in turn creates new knowledge. My research was linear rather than cyclical although, had I repeated the research with another cohort of students it could have taken a hermeneutic or cyclical approach.

As Gray (2004) describes, the Action Researcher’s tasks are to focus on meanings, to search for an understanding of what is happening and to construct theories and models from the data. Apart from the focus on construction of theory there is a correlation with my study.

As with any phenomenological study I used a multi-modal approach to gain different views over time and produced a large amount of unstructured data.

There is an element of the narrative approach in that my study could be seen as telling a story, an account of two years of PCET on a particular course. Within the main story are sub-stories. There is the story, for example, of one very academic male student who abhorred the introduction of ‘rubbish’ and ‘froth’ into a university course where he expected to ‘listen and learn’. The story goes on to explain how he dealt with the situation and the changes in his thinking which occurred over the next two years.

The narrative approach to research, however, aims to keep each character’s voice pure and complete, whereas in chapter 7 I draw out elements of many student voices in interpreting the significance of PCET on their course. In chapters 6 and 8 there is a more narrative flavour as individual voices are heard.

There is an unexpected heuristic element in the account of my own story, my personal discoveries along the way. I did not set out, however, to solve a personal dilemma, as in traditional heuristic research; my personal discoveries were incidental and, as peripheral to my research question, are discussed only briefly in my conclusions.

Dey (1993, p. 15) suggests “*We would do better to focus on the data which has been produced rather than implying rigid distinctions between styles of research and methods of data collection*”. I agree; the rich data which I collected will, I believe, speak for itself. The methods evolved to suit the context, the needs and interests of a particular group of students. As my Journal records, for example, my initial form of data collection through simple questionnaires was soon abandoned in favour of ‘post-its’; these were less time-consuming for students to complete, so I gained a broader set of views.

Ethical concerns

In writing about Action Research in an organisation Coghlan and Brannick (2001) describe the balance which a researcher needs between his usual roles, e.g., as a teacher, and his researcher role.

From the beginning of my research I was very aware of my dual role as tutor and researcher. The advantages eventually included the relationship I already had with students as a tutor but in the early weeks of the course, when I was eager to begin the data collection, our relationship was in its infancy. I felt restrained by reluctance to move into my agenda and to impose extra work on busy part-time students, many of whom were in full-time employment.

I had ethical concerns about power and authority. Meekums (1992, p. 168) suggests that we all “*position ourselves*” and are “*positioned*” in our institutions. “*We also need to consider how we position our clients and our students and how our clients and students in turn position themselves and us. What power differentials are there ...?*” I was aware of the students’ positioning of me in my tutor role as more powerful than themselves. How able would they be to opt out of my research?

Initially I hoped to enlist the students’ participation as co-researchers, much as Silverstone (1997) did in researching a year’s course in Person-Centred art therapy with a cohort of twelve students. Silverstone encouraged her students to contribute accounts of their experience and examples of their art work for inclusion in a book she would later write. She made her own comments, written before and after each session, available for students to read. I planned to copy this method of decreasing the

power imbalance between tutor and students. It would also reflect what I had learned in my PCET training; tutors participated fully in all exercises and feedback sessions, sharing themselves in the same way that students were invited to do. I hoped that students, as co-researchers, would eventually create arts exercises for their own learning as students had on PCETI courses.

I wondered whether students would be interested enough to share their thoughts and feelings, the depths of being to which, I believed, PCET could quickly take them. Would they give permission for me to use their 'voices' in research which initially seemed to be purely for my benefit? Would their participation depend on what Payne (1993, p. 22) calls the "*are they saying this to please me?*" problem. Part of my role as a tutor was to assess practical and academic work and I was conscious of the power this gave me. Would students feel safe enough to give negative feedback on my teaching methods? Could they trust my integrity to be fair if they gave negative comments on my work? Could I devise ways of collecting comments anonymously?

To look at the phenomenon of introducing PCET into training from many angles I planned to use multi-modal data gathering which would eventually include interviews and a focus group; at an early stage of the course I considered interviews to be unethical as students might fear biased marking dependent upon their views.

McLeod (1999, pp. 82-83) refers to three procedures which ensure ethical standards in all good research. First, there is the requirement of informed consent. Participants, as autonomous beings, deserve the right to be fully informed about the purpose of the research before consenting to take part. They need to be clear that they can refuse any invitation to be involved at all or to withdraw their views at any later stage of the research. Secondly, participants need to know how personal information will be recorded and stored and the degree of confidentiality awarded to them in the writing up of the study. Thirdly, the researcher needs to respect the principle of avoidance of harm. McLeod writes about these ethical dilemmas for counsellors researching their practice with clients, some of which I adopted into my own research practice as a tutor.

At the second meeting of the course I explained the purpose of my research, invited students to become co-researchers and distributed consent forms. I shared with them my concerns about my dual role and the steps I was proposing to resolve them. I stated that names and other identifying material would not be used in the writing up of my thesis. I also clarified that students' material could be withdrawn at any time. Some weeks later I asked for permission to tape feedback after a PCET

session and repeated the request for permission on each occasion when I used a tape-recorder. On some occasions I asked permission to take photographs. Occasionally a student opted out of a particular exercise or asked not to be photographed and these wishes were respected as part of the group contract (Appendix C). I was aware that taking photographs in some sessions would be intrusive; for example in a session on rituals where students were working with particularly sensitive material. I considered that video-recordings of sessions would also be intrusive and counter-productive because of the high level of inhibition in the student group. The students were made aware of the name of my supervisor. As he was, unexpectedly, the course director for that cohort there is a possibility that the supervisory role was blurred for them. On the other hand he was readily available to them for any complaints. McLeod (1999, p. 15) acknowledges the moral dimension of Practitioner Research in which the researchers' values are central and need to be explicit.

Researchers who are also counsellors are very aware of the ethical principles of their clinical work which are strongly advocated by the BACP in its Ethical Framework (2002). They apply equally well to ethical research. Ethical principles were initially developed for medical research (Beauchamp and Childness, 1979) and developed for counselling research by Kitchener (1984). Kitchener (cited in Forester-Miller and Davis, 1996, pp. 1-2) lists these as:

- Nonmaleficence, or avoiding harm
- Beneficence, or doing good to others
- Autonomy, or respect for a person's freedom of action and choice
- Justice, or fairness
- Fidelity, which includes giving adequate information, keeping trust and confidentiality

By 2002 the BACP had added, (sect. 3), self-respect, which is concerned with how a practitioner cares for herself, for example through supervision and personal development. I believe that I did apply these principles to my research although initially some students might have doubted my intention of beneficence when they experienced exercises which they found embarrassing or childish. My research question presupposes that PCET would enhance their training. If I had not strongly believed that I think it would have been unethical to introduce it on the course.

The Framework (BACP, 2002, section 3) describes Justice as "*the fair and impartial treatment of all clients*". Applying this principle to my research I took steps to ensure that individual interviews were carried out during the second year of the course when the decision had been taken about membership of my Personal Development Group for that year. I interviewed only those fourteen students for

whom I had no assessment responsibility. The views of the seven students in my Personal Development Group were sought only after the course and all assessment had ended.

Appendix E provides samples of letters inviting research data; these demonstrate ethical awareness.

I attended to my own needs by seeking emotional support outside my academic supervision. Sometimes I needed to express my feelings rather than discuss academic content and process.

Data collection

"Data are not 'out there', waiting collection like so many rubbish bags on the pavement" (Dey, 1993, p. 15).

Dey makes the point that the researcher is influential in deciding what she needs to know, her methods for discovering the answers, even her decisions about transcribing the material. Will she choose unstructured data collection methods which result in descriptive, unclassified material, very different from a survey, for example, which asks closed questions and receives limited answers? Unstructured responses can be irrelevant, confused, disorganised. How can they be classified and analysed when ideas are so diverse? Will the researcher personally transcribe the data to gain closeness to the material? *"The point is that any 'data, regardless of method, is in fact 'produced' by the researcher"* (ibid.).

McLeod (1999, p. 87) similarly points out that data does not constitute facts because any feedback given is socially constructed. I believe that a wide range of data collecting methods is therefore helpful in order to find some commonalities amongst the many voices. A view which is not shared by anyone else is also interesting, reflecting the unique experience of one person, but will not be as helpful in drawing tentative conclusions useful to other practitioners.

The multi-modal approach I took to data collection was influenced mostly, however, by pragmatic and ethical considerations.

Useful data, Silverman (2000, p. 823) suggests, is that which best answers the research question. Some modes provided much more useful data than others but I believe all had some value. Although the results of questionnaires can be relatively easy to code and analyse they fit uneasily into a humanistic philosophy. The researcher is imposing questions, limiting the scope of reply. I decided to

use questionnaires initially, however, as a means of anonymous and therefore less threatening response to early PCET sessions. Appendix D records data collection methods and quantities through the two-year period.

The beginning of a new course is, I believe, crucial in establishing the norms and relationships which will sustain students and staff through the progress and setbacks of two years. I held back from introducing my research too soon, from imposing yet another demand on students' attention. I had introduced a PCET exercise with miniatures¹⁴ on the first evening and allowed it to go by without requesting feedback.

Journal entry - 5th October 1999:

"It was the final exercise of the evening and after all the explanations and filling in of registration forms suddenly there was animated chatter and students really engaging with each other. I noticed that students were holding their miniature as they talked - it seemed to provide a focus and it was much more helpful than just talking about themselves from cold, I think. I was relieved that there were enough miniatures to give some choice, despite the huge group (I had planned for a group of 16)."

It was not until the 19th October that I mentioned my research prior to a PCET exercise using clay:

Journal entry - 19th October 1999

"the introduction of my research, which preceded the exercise, felt very rushed. I distributed draft questionnaires but there was little time to open up the whole issue for proper discussion, which felt uncomfortable. A few students responded by expressing their willingness to complete questionnaires."

PCET is time-consuming, requiring plenty of time for verbal discussion after the arts work. The timing for the two evenings each term (representing one fifth of the course) which were time-tabled for PCET was changed to accommodate this. I used the whole evening, apart from the hour set aside for personal development groups, but there never seemed enough time either to me, or to the students. As soon as questionnaires were mentioned concerns about time were expressed:

¹⁴ Miniature objects used in play therapy and in PCET into which users project what is currently important to them.

Journal entry - 19th October 1999:

"Later, in my PD group there was a remark about the amount of thought which the questionnaire required, another student thinking that perhaps this would provide useful learning. I want to offer - soon - the very different contribution which could be made by the research file - more creative, spontaneous, maybe quicker. I sensed some concern that taking part in my research would be time-consuming - extra work. I need to check this out."

The research file which I planned was an imitation of Silverstone's (1997) method of collecting research data. Although I provided a file the following week it was unsuccessful; the students were not interested in reading my comments and added none of their own. I offered a meeting to discuss concerns. Only three attended and confirmed my belief that there was general concern about tasks which would take up extra time... So far my journal was providing the fullest, albeit highly subjective, data! My first mistake was to assume that students would be as interested in my research as I was. In retrospect I believe it would have been helpful to send an information sheet about my research to all students prior to the start of the course. The Course Handbook gave a broad outline of the course but there was no mention of ET. An information sheet would have better prepared them for what to expect and perhaps engaged their interest more quickly in my research.

My co-tutor had kindly agreed to observe the research process in a journal, not to be shared with me until the end of the course. I wanted her to feel free to comment honestly. I believed that my research question could be answered by a trainer colleague as well as by students. She could answer it from the perspective of an observer. Her experience of training counsellors without reference to the arts would enable her to make informed observations about the difference which PCET made to the students. Observation is an accepted form of qualitative data collection (McLeod, 1999), although often used by researchers who are non-participants and observing group behaviour. My co-tutor had a more complex role. As the facilitator of a personal development group she potentially heard the views of seven or eight students reflecting on PCET. She also was so interested in PCET methods that she frequently participated when a student needed a partner. She thereby experienced PCET personally.

At the end of years one and two of the course I also interviewed her. I realised that she had a very different perspective from the students, being an experienced counsellor rather than a novice. I needed to discover ways of collecting data which would be acceptable, even enhancing, to students and reflect the richness of their experience of PCET exercises which I was already observing. Face to face interviews, the most popular form of data collection in counselling research, could not be used

yet, for ethical reasons already described. My supervisor suggested using 'post-its on which students could provide brief comments on their experience of PCET sessions. The response rate rose immediately from five questionnaires to sixteen post-its. Though brief, the responses were immediate and more representative of the group. I also asked permission to tape-record the whole group feedback which was an integral part of each PCET session, adding no extra time to students' workload. Despite the frustration of inadequate technology to capture quiet voices in a very large group I was beginning to gather data which was rich and immediate. The views, however, were all positive and I knew that the picture I was getting was incomplete. From body language alone I knew that some students were not fully engaging with PCET. Apart from on post-its, which were anonymous, it seemed difficult for students to express negative feelings in front of colleagues and three tutors. I could have used the time spent in group feedback differently, by inviting students to provide written feedback. I believe there is more learning value for students however in group feedback. My researcher role could have easily overshadowed my primary tutor role. As my IT skills were poor I did not consider at the time inviting responses by email, which would have ensured that negative views could be expressed in private.

Students had been invited to photocopy relevant excerpts from their Learning Record which they would give to me only after the end of the course. I hoped that this would provide an opportunity for negative views to emerge. This also added no extra burden of work to busy students as Learning Records were a required, though unassessed, element of the course.

As a tutor I was excited by what I could observe in PCET sessions; as a researcher I was disappointed that I was missing so much potential data. Students were interested in PCET, much less so in my research, and there was no reason why they should be. So far I had failed to engage the majority of students as co-researchers to the extent I had hoped; this was my initially unrealistic expectation.

A breakthrough came in January on a residential week-end. The PCET experience with masks and a focus on sub-personalities was so powerful that, as my co-tutor observed, I had "won them over". Sixteen students contributed to a file on 'The Mask Experience (please see chapter 8).

At the end of the first year of the course, with the long summer vacation ahead, I invited students to reflect on their experience of PCET so far. Two students interviewed each other, which provided an incidental session in interviewing skills. Two other students contributed a taped recording of their

own views. I also interviewed my co-tutor to gain her overall views of the contribution of PCET so far.

My data collection at this stage could be seen as hotch-potch or as a series of vignettes illuminating the research phenomenon. It had been hard work for me to teach PCET, which is time-consuming in terms of preparation and demanding emotionally. I found myself at times wishing that I could focus on the one role of trainer rather than on the two roles of trainer and researcher. I was confident, however, that I had not coerced any data contribution or compromised my primary role as trainer. The impact of PCET had, prior to the analysis of research data, satisfied me as a tutor.

In the second year of the course twenty-one students remained. All fourteen of the students who were not in my Personal Development Group agreed to be interviewed. For pragmatic reasons I did fifteen-minute interviews, mainly by telephone. With the students' permission the interview was tape-recorded. Three students preferred to have a face to face session. All dates and times were negotiated with students. The interviews were semi-structured, ensuring that students were able to respond openly and that I received focused data. McLeod (1999), in reflecting on the advantages of interviews over other methods of data collection, points out that respondents have time to 'get into' the topic. He believes that an interview of only fifteen minutes is too short for credible qualitative research. These interviews were not isolated snapshots, however, but part of a rich data-gathering process over the course of two years. McLeod (ibid.) points out that counsellors have good interview skills and can probe in order to get good quality data. Knowing the research question beforehand helped students to recall the sessions which had most impacted on them, personally and professionally. Feminist researchers believe that an interview is a meeting between two people to exchange views so that there is a mutual collaboration and dialogue rather than a professional distance between respondent and researcher. (Finch, cited in McLeod, 1999, p. 80).

Prior to the interviews I asked respondents to reflect on their experience of ET, particularly on how it had impacted on them, first as a person and secondly as a trainee counsellor. Whilst many respondents had prepared well and spoke fluently, others needed prompting to remember specific exercises which I thought might have impacted on them. I was aware of leading the conversation as I would be reluctant to do in a counselling situation. "*The interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. It is not a neutral tool, for at least two people create the reality of the interview situation*" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 48). Had I not prompted, the results would have been different.

Silverman (2000, p. 823) warns the researcher against treating “*respondents’ accounts as potentially ‘true’ patterns of ‘reality’*”. By abandoning this view “*we open up for analysis the culturally rich world through which interviewers and interviewees in concert generate plausible accounts of the world*” (ibid.). Silverman questions whether people attach single meanings to their experiences. I find this particularly interesting in the light of Rowan’s (1990) concept of sub-personalities. Which of my sub-personalities was conducting the interview and which sub-personality was I meeting in each respondent? Would another sub-personality have responded differently? “*Of course, every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing*” (ibid., p. 825).

After the course had ended, the seven students who had been in my Personal Development group and therefore whose practical and academic work had been assessed by me were invited to take part in a focus group. Widely used in marketing to gather the views of consumers, focus groups are a form of small group interview. The advantage of a focus group as a form of data gathering is that the views of, generally around eight, people can be collected on one occasion. An added bonus is that there is collective discussion, each respondent triggering the views and recall of other people. In facilitating my focus group I noticed how the conversation developed almost as though I were invisible, the group needing few external prompts. After two years in the training group and one year in the closeness of the Personal Development Group there was a marked openness and a willingness to express negative views; the lack of anonymity was not a problem. Having experienced my humanistic values in the Personal Development group the students knew that their views would be heard and valued. I experienced this as powerful and untainted data.

Morgan (1997) poses the question whether or not focus groups produce similar data to individual interviews. I show on p. 86 how different topics did emerge, some of which I had never previously considered.

The disadvantages of a focus group include the cost to respondents in terms of time and transport costs (McLeod, 1999). By the end of two years there was a sense of mutuality between the students and me, and after the focus group we enjoyed a bountiful picnic at my expense as a way of thanking them, and as an ending to our Personal Development Group. The transcription of a focus group is very time-consuming but my experience of immersion in the material was invaluable.

Another potential disadvantage of a focus group is that, in a less controlled situation than an individual interview, some members might be silent while others take centre stage. As my respondents felt secure, in an already established group, every-one contributed.

As a final piece of data gathering I interviewed my co-tutor before reading her journal. It was invaluable to gain her perception of the students' experience, although this was at one remove.

Over the two years students offered me drawings and pieces of creative writing. I also collected photographs, particularly at the two residential week-ends, but was very conscious of when this would not be appropriate. Some of this non-verbal data, which provides an extra dimension, is included in chapter 8.

The variety of data collection methods I used provides a broad perspective of views across a two year period. *"By staying in a setting over time the researcher has the opportunity to use crystallisation, whereby he or she may view the approaching work in the study through various facets to deepen understanding of what is going on in the study"* (Janesick, 2000, p. 395).

Triangulation, a term often used in positivist research, refers to examining the data from several angles to demonstrate its validity. Richardson, cited in Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 392), introduces an alternative term of crystallisation which I consider better suits qualitative research such as mine. Triangulation is mechanistic, crystallisation organic. The crystal *"combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes and substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionality, and angles of approach ... crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know"*.

With the concept of crystallisation in mind, in chapters 6 and 7 of this study I present the same data in two very different formats. First I present an anthology of poems derived from tape-recorded interviews; secondly I present the same data through a more analytical, thematic approach. In chapter 8 I provide new data which give the reader a different and, I believe, richer perspective on the students' more immediate experience of ET exercises. In these three chapters I have moved away from the traditional research method of separating results and discussion of these. It seemed to me more natural and effective to blend them together.

In a letter to Mearns (cited in Buchanan and Hughes, 1999, p. i) Carl Rogers wrote *"In our 'client-centred approach' we start from the experiencing of our client, but seldom do we give that experience center stage in our writing"*. Termly evaluation forms provided an opportunity for students to comment on their training experience but their views sound much more powerfully through my research.

Reason and Rowan (1981, p. 245) make the point that valid research is dependent on *"high quality awareness on the part of co-researchers"*. The reader can make a judgement on the quality of responses in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Data analysis

Data having been collected and transcribed I had a sense that the exciting part of my research was over; introducing Expressive Arts Therapy to students had been creative, collecting their reactions had been stimulating, but now I was faced with analysing hundreds of subjective statements through my own subjective filter.

McLeod (1999) acknowledges that analysis is the part of research furthest away from counselling practice. My educational background includes the study of English literature, in which analysis was concerned with understanding relationships between fictional characters and the subtle meaning of the author's vocabulary and choice of location for events. I also studied Religious Knowledge and analysis of the meaning of God's revelations through history. As a counsellor I search for the underlying meaning of a client's communication. Now I had to analyse my research data in a way which was true to the students' meaning and yet produce practical knowledge.

Grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was my chosen method of analysis at the point of research proposal; I had recognised its rigorous approach. Charmaz (2000, p. 509) describes grounded theory methods as *"systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analysing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data"*. Strauss and Corbin (1990) continued to develop the guidelines which Glaser (1992, p. 43) later criticised, believing that they were producing biased data and analysis because of preconceptions and hypotheses. Glaser wrote *"Categories emerge upon comparison and properties emerge upon more comparison and that is all there is to it"*. Charmaz (2000, p. 514) disputes Strauss and Corbin's claim (1998) that *"the data do not lie"*, pointing out *"data remain reconstructions"* of experience.

Having invested a great deal of myself in terms of costly training as an Expressive Arts Therapist and in sharing my enthusiasm with students and colleagues I was aware of potential bias in analysing the data. Coding each meaning unit of data would ensure a detailed and transparent approach which I hoped would validate emerging theory.

In using a grounded theory approach I noticed my initial reluctance as a holistic practitioner to dissecting the text into 'units of meaning'. Would I thereby distort the respondents' meaning? Had the mechanical overtaken the creative? In the word analysis, 'lysis' stems from the Greek root "*to break up or dissolve*" (Bohm, 1983, p. 125), so the same dissection is clearly inevitable in data analysis. I felt as though the rich and exciting experience of the past two years was disintegrating in the process of dividing data into so many units of meaning. There was also a danger of abstracting meaning from its embedded context and thereby distorting it.

After analysing one set of 'post-it' responses and one interview as a pilot experiment using grounded theory I decided to take a different approach.

Almost all data was collected prior to analysis; this was partly pragmatic as I had an unexpectedly heavy teaching load, particularly in the second data collecting year and my energy went into teaching Expressive Arts Therapy well. There were also the ethical considerations I have described. As the course progressed I heard or read all the data and made some practical adjustments to my teaching methods in response to feedback. For example personal development work was initially incorporated into a whole evening of Expressive Therapy. At the students' request, personal development groups were reinstated and always held for the last hour so that students could work through personal material in their smaller, familiar groups.

My data, verbal and non-verbal, could be organised under five headings:

- immediate and spontaneous self-report after a PCET session.
- reflective self-report on a PCET session after some time lapse – learning records, audio-tapes from four students. These might provide more considered views but some points might have been forgotten.
- more explicit answers to my research question – questionnaires, interviews, including focus group.
- observation of process – co-tutor's journal, my own journal.
- photographs taken, where appropriate and with permission.

In considering which data best answered my research question I concluded that the interviews provided the most relevant data. I decided to use my counsellor skills to analyse these in a more holistic way than using traditional grounded theory, a way which would be more meaningful to me. My method is, nevertheless, a form of grounded theory in that I analyse statements in detail. Although McLeod (1999, p. 17) states that research “*is not meant to be a ‘good read’*” I wanted to enable the reader of my thesis to have a sense of what a PCET session felt like. I therefore decided, additionally, to describe and analyse three PCET sessions to provide richness as well as research credibility (chapter 8). The students' comments about these three sessions provide answers to my research question from a different angle, as they were not included in my initial analysis (I analysed only the results of interviews).

Analysis of data

Miles (1979, cited in Robson 2002, p. 455) describes qualitative data as “*an attractive nuisance*” since as Robson (ibid., p. 456) states “*There is no clear and accepted single set of conventions for analysis*”. From numerous methods of analysis named by qualitative researchers, Tesch (1990, cited in Robson, ibid., p. 457) reduces them to four groups. I recognise that my method of analysis falls into the group concerned with “*the comprehension of the meaning of text or action*” (ibid.).

McLeod (1994, p. 40) refers to the stages in the analysis of qualitative data, the first being immersion and the second categorisation. For me the immersion stage lasted throughout the two year course and the transcription of data. Although very time-consuming, transcription kept me close to the material. Before making any formal analysis of the data I was noticing themes and forming opinions, some of which were contradicted in the detailed analysis.

McLeod (2001, p. 56) describes phenomenology as “*almost a meditative practice and involves an ‘in-dwelling’ in the phenomenon until its essential features reveal themselves*”. During the analysis stage, and indeed in writing up my research, I experienced an ‘in-dwelling’ which felt like an altered state of consciousness. The research followed me even in my dreams.

Journal entry – April 2001

“I began to notice that students had learned in all three categories of PD, Theory and Practice, whereas I had suspected that their gains had mainly been in the area of PD. Quite a number were

already using ET with clients and many had collected materials. Many had clearly experienced theory through ET exercises”.

I was interested to notice that my learning from early stages of the research was forgotten and rediscovered with some excitement.

Journal entry – May 2005

“I’ve noticed that many of the discoveries recently, e.g. about students experiencing theory, were made two years ago when I was analysing – I’d forgotten, but perhaps this reflects authenticity, i.e. I’m still seeing the same things in the data”.

As a tutor I found it impossible to “*bracket off*” my assumptions as in a phenomenological study (McLeod, 1994, p. 90). My aim was to be non-judgemental towards all aspects of emerging data. This is a parallel process to my non-judgemental attitude towards clients. I am aware of my own values and beliefs as I listen to them but I do not allow their material to be contaminated by these. I can hold both alongside each other.

Dey (1993) also acknowledges the difficulty of classifying qualitative data. The responses in an unstructured interview cover a wide range of points, some of which may be irrelevant. They are descriptive, subjective, without any organisation. The qualitative researcher needs to find a way to classify, to organise, the data as a foundation for analysis. “*Categorising brings together a number of observations which we consider similar in some respects, by implied contrast with other observations*” (Dey, 1993, p. 20).

Tables 2 and 3 on the following pages demonstrate the process by which I analysed data from individual and group interviews, and, later, from audio-tapes and journals.

Table 2 – The Process of Analysis

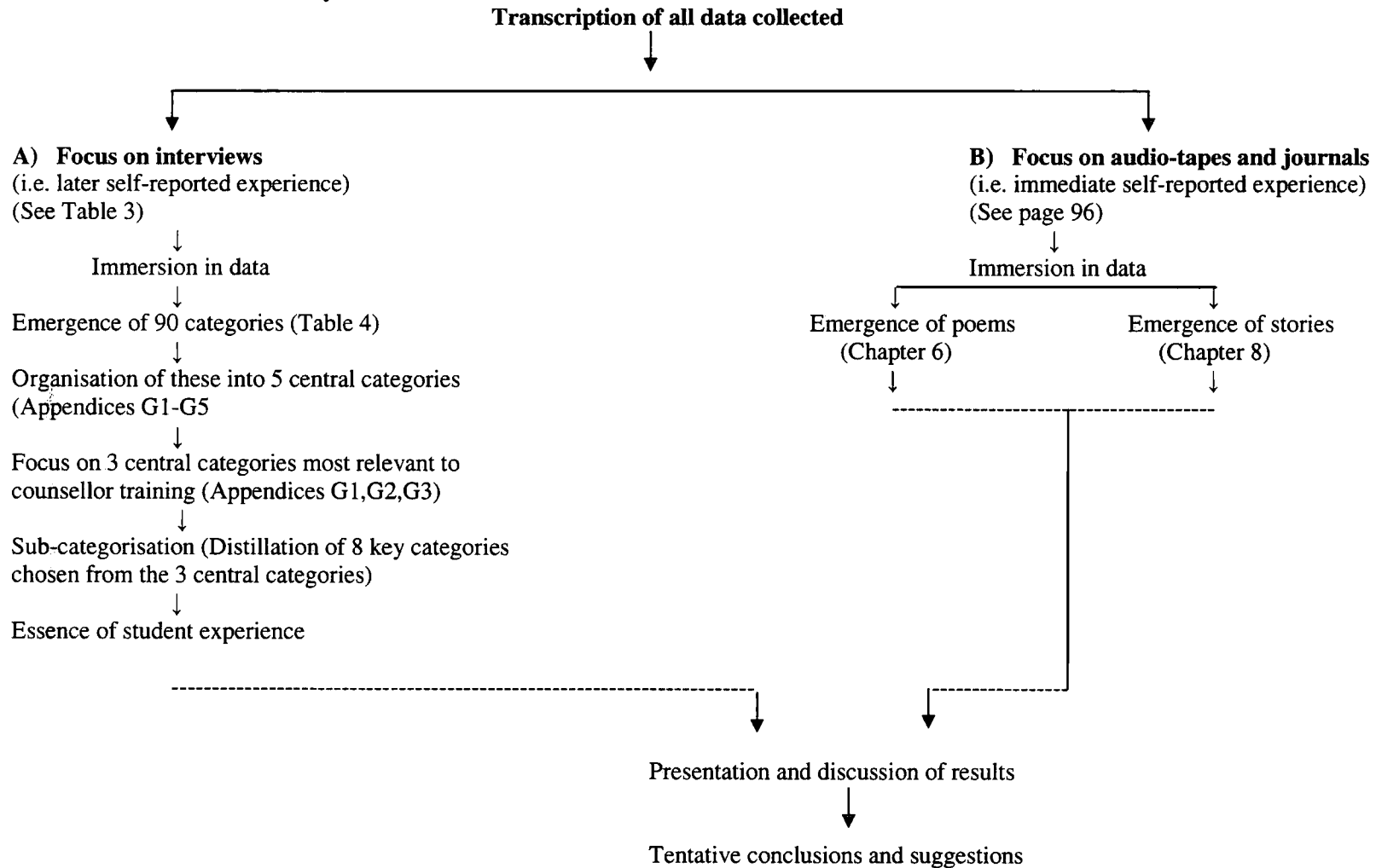
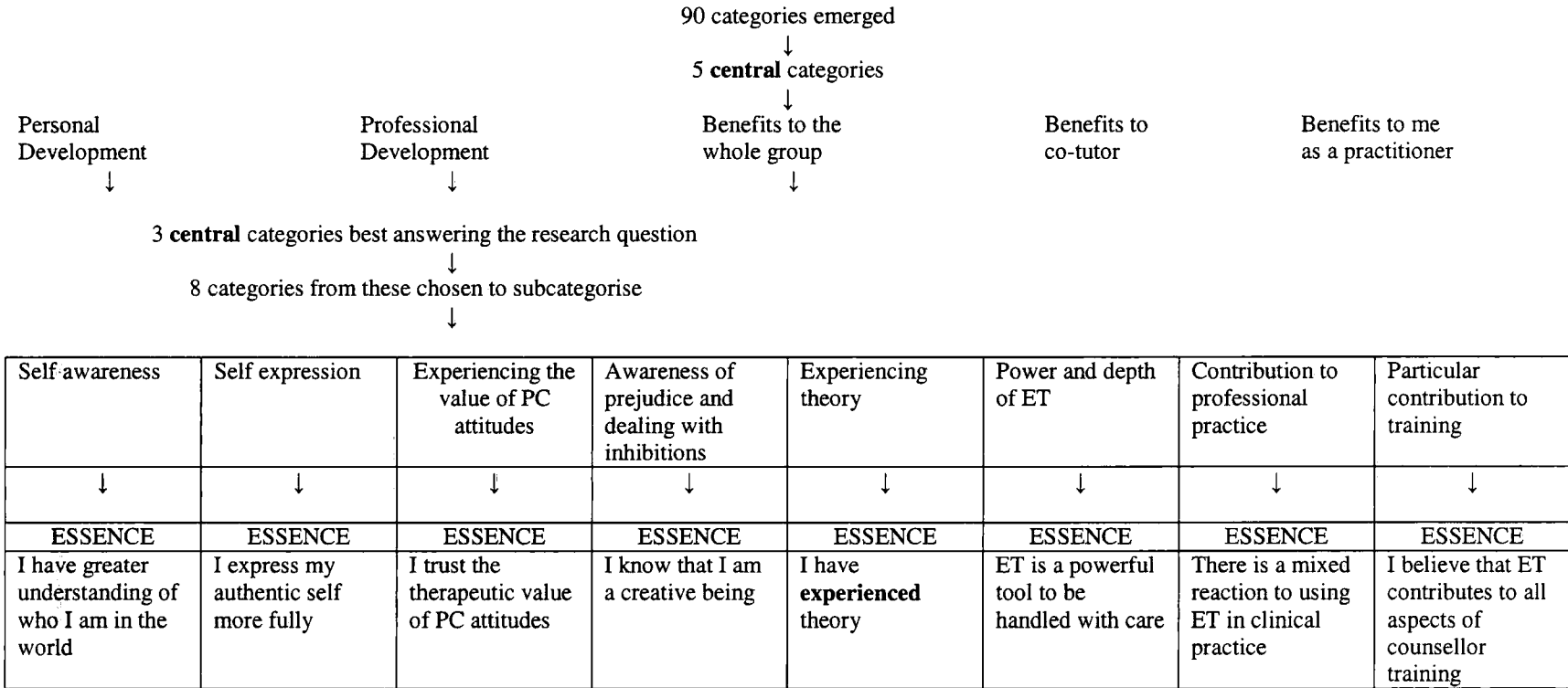


Table 3 – The process of analysis – Interview data



I began to categorise data from the fourteen interviewees completed in the second and third terms of the second year of the course with students who were not my academic responsibility. Taking each interview in turn I recorded the essence of each statement. I was very aware that I was deciding the students' meaning. Yet this is what, as a counsellor, I do in every session; I listen for the core meaning, discarding the extraneous material.

I decided to trust in my own experience as an empathic practitioner, taking my counselling skills into research. Having recorded the core meaning of each statement I then summarised each student's experience of PCET. Having completed all fourteen interviews I then searched for and recorded emerging categories. I used the same method for analysing the focus group. The interviews, including the group interview (focus group), resulted in the following categories (Table 4) which reflected the views of all twenty-one students who completed the course.

Although I could have placed Table 4 in an Appendix I have chosen to retain it, as indicative of my process, within the main text. As qualitative research can be judged by its trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 606), throughout this study I have therefore included examples of my thinking and, occasionally, of my creative process.

Table 4: Categories emerging from fourteen interviews and one focus group

Person-centred attitudes	Spirituality	Client practice	Non-verbal communication	Inhibitions and prejudices	Time/timing
Experiencing theory	Negative feelings and views about ET	Particular contribution of ET to therapy	Training	Trust and safety	Influence of ET on group as a whole
Particular contribution of ET to training	Personal development Groups	Self-awareness	The unexpected	Thoughts about authenticity of ET	Reservations about ET in therapy
Reservations about ET on the course	Learning styles	Too much speed	Self-protection strategies	Power of ET	Images - mental
Images - created	Images - using existing, e.g., miniatures	Unskilled at art	Materials used in ET	A tangible keepsake	Preference for particular media
Choice about trying ET on course	Lasting influence of ET taught	Catharsis	Feelings prior to an ET session	Insight	Ongoing inner work after ET session

Changed perception of ET	Silence	Brief responses to research question	My way of teaching ET	ET and nature	The right environment for ET
Need for practitioner's comfort with ET	ET gets to the heart of the matter (right brain wisdom)	Overcoming one's resistance to ET	Is ET directive?	Enjoyment of ET	Integration
Understanding ET theoretically	Being intrusive	Dislike of specific medium	Clay	Creativity	Self-expression
ET better than words	Trusting one's processes	Feeling free	Holistic	Keeping content private	Lack of interpretation (respect for client's autonomy)
Unfinished business	Dressing up in costume	Appreciation of ET in general	Preparation for an ET evening (students)	Describing oneself as artistic	Expression through movement
Experiencing the creative connection	Work with stories	Symbols	Supremacy of client's meaning	Spontaneity	The power of work with miniatures
Mask weekend	Size of the group	Differences in working with objects rather than words alone	Expectations of the course	ET helpful to student as a person	Feeling inadequate in practice
Regression	Pretence	Peer pressure	Personal development	Comments about being interviewed	Connections with one's life
Value of the witness	'The Seed' exercise	Distinction between being creative and self-expression	Tutor participation	Learning by observing others	Depth of work via ET

These categories indicate the complexity of the data. In choosing each category I looked for an idea which was explicitly expressed or for the essence of a statement. For example, a student explicitly referred to the person-centred attitude of acceptance - *"but that's what I felt I got from the course. I could learn, experiment for myself and not feel that I was the one who got it wrong, I just did it differently and that's O.K. Yes, acceptance, that's the huge, huge benefit of this course, when we're doing creativity especially, acceptance"*. This was categorised under 'Person-centred attitudes'.

The benefit to a student in her personal life, which I categorised under the heading 'ET helpful to student as person' emerged from *"and I think if anything the expressive work has put life into perspective"*. There had been a benefit to her, regardless of whether or not she incorporated ET into her counselling practice.

When a new idea was expressed I added a further category until no new ideas emerged. I then revisited each interview to ensure that every statement was arranged under one or more headings. There was inevitably some overlap as each statement could encompass more than one category, that is, they are inclusive categories rather than exclusive (Dey, 1993). I recorded the following statement, for example, under two categories - 'working non-verbally' and 'ET better than words'; *"the movement as well I found particularly powerful when we did that because it's almost like raw expression really that you're expressing, you're not sort of diluting it with words"*.

Eight of these categories emerged from the focus group alone.

Table 5: Categories emerging from focus group alone:

Expectations of the course	Size of the group	Regression	Peer pressure
Distinction between being creative and self-expression	Tutor participation	Learning by observing others	'The Seed' exercise

The focus group was held after the end of the course and students had been able to reflect on the impact of PCET from the distance of a month. Were they able to take a more holistic view, I wonder, in referring, for example, to their expectations of the course, the impact of group size and the value of tutor participation? I used the same method of categorisation with the focus group and my co-tutor's interviews. My co-tutor's supplementary comments, from the Journal she kept throughout the course, I decided to categorise separately. I considered her views to be a crucial form of crystallisation, that is, seeing the phenomenon through various facets.

Stake (1995, p. 56) makes the point that the researcher should have *"a connoisseur's appetite for the best person, places and occasions"* as sources of data. The personal reality of each informant is not, Stake suggest, of equal importance. To eliminate bias I found it important to give every student a voice but reluctantly decided not to analyse every piece of data collected over the two years. I found it frustrating, in the interests of time and sanity, to discard so much rich data but I believe that the story,

although shorter, is the same story, in essence, that would have been told had I included every statement. I acknowledge that in collecting more data than I needed I might be accused of being disrespectful to students who took the time and effort to contribute their views (McLeod, 1999). Yet, transcribing every piece of data I received contributed, I believe, to my thinking.

Most of the voices are heard again in the three expressive therapy sessions which I describe fully in chapter 8. Comforted by Stake's encouragement to have "*a connoisseur's appetite*" (1995, p. 56), I have chosen the three sessions which are best supported by a variety of creative media such as stories and photographs.

My next task was to organise, or code, my categories in a way which had relevance to my research question. Anderson (2004, p. 182) encourages the researcher to distance oneself from the data and to look at it from more than one perspective. I realised that I could organise my categories in several ways:

- 1 What was helpful to students about expressive therapy on their course? What was unhelpful?
- 2 How did expressive therapy impact on the three main training elements of Theory, Personal development, Practice?
- 3 What was helpful to students as people?
What was helpful to students as counsellors?
What was helpful to students in counselling practice?
- 4 What was helpful to me as a tutor?

I differentiate between students who are training as counsellors and yet might never use expressive therapy in their practice, and those who are using it, or intend to do so. Was there value to each student even if they never used expressive therapy in practice? Is there particular value to students training to be counsellors as opposed to students training to be nurses or engineers? I initially decided that this third option was the most comprehensive form of organisation which would encompass most categories. My own learning as a practitioner, as well as a researcher, was, I believed, crucial to my chosen form of practitioner research.

I noticed that some categories belong specifically to expressive therapy on the course – for example:

- Particular contribution of ET to training
- Reservations about ET on course
- ET helpful to student as a person

(For a complete list please see Appendix F1)

Other categories could belong to the therapeutic arts in general – for example:

- Creativity
- Self-expression
- Value of the witness

(For a complete list please see Appendix F2)

Others have a flavour of generic counselling – for example:

- Insight
- Unfinished business
- Non-verbal communication

(For a complete list please see Appendix F3)

or, specifically of a Humanistic, including the Person-Centred, approach – for example:

- Person-centred attitudes
- Pretence - dislike of
- Trust and safety

(For a complete list please see Appendix F4)

A few categories refer to teaching methods - for example:

- Experiencing theory (as opposed to hearing about it)
- Time/Timing
- My way of teaching ET

(For a complete list please see Appendix F5)

Category referring to research methods:

- Brief responses to research question
- Comments about being interviewed

I noticed the considerable overlap between categories relating to expressive therapy and to the general use of the arts in therapy. This encouraged further reading of the arts therapy literature.

I had taught expressive therapy within a generic counselling course with a strong person-centred ethos and it was satisfying to see that students were speaking the language of aware, ethical practitioners.

Clearly there is a great deal of overlap between these very artificial divisions and some categories I found particularly difficult to place. As a tutor, prior to using expressive therapy, the value of silence in therapy was something I stressed. Maintaining silence can be important to enable a client, for example, to think and make connections at a deep level. In expressive therapy silence is maintained as a way of moving from left brain to right brain activity, from everyday verbal communication to intuitive creativity. Words are content specific, meaning different things to different people and at different times. In some ways, I realised, the list of categories is in itself meaningless. I needed to explore each statement under every category. For this reason I decided to focus on other ways of organising categories. How could I best answer my research question? How could I use the data to discover how PCET had enhanced the students' training experience?

I reminded myself of my research question 'In what ways does PCET enhance counsellor training?' In the light of this I read again individual statements under the numerous categories I had chosen. Although as a tutor I am interested in the students' total training experience, as a researcher I have chosen to focus on the specific way in which PCET has enriched their experience.

Eventually, I arranged my categories under five central categories:

- a) Personal development - see Diagram A }
- b) Professional development - see Diagram B }
- c) Benefits to the whole group - see Diagram C } Please see Appendices G1 – G5
- d) Benefits to co-tutor - see Diagram D }
- e) Benefits to me as a practitioner - see Diagram E }

Of these, the first three central categories are most relevant to my research question - 'How does PCET enhance counsellor training?' I needed to focus on the benefits to students.

Personal Development

I then chose what I considered to be the most important categories under the central category of Personal Development (Diagram A) to sub-categorise. My purpose in the sub-categorisation was to distil the essence of each set of statements made under each category. I was very much aware throughout the analysis of my influence in choosing and discarding. My rationale in choosing the categories to sub-categorise or distil was to notice which categories were most relevant to the inclusion of the arts in counsellor training. As Dey points out - "*Research is essentially an exercise in selection*" (1993, p. 242) as some categories do not merit further work.

I decided to sub-categorise the following categories and to distil their meaning:-

- Self-awareness through ET
- Self-expression through ET
- Experiencing the value of PC attitudes through ET.
- Awareness of prejudice and dealing with inhibitions through ET.

Distillation is a term I associate with science - for example, with the perfume industry where thousands of rose petals are distilled into the concentrated essence of rose. From numerous statements in each chosen category I hoped to distil the essence of meaning.

Below is one example of sub-categorisation. In order to sub-categorise and distil meaning I revisited and summarised every statement made under that category heading.

Category - Awareness of prejudice and dealing with inhibitions through ET.

I chose this category to sub-categorise because inhibitions:

- 1) threaten access to right-brain activity and wisdom
- 2) limit personal development, a key component of humanistic counsellor training
- 3) are likely to block the creative experience of clients during therapy

Sub-categorisation:

Feelings

Fear - of being exposed
- of being observed
- of being judged
- of being misunderstood
- of getting it wrong

Feeling silly } linked to memories of feeling silly/embarrassed,

Feeling unsafe } naked, at school

Feeling unsafe - I don't know you - can I trust you?

Introjects

Adults don't play

Play is of no value

Play is for children

At University you learn by listening

Self-concept

I don't like being touched

I like words, I don't play

I'm no good at art/ anything creative

I don't know how to express myself

I work in an analytical, non-emotional, very rational way

I sneer at new things like my father did

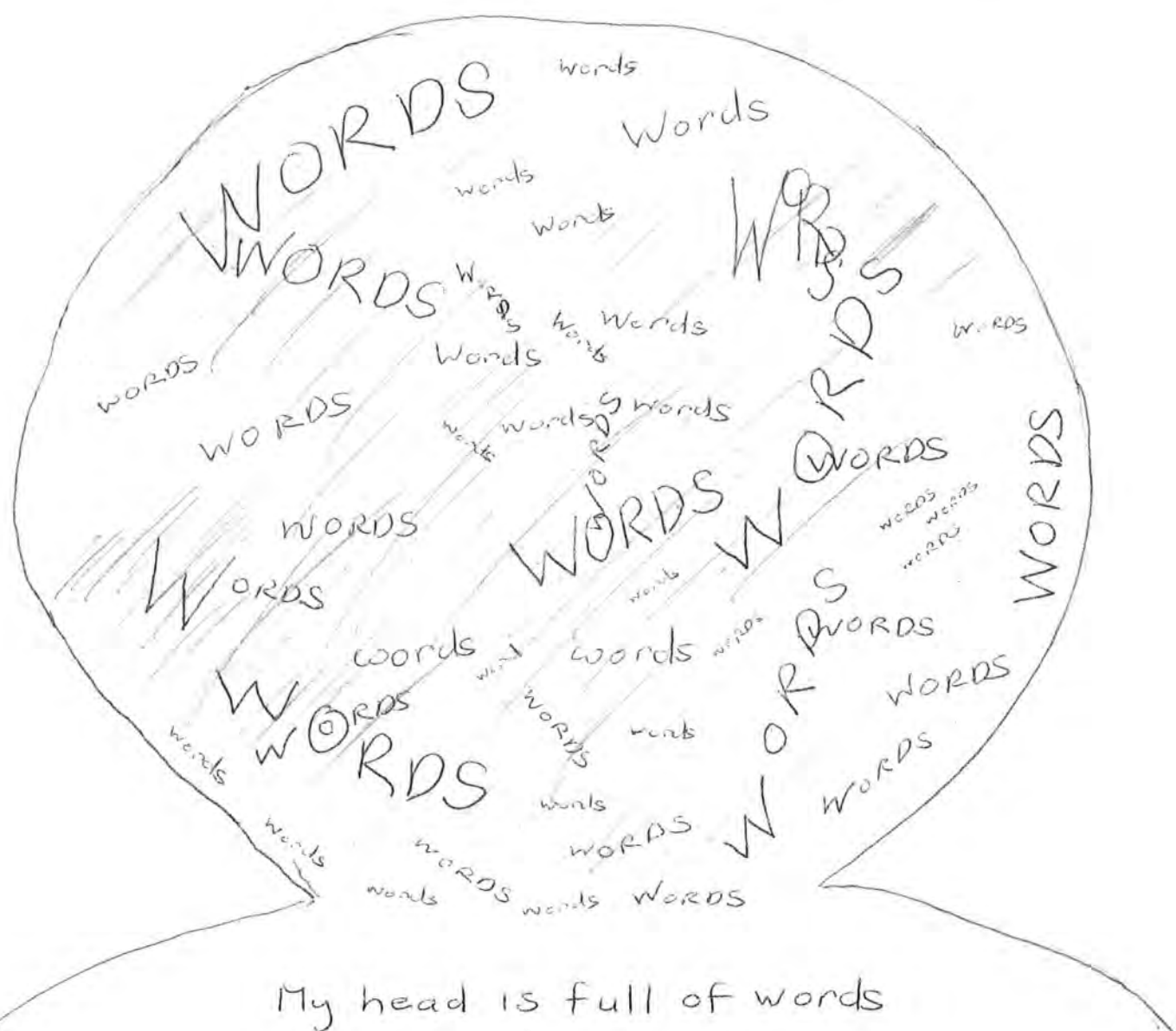
I don't belong in this culture

The results of all my sub-categorisations are fully discussed in chapter 7 where I distil the essence of each.

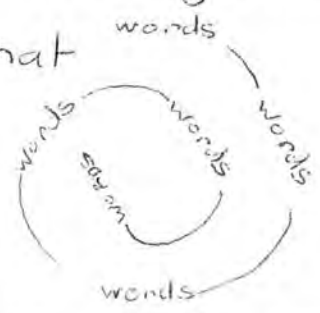
Journal entry - February 2006

"I was feeling overwhelmed by all this data last night but this morning, lying in bed, I saw a picture in my imagination and a story was forming and demanding to be written down. I felt a surging energy."

Immersion? Submersion!



My head is full of words
 Meaningless words
 I can string them this way
 Or that



No difference
 No sense
 Nonsense

It isn't about words - that's the point!

words... words - words

The Story

Prejudices



Spider on the wall (Hairy) to another spider on the wall (Scary)

- H. Supposed to be a university classroom but see what I mean? No desks, half of them sitting on the floor. Doesn't look very disciplined to me.
- S. Reminds me of an infant school. See all those ready-mix paints and felt-tips over there? And that table full of little toys. 'Scuse me, H, I'll scuttle over and take a close look. Won't take me a second.
- H. Thought I'd come with you, mate, - yeh, paper - every colour you can imagine. Probably teaching them their colours. Another thing - it's peculiarly quiet in here, S, all busy but no-one's talking - I thought you were supposed to debate things in a university.
- S. Well there isn't even a tutor is there? Nobody standing at the front spouting wisdom - how are they supposed to learn?
- H. You see that woman in brown, drawing over there, and that other one with curly hair sitting on the floor playing with animals - you'll never believe this, Scary, - they're the tutors!
- S. Easy money if you ask me. Oh, now they're talking - quietly though in twos - showing each other the pictures they've done. Let's have a closer look, Hairy, - hm - not an artist amongst them!
- H. Oh come away, Scary, - this feels weird - some of them are smiling but some of them are having a few tears. Can't stand anybody crying, meself - let's scuttle. Bluebottle paté for tea!

"After a couple of creative hours I had reconnected with the purpose of my research".

Journal entry - February 2006 (continued).

Professional Development

From the central category of Professional Development (Diagram B) I chose to distil:-

Experiencing theory through ET.

The contribution of ET to clinical practice.

Benefits to the whole group

The central category of Benefits to the whole group (Diagram C) contains few categories. I therefore incorporated all comments from this table under a sub category of 'The particular contribution of ET to training', which I then distilled.

The eight categories I chose to distil can be seen as a metaphor encapsulating the whole student experience of ET.

Analysis of second set of data

In chapter 8 - 'Three sessions – three voices' I present a new set of data which was drawn from immediate feedback after ET sessions and entries from personal Journals. I analysed this data under the same eight sub-categories I had used in chapter 7. My purpose was not to distil but to identify whether or not there was any correlation between the two sets of data (Appendix H).

On reading transcripts of the data which I present in chapter 8 I became aware that I was largely reading narratives. For several decades researchers in the Social Sciences have used a variety of narrative approaches including biography, autobiography and ethnography (Denzin, 1997) as a way of understanding one's own or other people's experience. I had appreciated Etherington's (2000) use of stories in her research which brought it alive for me in a way which much research does not.

Alvermann (2000, on-line) outlines criticisms of what has been outlined by Casey (1995) as "*new narrative research*". These include issues of subjectivity and representation. My respondents' accounts of ET sessions are clearly subjective yet no more so than their opinions expressed in interviews. By retelling a story it is possible for a researcher to misrepresent by providing only one account of the author's experience. The stories which I decided to retell in chapter 8 are snapshots of experience which complement the data in chapters 6 and 7; they are not isolated accounts and are connected through my discussion to the whole student experience of ET and to relevant theory.

Alvermann (ibid.) raises awareness of the researcher's influence in choosing which stories or sections of stories to include. The second session on which I focus is entitled 'Polarities'; students wrote animal stories as they learned experientially about themselves within themselves. I use all the stories about polarities which were audio-recorded in class. Similarly, I include all six stories which I recorded after the session on 'Rituals'. I omitted sections which were repetitious, for example the preparation for the ritual. It was in focusing on 'The Mask Experience' that I made deliberate choices. I included one participant's story since it encompassed the whole week-end's activity, setting it into context for the reader. Three other accounts were chosen because of their reflective quality. "*Staying close to the data is the most powerful means of telling the story, just as in dance the story is told through the body itself*" (Janesick, 2000, p. 389).

Narrative Inquiry incorporates a variety of research practices, as a way of understanding one's own, or other peoples' experience. In using Narrative Inquiry as one method of his research Shu (2006) adopts an ethnographic technique of juxtaposing 'episodes' and 'positioning'. In chapter 8 the students' stories are 'episodes' which I 'position' in relation to the theoretical literature.

Presentation of results

Finally I considered appropriate ways of presenting my results. Inspired by Sparkes (2002) I wanted to match my mode of presentation to the creative focus of my research. Sparkes encourages qualitative researchers to consider non-traditional forms of writing which communicate the research story powerfully. Richardson (2000, p. 923) argues "*Writing is also a way of 'knowing' - a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable*"

I decided to produce my results in three separate chapters, including discussion of results in two of the three chapters. In chapter 6 fourteen students' voices are heard through an anthology of poems. These poems present the verbatim words from their individual interviews. The order of some statements has been changed and I include what I consider to be the main views expressed. I was very aware of potential bias towards positive statements about person-centred expressive therapy and the reader will see that negative comments are equally valued.

Diversi (1998, p. 132) describes how a poetic representation, although constructed by the researcher, can portray the sense of an interview more vividly than prose. He poses the question "*How can I know this person through very few words?*"

Glesne (1997, p. 215) values what he terms "*poetic transcription*". The order of the respondent's words might be changed but not his language or the sense of his views. Poetic transcription can engage the reader emotionally in a way which prose does not. The interview is simplified to distil its essence. Furthermore, "*poetic transcription disintegrates any notice of separation of observer and observed. These categories are conflated in an interpretative space*" (ibid.). For me this resonates with the shared understanding which emerges in the therapeutic space between client and counsellor.

I believe that the impact of the students' voices in chapter 6 would have been diminished had I included discussion, from an analytical, left-brain perspective. I leave the discussion of results until chapters 7 and 8.

In chapter 7 the results derive from the same data but represent the collective student view on major themes which I chose to distil. As I have explained, chapter 8 presents new data as a form of crystallisation. Whereas the interviews represent students' retrospective views of expressive therapy on the course as a whole, the data in chapter 8 arises from immediate reaction to ET sessions. Furthermore, the reactions derive from three viewpoints. The student voice is augmented by my co-tutor's voice and my own voice as tutor-researcher. This, I believe, provides further authenticity to the study.

My co-tutor's voice is heard in this chapter through the medium of her Journal. My own voice reflects spontaneous and immediate thoughts recorded after each session in my Journal.

Conclusions

In chapter 9 I present tentative conclusions, drawn from the research, which I hope will be of particular interest to counsellor trainers.

Appendices

These contain information for the reader in support of my belief that the research is trustworthy and ethical.

In making a choice about which transcripts to include I was influenced by the poor quality of some audio recordings, for example of the focus group. I provide transcripts of both interviews with my co-tutor and of eight interviews with students (more than fifty per cent), as they discuss their overall experience of ET (Appendix N1 – N10).

I have chosen to include two transcripts which are not analysed in the text. These might give the reader a flavour of feedback from post-its and whole group audio-taped feedback, both of which are referred to in the text (Appendix N11 – N12). I enclose also one example of a completed questionnaire and two examples of entries by students in their Learning Records; one of these is recorded verbally, the other non-verbally (Appendix O1 – O3).

Summary

I have described my qualitative study, dependent on a constructivist paradigm, as Practitioner Research. Methods of data collection included interviews, a focus group, audio-tapes of immediate feedback after ET sessions and Journal entries.

Analysis of interviews began with ninety categories, arranged under five key headings; from the three most relevant key headings eight sub-categories were chosen to distil for the essence of meaning. A second set of data was analysed under the same eight sub-categories, using a Narrative Inquiry technique of 'episode' and 'positioning'. Results are presented and discussed in three separate chapters, combining a variety of creative and analytical modes.

In the following chapter I review the literature which informed my understanding of the creative arts.

Chapter 5

Theoretical perspectives on arts therapies

Introduction

Prior to my research and as part of my exploration around training as an art therapist, I began to read some of the literature on the use of the arts in therapy. I discovered that much has been written about each discrete discipline - about art therapy, dance movement therapy, drama therapy and music therapy, and that each derived from a psychodynamic approach.

I was excited to discover Silverstone's (1997) book which resulted from teaching art therapy in a person-centred way - the first link I had read between my interest in imagery and the person-centred approach which underpinned my counselling practice. As a counsellor trainer I was familiar with some of the literature on counsellor training. What seemed to be missing was any literature linking the arts with counsellor training. My research is a contribution to that link, adding to the knowledge about counsellor training.

I believed that I could learn from a review of some of the arts literature, of which there is a great deal, and of the more sparse literature on aspects of counsellor training. My research makes a new link between the arts and generic counsellor training yet has its foundations in previous learning about both. According to Payne (2002) there has been little systematic research into individual components of training such as personal development in the therapeutic arts.

Using the arts in therapy - a review of significant literature

I had three approaches to reading literature on the arts in therapy:-

- a) Initially to inform me about what each discrete discipline could offer clients. After training in PCET I wanted to discover common ground between that and the established arts therapies.
- b) To help me during the research in preparing handouts for students at specific sessions, e.g. one on stories, one on dreams, one on movement, polarities.

- c) To give me further insight into what emerged from the data, e.g. seeing an image in one's head but being unable to record it on paper.

In this review I explore the common ground and the differences between PCET and three of the established arts therapies. I decided to omit exploration of music therapy as neither my training in PCET nor my teaching of it focused specifically on music. I do include brief exploration of sandplay and free writing, both of which fall outside the specific arts therapies but have relevance to person centred expressive therapy.

In PCET training, although not in Natalie Rogers' writing, there was deliberately no emphasis on theory other than the importance of the core conditions, the rationale being that theory belongs to left brain activity. This lack of theoretical underpinning jarred with my intellectual curiosity. A further aim in reading the arts literature was to redress this balance, to gain more theoretical understanding of the arts in therapy.

Waller (1998, p. 47) wrote *"In Britain there are four arts therapies: art, dance, drama and music, all with their own training and professional organisations"*. Some other countries, in contrast, offer programmes of training across all four arts therapies, for example the Netherlands, Canada and the U.S.A. from which PCET sprang. Mastnak (cited in Waller, 1998) recognised the interdependence of music, drama, dance and art in the artistic therapies. He helped to develop 'Polyaesthetic therapy' which is widely practised in Austria. Its purpose is not limited to therapy but can be used 'as a way of life' *"which helps to reactivate essential creativity ... to get rid of neurotic fixations, and to stabilize cognitive, volitional and emotional human functions"* (Waller, 1998, p. 83).

Payne (1993, p.xi) argues that *"the common ground for all arts therapies includes the focus on non-verbal communication and creative processes together with the facilitation of a trusting safe environment within which people can acknowledge and express strong emotions"*. People use whatever medium is offered *"in a way which reflects how they are thinking and feeling"*. The client communicates in his *"own special language"* (ibid.).

In her book, which brought together for the first time research into all four arts therapies, she writes *"The ability to respond to the arts is in all of us ... the arts therapies seek to engage the client in an experiential approach within one of these mediums whereby clients can be guided towards realising their full potential"* (ibid.). What I value in PCET is that clients have a choice of media for self



expression. Mindell (1985) describes six major channels of experiencing and communicating. Traditionally counsellors have used the auditory/verbal and the relationship channels which limit the client to two. Mindell and other practitioners of Process Oriented Psychology also make use of the visual, movement, world and proprioception (or bodily felt sense) channels. Mindell encourages therapists to develop as multi-channelled techniques as possible and to help clients to gain awareness of them. PCET is moving in that direction, particularly with its emphasis on what Natalie Rogers calls 'the creative connection'¹⁵.

Art therapy

The term art therapy was first used in Britain in the 1940s to describe painting classes in a sanatorium in southern England (Fuller, 1984, unnumbered foreword). Until 1997 art therapists were described by the Department of Health as organisers of art activities (Waller, 1998, p. 48). Waller defines it as *"a form of psychotherapeutic intervention in which the patient is encouraged to make painted or other visual images, using basic art materials. Such images can be used to communicate emotions and states of mind that may be difficult or even impossible to express verbally"* (1998, p. 9).

Silverstone (1997, p. 9) agrees that art is *"a helpful language"* either for the inarticulate or for those who *"use words to distract, defend and delay"* (ibid.). Natalie Rogers points out that since *"emotional states are seldom logical, the use of imagery and non-verbal modes allows the client an alternate path for exploration and communication"* (2000, p. 3).

By 1997 the National Health Service Executive was acknowledging the art therapist as a professional who was an *"experienced practitioner in her chosen art form but also to be trained to assist people who are suffering from a range of distressing or disabling conditions"* (Waller, 1998, p. 48). Waller and Silverstone disagree with the requirement of an art qualification for art therapists working with the arts: *"Qualifications in art symbolise the very aspect which deters people from their creativity, the fear of not being good enough. To be good at art is not relevant. In fact, paradoxically, it can be unhelpful"* (Waller, ibid.). Silverstone (1997) believes that the desire to produce a well-structured piece of work interferes with spontaneity and potential self-discovery. Natalie Rogers equally stresses that the value of the arts in therapy is in the process rather than the product. Does this imply that whenever we paint or draw we are working on psychological issues? Birtchnell (1984) believes not: *"It is my belief that various forms of aesthetic pursuit, whilst being satisfying in themselves, do not bring emotions and conflicts near enough to the surface, or if they do, we do not hold on to them"*

long enough to work with them" (p. 37). He sees the art therapist's job as *"to move in and disentangle the neat and elegant statement of the aesthetic creation, break down the veneer of orderliness, and get back to the underlying turmoil before it was tidied up and made more acceptable"* (ibid.). The implication is that the therapist uses art intentionally for a therapeutic purpose. Natalie Rogers applies a whole range of expressive arts specifically to meet her clients' therapeutic needs.

In art therapy there is an expectation that the client will use art; in PCET it may be offered but is not required. In both there is no need for the client to have any artistic talent and there is often more therapeutic gain if they have no artistic skill. Dalley (1984, p.xxiii) noticed that trained artists can use their skills to distort or repress unconscious material and that they can find spontaneous expression difficult.

The roots of art therapy lie in the concept of creativity which Storr (1972, p. 11) defines as *"the ability to bring something new into existence for that person"*. In PCET there is often new insight for the client, an ability to view an aspect of life differently or to feel different in some way. Feelings can be transformed through the metaphor of the image. CESCO students learned to value and work with verbal metaphor. They were introduced to David Grove's work with somatic metaphors (1989). PCET introduced them to a broader understanding of metaphor.

Waller (1998, p. 49) points out that in using art there is a three-way transaction between *"the creator (the patient), the image or artefact and the therapist"*. I have noticed the different dynamic when a painting or group of miniatures is introduced into a session; I need to relate to the painting or miniatures as well as to my client. The eye contact with the client which is generally maintained by the counsellor shifts sometimes to the painting, as if there is a third person in the room. Grainger (1999, p. 11) describes art as *"a medium rather than a technique and the things it creates as presences rather than tools"*.

In art therapy the client's picture is often described as a 'frame within a frame'. The outer frame refers to the secure boundary which the therapist provides while the client's picture is an inner frame or container for the client's private exploration.

Schaverien (1991, p. 3) describes the need for art therapists to *"provide a space which is safe and set apart for meditative, self-reflective experience. It is a place with its own rules and boundaries, within*

¹⁵ The use of several artistic media in succession.

which the patient can be free to explore the inner world. The safety provided by these boundaries is essential to prevent the process from becoming overwhelming". The concept of the picture as boundary is useful learning for me.

Dalley (1984, p. xx) believes that clients can express both conscious and unconscious material which is then discussed with the therapist who is a participant as well as an observer in the process. Often in PCET sessions a student only made sense of art work as his partner helped with the verbal exploration.

Interpretation sits uncomfortably with the person-centred belief in the client's wisdom and autonomy. I was surprised to discover that there is less interpretation by art therapists than I had supposed. Winnicott (1971, p. 102) wrote *"If only we can wait, the patient arrives at understanding creatively and with immense joy, and I now enjoy this more than I used to enjoy the sense of being clever"*. Dalley (1984, p. xx) warns against premature interpretation for *"despite the apparent advantages in having such a tangible focus, art forms are statements on many different levels"*. Client and therapist are thus co-creators in what Winnicott (cited in Meekums, 1999, p. 249) calls the *"potential space"* between them. Often in PCET sessions students were encouraged to use counselling skills to help clients to explore their work and only then to make observations rather than interpretation if the client had agreed to their input. For example, in working with a client's picture I might say 'I notice that you have used only one colour throughout', or, 'looking at your picture I feel sad.' I 'own' my observations and check how the client responds to them.

Schaverien (1991) believes that *"interpretation, like diagnosis, is a matter of relationship, that of patient to the picture and therapist; and that of therapist to patient and picture"* (p. 3). She emphasises the importance of giving space to the client as she makes an image and as she contemplates its meaning. Meanings might be multi-faceted and not immediately apparent. Rollo May (cited in Grainger, 1999, p. 11) describes the function of art to stand apart and involve at the same time. Schaverien (1991, p. 19) clarifies his meaning for me. As the 'artist' part of the client makes a picture he is totally absorbed in it. Then the 'viewer' part responds to it, makes sense of it.

Meekums (1999, p. 249) makes the point, as do Cox and Theilgard (1987), that metaphorical forms of expression *"can act both to distance the client from the emotional content of the reference and to reduce the distance between client and therapist"*.

The concept of transference, although not denied by person-centred counsellors, is never a focal point. In contrast it plays a significant part in the psychoanalytical approach to art therapy. In verbal psychoanalysis, transference manifests as feelings, initially experienced by the client in the past, and brought into the therapeutic relationship. Transference "*mobilizes affect*" (Schaverien, 1991, p. 1) and allows transformation of long-established inner patterns of feeling and behaviour. There is a similar mobilization of feeling through making pictures; transformation then occurs, mainly, Schaverien believes, through the client's relationship to his pictures, and only partly to the relationship with the therapist.

The benefits of having a tangible picture or other artefact are summarised by Schaverien - "*They provide an object onto which feelings can be projected, within which they are contained and from which they communicate*" (ibid., p. 16). The client's psychological material is externalised as something that was never seen before. The unconscious has become conscious. Once externalized, the client can return to it, reviewing it over time.

Part of the psychodynamic tradition is to bring unconscious feelings to a conscious level while person-centred counsellors generally work with what is conscious or on the edge of awareness. Influenced by Jung, Natalie Rogers (2000) acknowledges the concept of the unconscious within her person-centred philosophy. She describes in particular the 'shadow' side of our personality, "*that aspect of the self that is unknown or that lives in the realm of the unconscious. The shadow is composed of all that became unconscious as a result of early experiences and conditioning*" (p. 158). She writes "*I find myself drawn to integrating the thinking of Carl Jung as he discusses the shadow with that of Carl Rogers as he discusses the trustworthiness of the human potential*" (ibid., p. 162). PCET, she believes, enables clients to explore the unconscious within a therapeutic relationship characterised by the core conditions. Schaverien places art therapy in the psychoanalytical tradition whereas Silverstone and Natalie Rogers believe they have found a way to incorporate it into a person-centred ethos. Jung believed that archetypes from the collective unconscious influence a person's pictures, as well as his dreams. (Schaverien, 1991, p. 24) believes that "*The psyche finds the images it requires at the time they are needed*". She gives an example of falling in love as an "*analytically determined state. A state in which there is a universal pattern underlying the individual dynamics of any particular pattern*" (ibid., p. 27). What this reinforces for me is the depth to which the arts can take us. Schaverien provides examples of archetypal material occurring in clients' pictures, for example, the Great Mother, the Great Goddess. I found it reassuring to read "*When I write of these*

pictures with apparent knowledge of the meanings I ask the reader to bear in mind that this is rarely how it is in the day-to-day practice of analytical art therapy" (ibid., p. 163).

Jung encouraged some of his patients to paint *"in order to escape the censor of the conscious mind"* (cited in Schaverien, 1991, p. 21). For me this freedom from censorship is one of the key benefits of working with the arts although the intuitive awareness of this can inhibit a client from creative work. We are skilled at using words and facial expressions to mask our deepest feelings and concerns. We dare not acknowledge even to ourselves our loneliness, terror and despair. In the busy pace of everyday life we don't allow ourselves to think and feel. Person-centred theory explains that the person struggles to protect the self-concept. Polanyi (1966) describes what he calls 'our tacit awareness' which resonates for me with the concept of right brain wisdom. At an intuitive level we know more than we think that we know. Birtchnell (1984, p. 35) believes that revealing oneself through a painting feels safer than talking directly about it. *"in painting there is more scope for ambiguity, since you can represent yourself as an animal or even as an object"*. I noticed how this ability to be 'at one removed' from oneself enabled students to reveal aspects of themselves which they found useful for their self-development, to explore. *"Like alcohol and dreaming, imagery weakens our inner censor which gradually represses aspects of ourselves of which we are scarcely aware or are afraid to acknowledge"* (Birtchnell, 1984, p. 38). Natalie Rogers (1993, p. 24) provides a rationale for daring to dip into the unknown. If we dare to face the demons we most fear within ourselves we can bring them into conscious awareness and diffuse their energy. I have seen students and clients having the courage to explore their inner selves through the arts and transforming an apparently evil subpersonality, for example, into a source of strength and well-being.

McNiff (1998) observes that engaging in arts activities raises the energy of an individual or group. He wonders whether the energy of creation *"can be likened to a circulatory and ecological system"* (p. 198). This resonates for me with Carl Rogers' belief in the *"directional trend which is evident in all organic human life ... to express and activate all the capacities of the organism"* (1961, p. 351). I was particularly interested in McNiff's belief that *"this system needs to be activated in more than one area of expression in order to maximise the flow of creative expression"*. (1998, p. 198). He believes that a focus *"on one art modality may block the ebb and flow of the larger complex of creative expression"* (ibid.).

McNiff raises practical questions which I found particularly interesting, such as how do different types of artistic activity affect energy levels? Do any have a sedating, tranquilizing effect rather than

raising energy? How do images affect the nervous system? I was reassured that my ignorance about how the arts 'work' is shared with much more experienced arts practitioners.

Sandplay

Although this has its origins in play therapy and is not a form of art therapy I wanted to explore it in the literature as it uses miniature objects in a similar way to PCET. Rabone (2003) describes sandplay as "*a symbolic creative process with the significant advantage that the symbols can be held, moved and transferred*" (p. 10). For those people who deny any creative abilities, projection into objects can be a different way of evading the censor. For example, I might tell a spontaneous story to my therapist, using miniature toys to represent the characters and only afterwards realise the relevance to my life. Rabone (ibid.) encourages therapists to collect miniatures which "*will stimulate sensory activity*". I learned from him that "*natural and abstract objects bring the client closer to their unconscious resource than representational toys*" (ibid., p. 11). My PCET training taught me to provide miniatures which are aesthetically pleasing; as they can play a significant part in a client's therapy they need to be clean and in good condition. In the light of this I was interested when a student complained that he needed a broken miniature to represent his experience of brokenness. Clients express their polarities and inner tensions by creating their inner world in the sand leading to greater understanding and growth and integration. In working with miniatures PCET does not generally use sand so I valued Rabone's point that the sand itself is symbolic in many cultures.

Although Natalie Rogers makes no mention in her books of using miniatures they were much used in PCETI training and in my teaching of the expressive arts. Spiegelman (1989, p. 435) describes Jung's practice of playing with bricks and sand as he had done as a child. Jung "*decided to let the psyche speak to him directly, without any prodding on his part*". Miniatures used in adult therapy are similar to the objects of play which Winnicott describes (1971, p.60) "*a child at play gathers objects or phenomena from the external reality and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality*". Students were encouraged to allow miniatures to choose them rather than to choose them intentionally. In the light of this I was interested in Grainger's belief that we don't use art, it uses us! "*Because of the effect it sometimes has on you, your reaction to it, it sometimes feels that it is actually using you*" (1999, p. 12). The psyche makes use of whatever tools we provide.

Hughes (1999), in describing the therapeutic value of play, makes the point that children are less anxious and defensive as they play (an exception being abused children who may find it difficult to

play). I believe the same applies to adults once they have overcome their initial prejudice that play is childish. The props of play therapy, whether dolls, puppets or miniatures "*all contain as a common element the recognition that play allows a child to communicate even the most complicated and most personal feelings from a safe distance. The child at play speaks, as it were, from behind a curtain of make-believe*" (Hughes, 1999, p. 225). Similarly, adults can feel a sense of greater safety in self-expression which is indirectly communicated through a picture, miniature, or piece of creative writing. From 'a distance' they can develop awareness, objectivity and perspective on their inner life.

Natalie Rogers (2000) describes the expressive arts as healing as well as media for self-expression, self-understanding and growth - although they are clearly interconnected. I understand this to mean healing from psychological pain. The arts literature describes therapeutic work with clients suffering, for example, from eating distress, depression, abuse, oppression, loss. Natalie Rogers writes "*For years I have tried to explain why self-expression through the process of drawing, dancing, singing or writing heals the spirit, the soul. All my explanations - that it releases energy, unlocks inhibitions, brings the unconscious to consciousness - do not really answer the question, Why the healing? They are merely further descriptions of the process itself*" (2000, p. 175). I think this is true of therapy in general - the client's life is transformed in some way and therapists do not always understand why.

Dance Movement Therapy

Dance Movement Therapy is defined as "*the psychotherapeutic use of movement and dance through which a person can engage creatively in a process of personal integration and growth*" (The Association for Dance Movement Therapy, UK., quoted in Gates, Gear and Wray, 1998, p. 111).

Meekums (2002) differentiates between therapeutic dance and dance movement therapy (DMT). Therapeutic dance is facilitated by skilled dance teachers, untrained as therapists, who might work with groups for example in prisons or schools. Their aim can be "*broadly therapeutic and sometimes educational/artistic*" (p. 6). In contrast, dance movement therapy is a form of psychotherapy which facilitates the client's understanding and growth specifically through movement. A core principle of DMT is the interrelationship of mind and body. "*Movement can affect how we feel, and how we feel can affect our way of moving*" (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 51).

In my PCETI training I was introduced to 'Authentic Movement', a way of moving spontaneously without thought or any intention to perform. I had previously tried to move beautifully (in ballet), to

follow specific steps and patterns (in folk dance and circle dance), to depict a character in movement (in dance drama). I found 'authentic movement' very different, initially strange, later very freeing and illuminating about my inner life. 'Authentic Movement' is a term first used by Adler, who strongly influenced Natalie Rogers.

"Movement is life, life is movement" (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 50). When we breathe we move, when we speak we move, yet many people seem disconnected from movement and their bodies. *"Words have become his (i.e. a person's) primary means of communication and realization - words that he says, words that he listens to, words in books, words that he thinks with. And slowly, slowly, without his knowing it almost, the words and the talking, which are only one kind of movement linked to one kind of understanding, take the place of another quite different awareness of himself and others"* (Whitehouse, quoted in Pallaro, 1999, p. 41).

Pallaro (ibid., p. 43) summarises the general perception of movement - *"Movement has become a means to an end, usually a rational and purposeful end, and takes place automatically in response to hundreds and hundreds of mental images of going some place and doing something"*. Authentic movement contrasts staying with this utilitarian approach, raising an awareness that *"movement is the personality made visible"* (ibid., p. 52). On reading this I felt a pang of anxiety, felt vulnerable and exposed. If I choose to express myself in a picture or poetry I can do so in private. When I move I inevitably reveal myself, which explains the strength of initial inhibition against being observed while moving.

In expressing authentic movement people can achieve greater self-awareness. Movement is another form of communication which outwits the protective censor. *"The body does not, I would almost say cannot, lie"* (Pallaro, 1999, p. 42). As in painting a picture, movement can bring unconscious material into awareness, sometimes with accompanying images or feelings. There can be a sense that the unconscious has taken over, that rather than moving, they are being moved. Whitehouse (quoted in Pallaro, 1999, p. 59) believes that *"To move is to be directed by the ego. To experience being moved is to know the reality of the unconscious"*. The body is no longer *"an object to be trained, controlled or manipulated ... when it is somehow myself, impelled by impulses, feelings and inward demands for action waiting to be perceived and allowed, I am suddenly aware of being differently alive, differently conscious of myself"* (ibid.). This was both an exciting and crucial discovery for me in PCET training and I wanted students to be aware of its potential in their search for self-awareness.

David Grove (1989) believes that trauma is held somatically and can be experienced in bodily symptoms such as a headache or a tightness in the chest. He changes the symptom into a metaphor and works verbally to transform both the metaphor and the memory. Movement provides a different path. That the body holds information about the past is summarised by Proust (1928, p. 2) "*Our arms and legs are full of sleeping memories of the past*". Authentic movement can reawaken and transform these memories.

Skill in dance is no more required than artistic skill in art therapy. "*Dance does not belong to dancers, it belongs to Man (sic) - and always has*" (Whitehouse, quoted in Pallaro, 1999, p. 59).

The concept of 'the witness' emerges in movement therapy. As the client moves within a therapeutic setting the therapist becomes her witness. Janet Adler (cited in Pallaro, 1999, p. 142) describes the role of the witness - "*She is not 'looking at' the person moving, she is witnessing, listening, bringing a specific quality of attention or presence to the experience of the mover*". As a witness I try to provide sustained empathy as well as ensuring physical safety if the client has her eyes closed and there is limited space. Natalie Rogers (2000, p. 119) defines the role of witness from a person-centred perspective. The witness provides the core conditions and, as part of her congruence, allows her own images and intuition to emerge. Her experience can be shared with the client if the client wishes, owning the experience in the same way as after any creative therapeutic work. Adler (cited in Pallaro, 1999) points out that being witnessed or really seen is an inherent part of human development. "*This could be one way of describing the development of the self ... being seen initially precedes seeing oneself*" (p. 155). She claims "*Inherent in being a person in the cultures of the West is the longing for a witness. We want, deeply want, to be seen as we are by another*" (ibid., p. 158).

Cox and Theilgaard (1987, p 180), in describing the role of witness as originating in classical psychoanalysis, quote from Gedo. An analyst is "*an empathic witness who responds from a position of freely hovering attention*".

I believe that the client in verbal therapy needs witness to her experience which, to some degree, changes that experience. The client is no longer alone with the issue, the memory, the pain. Experiencing a witness as we move makes this truth more explicit.

The concept of mirroring is widely used in both verbal and non-verbal therapies. Winnicott (1971) describes the way in which a mother mirrors her baby's experience. If the mother is accepting of her baby's experience the infant sees a reflection of a loveable self, thus helping to form the child's self. Meekums (1999, p. 249) makes a connection with the therapeutic process which "*can thus be viewed as essentially cocreational, since the therapist contributes to the emotional form, a projection of the client's self, in the way that caregivers shape the emerging self created by the infant*". Jacobs (2001a, p. 15) writes "*In relationships, whether in the family, the consulting room or indeed in the lecture theatre, we and those with whom we are with are like a hall of reflecting mirrors*".

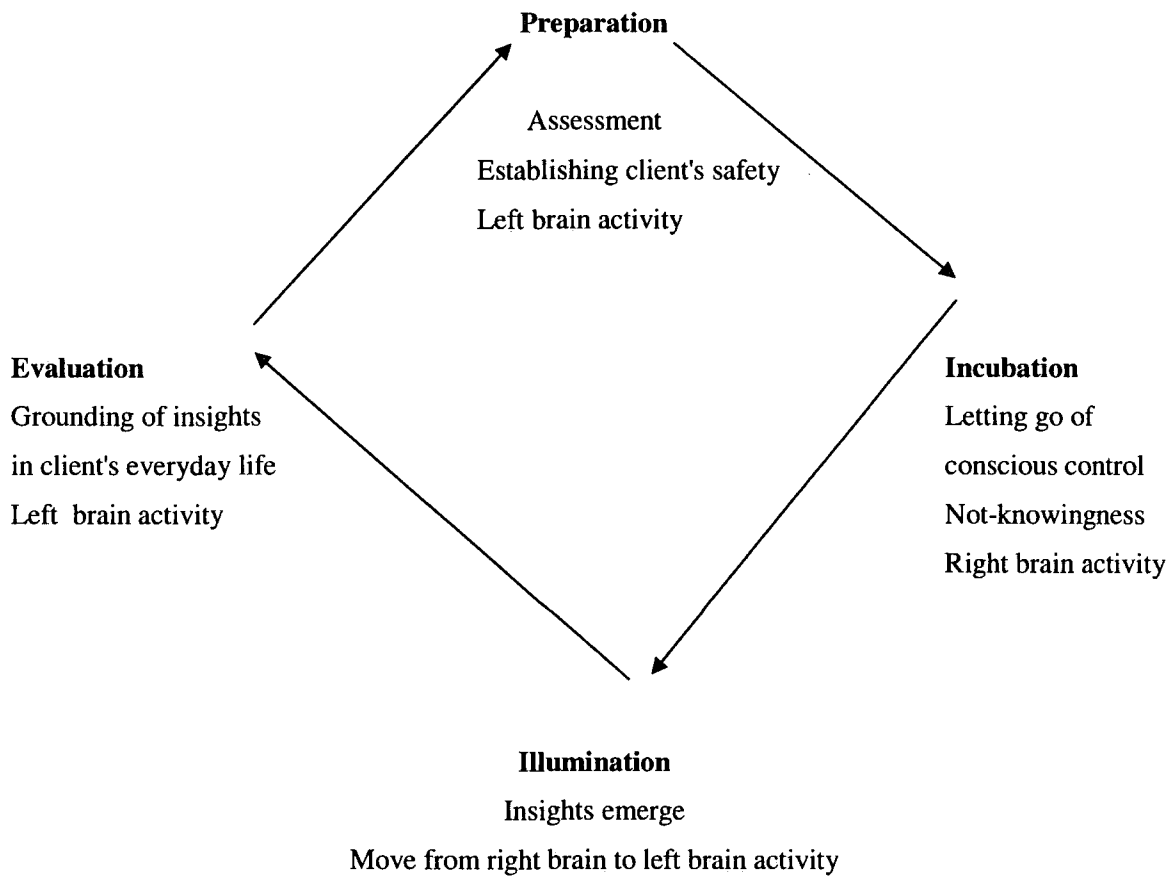
Adler (quoted in Pallaro, 1999, p. 142) describes the client's goal as she moves authentically - "*The mover works with closed eyes in order to expand her experiencing of listening to the deeper levels of her kinaesthetic reality. Her task is to respond to a sensation, to an inner impulse, to energy coming from the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious or what Wilber (1980) calls the 'superconscious'*". This hints at a spiritual awareness.

Natalie Rogers summarises the goal of authentic movement more simply. The client needs an 'intentional focus', that is, a decision to be aware of a feeling, thought or image and allow the body to express those. Sometimes the 'movement' consists of standing still!

Chodorow (quoted in Pallaro, 1999, p. 224) describes the possibility of a spiritual quality in her client's movement "*Then there is the whole realm of what does this person's movement stir up in me from a larger cultural perspective ... In what way does this express a universal human experience ... In a sense it has a ritual quality. It is as if we enter sacred space*".

Meekums (2002) describes dance movement therapy as a creative act. All forms of therapy need to be creative if the client's life is to change for the better. Yet how is creativity accessed? Meekums provides for me a deeper theoretical understanding of the creative process which occurs in therapy. She describes it as being in practice a spiral rather than a cycle as the client is likely to move round it many times. What I find interesting in the following diagram (adapted from Meekums, 2002, p. 15) is the movement between right and left brain activity.

Diagram 1: Movement between right and left brain activity



In all the arts therapies both functions of the brain are important at some stage of the cycle/spiral. *"The creative process depends on the capacity of the individual to both make use of and surrender the functions normally associated with 'ego'"* (Gordon, quoted in Meekums, 2002, p. 15).

I believe that verbal therapy does not generally give the client an opportunity to surrender conscious control, to enter the state of 'not-knowingness'. As a client in dance movement therapy enters this stage of the cycle (i.e. moves authentically) *"spontaneous movements become more obviously expressive of the intrapsychic material of the individual ... This is when the movement becomes metaphoric, that is, it symbolises something for clients, whether or not they are conscious of its meaning"* (Meekums, 2002, p. 17). In the incubation stage the client connects to his deepest unconscious self and, Natalie Rogers believes, to the collective unconscious. *"When we search inward for what is most deeply personal, we touch the universal"* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 186). The Jungian influence is clear. Adler (1996, p. 84) believed that this 'embodiment of the collective' is a

crucial part of therapy. *"We cannot endure the pain, the isolation, the despair from our own spirit and from each other"*. I have a sense that in purely verbal therapy we might be selling the client short.

Although The Association for Dance Movement Therapy (UK) definition of dance movement therapy (quoted in Gates, Gear and Wray, 1998, p. 111) omits a spiritual dimension, Meekums acknowledges that the incubation stage of movement can lead to spiritual awareness (1993, 2002).

Although I am accustomed to working with clients' verbal metaphors I had not recognised movement as a form of metaphor. Metaphor can be defined as *"the application of name or descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable"* (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1964). Metaphors frequently, as Meekums (2002, p. 22) points out, have bodily connections; for example, 'I'm in a spin', 'I feel weighed down', 'I nearly jumped out of my skin'. In DMT the metaphor is symbolised in the client's movement or posture which therapists are trained to observe and understand. *"I do not need to know where to take her. She shows me"* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 108).

The client's movement can be an unconscious revelation of the way in which he customarily relates to others, for example moving towards, moving away from or moving against other people. The metaphoric significance of the client's repetitive movements arises from the fact that *"Early mother-child interactions are mediated non-verbally"* (Meekums, 2002, p. 28). Meekums (ibid., p. 25) reminds us that Freud considered our ego to be initially a bodily ego.

Once the significance of the client's movement has been interpreted the therapist herself might mirror the movement to amplify it. *"Following the lead of the client supports her kinesthetic experience and helps her to delve more deeply into the issue"* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 108). Meekums (2002, p. 28) suggests that repetition *"of these patterns in movement allows us to remember (re-embody) the original meaning we attached to them"*. Emotions which have been repressed in the body and experienced as tension or other physical symptoms can be re-experienced. *"For some people, DMT helps them not only to face difficult and painful emotions but also to rediscover their physical selves, to reconnect with that part of the developing individual that is healthy and creative"* (ibid., p. 99). The client unblocks whatever is holding her back from achieving her full potential and experiences the actualising tendency within.

My own authentic movement was the first step towards experiencing rather than understanding the connection between my body and unconscious mind. As a practitioner my experience of working with the client's movement is limited to witnessing her authentic movement and facilitating her verbal

exploration. Although I had discovered that movement was the form of expression which best evaded my personal censor I was wary about introducing it too soon to CESCO students; movement is more visible in a group situation than drawing or creative writing and I was wary about too early a challenge to long-held inhibitions.

Free writing

The requirement for counselling students to keep a personal journal throughout their training is an extension of the established belief that writing can be therapeutic and self-revealing (Rainer, 1980). Diaries or personal journals can be cathartic, providing a readily available container of passionate or troubling thoughts and feelings, as a confessional and as a way of gaining self-understanding without the aid of a therapist. In 1996 The Association for Literary Arts in Personal Development (LAPIDUS) was established to promote the informal use of therapeutic writing and methods of writing in professional therapeutic practice.

For some people it is easier to use words on paper rather than to speak them aloud. Sensitive material can be easier to disclose, even to oneself, through writing which can be kept private. As through regular recording of dreams, frequent diary entries can provide a lasting record of psychological process which some people choose to share with a therapist. The research journal I have kept over several years provides a record of feelings, ideas and moments of illumination which otherwise would have been lost. In writing up the research I have used excerpts from my journal as a form of triangulation.

Bolton (1999) includes amongst the therapeutic benefits of creative writing its ability to create a pathway to our unconscious. While much writing is utilitarian or carefully crafted, what Natalie Rogers calls 'free writing' is akin to the free association technique of psychodynamic practice. Sentence construction, punctuation and spelling are of no concern. It has the flavour of authentic movement, being spontaneous and uncensored. Bolton (1999, p. 20) quotes the poet Ted Hughes "*The progress of any writer is marked by those moments when he manages to outwit his own inner police system*", that is our ability to repress fears, memories and experiences which, in person-centred terms, could challenge our self-concept.

I have noticed less inhibition about free writing than in inviting clients to paint or use movement.

Bolton (ibid., p. 21) believes that "*Writing does not seem to allow onto the page more than the writer*

can bear at that time." She acknowledges the fear, since Freud and Jung, that lurking in the unconscious mind might be a monster. *"Yet what is down there is no more than ourselves, our own memories, thoughts, fears, experiences"* (ibid.).

In her practice of linking arts modalities in the 'creative connection' Natalie Rogers encourages free writing before or after art or movement. Whilst some clients find it immediately freeing to write spontaneously for ten minutes or so without conscious thought, others find it initially strange. We are accustomed to writing about something specific and to frequent checking of what we have written.

"Free writing needs to be free of criticism and this enables expression of 'forbidden' or unaccepted thoughts, negative feelings and wishful thinking" (Lahad, 2000, p. 56). We need a non-judgemental attitude towards our own writing. If clients choose to share their writing an accepting, empathic response is as important as when clients express themselves through a picture or through movement.

All counsellors are required to be supervised by an experienced counselling practitioner. The purpose is to ensure that counsellors are working effectively and ethically. Lahad, in writing about the use of expressive arts methods in supervision, suggests that *"free writing is an excellent tool ... to enable expression of feelings, processing delicate issues and development of self-awareness. Writing is a way to communicate with oneself and with others."* (ibid., p. 55).

Dramatherapy

Grainger (1999, p. 99) stresses that it is only by experiencing the arts therapies that we can understand them *"... arts therapies work in the way and to the extent that known relationships 'work'; you learn about them by being in them; there is no other way"*. Natalie Rogers (2000) acknowledges that her writing focuses mainly on aspects of the arts of which she has most personal experience. There is no specific mention of drama.

In my PCET training and teaching, however, there were aspects of drama, particularly in the use of role-play, masks and costume. I am interested in the way the wearing of even a mask can change my feeling or behaviour. Hidden behind a lion's mask I feel safe, experiencing something of the lion's power which demands respect. By donning an apron and brandishing a broom I can become a 'sub-personality' (Rowan, 1990) who speaks her mind and comes out from behind the mask of politeness and consideration for others. I can experiment with being a usually hidden part of myself, rehearse a

new kind of behaviour. To my surprise I can become a part of me I have never previously met. I can identify with a favourite fairytale character by dressing up as her and discover the psychological connection between us. *"Drama therapy is one of the newly emergent arts therapies which include music, art and dance movement. It takes its form from theatre art and makes it available to clients and patients either to maintain health or to work with disorder and problems"* (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p. 17). Jennings underlines the fact that the ingredients of dramatherapy are ancient, demonstrated *"in healing rituals and theatre performances in many civilizations."* (ibid.).

Jennings helped me to differentiate between dramatherapy and psychodrama. Psychodrama was developed by Jacob Moreno, born in Vienna in 1892, as a reaction to individual therapy. Moreno believed that a more interactive form of group therapy enabled clients to see themselves as others perceived them. A drama is enacted which derives from an event in one individual's life. Other group members play the supporting roles while the facilitator directs the unfolding drama. In the new enactment of the event the client's perception can alter and his life-script undergo change. In contrast, dramatherapy works with material from plays, legends and myths, with universal human themes. All aspects of theatre can be involved, in work with groups or individuals. *"Of all the art forms this is perhaps the most inclusive, incorporating elements of music, movement, design, story and performance"* (Chesner, 1995, p. 5).

The literature highlighted for me the huge significance of drama in human life. Jennings (1995) describes three stages of developmental play in children, although these can overlap. In early infancy the child uses his senses in 'embodiment' play; for example imitates sounds, splashes in water, pushes food round with a spoon. He moves on to 'projective' play in which objects take on a symbolic meaning. An old blanket can symbolise mother. Feelings can be projected onto characters in his bedtime stories. Projective play allows for a distance between the child and his feelings, making them less overwhelming. Gradually a child develops the ability to role-play. With a sense of self established, he can pretend to be his toy car or Batman with the appropriate sound effects! The arts therapies involve projective and embodiment play.

Jennings makes a strong claim - *"The infant is born with creative potential and the capacity to symbolise; indeed it is the very capacity of human beings to pretend or make-believe which enables them to survive"* (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p. 20). If children miss out on this dramatic development she believes that *"they are likely to have problems of body image, perceptual distortion, reality-*

ground and role confusion" (Jennings, 1995, p. 90), all problems which dramatherapy can seek to alleviate.

We continue to be actors throughout our lives, on both an internal and external stage. Internally, for example, our 'sub-personalities' (Rowan, 1990) argue, struggle for power, form alliances, sabotage our good intentions or rescue us from difficulty. Externally, Goffman (1969) shows how people interact by following certain performance rituals. For example, I have seen the head waiter in his coat and tails perform the ritual of the restaurant before putting on his anorak and going home to the humble ritual of walking the dog. *"In everyday life, as in drama/theatre, persons or actors take on and play out personae or roles in order to express a sense of who they are and what they want. Role-taking is an imaginative process of identifying with a role-model and internalising several of its qualities"* (Landy, 1995, p. 7). In dramatherapy a client can try out any role he chooses and move between them as he wishes.

"In therapy the expansiveness and fluidity of this process is profoundly therapeutic. By temporarily adapting roles that are alien to our habitual life roles we can learn something transformative about the possibilities of change. What we consider to be permanent features of our identity might be nothing more than habitual patterns of posture, breathing, facial expression or thought patterns" (Chesner, 1995, p. 6).

Chesner describes four stages in the dramatherapy process. The client needs firstly to gain trust in the therapist through exercises designed to put him in touch with his body. Structured games follow which are fun and provide the client with a sense of 'boundaried freedom'. The client then agrees to enter a world of pretence and make-believe where anything is possible and time and distance can be manipulated. This might involve 'stepping into' a well known story or a make believe place. The client can expand his life experience. *"We can explore what was in terms of personal experience, what might have been, and what might never have been"* (ibid., p. 7). I would add 'And what could be in the future.' The final stage is to gain insight through creative exploration. *"Whilst psychotherapy often focuses on problems or solutions to problems the arts therapies, including dramatherapy, can focus on nurturing what is healthy and alive in the inner world of the person through creativity"* (ibid., p. 11). Epston, cited in Jennings (1995), suggests that the therapist can help a client to create a drama in which he becomes an ally in the fight against, for example, anorexia or nightmares - *"Don't talk about the problem - talk against it"*(p. 73). This sits uneasily for me with the person-centred belief that all the client's experience needs to be valued. Nevertheless, externalising symptoms

through role play or working with miniatures for example can empower clients to re-author their lives, to direct a different play.

Landy (1995) and Jennings and Minde (1993) write about the process of emotional distancing which drama allows. *"The theatre provides a distancing process that enables the experience to be contained as well as seen in different perspectives ... The theatre enables us to have theatrical distance on the one hand and to come closer to something on the other"* (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p. 18). The distancing process is enhanced by costume and, particularly by masks. *"In a mask you feel an ancient strength; in a mask you do things that the mind cannot conceive"* (Alekos Fashions Paris, quoted in Jennings and Minde, p. 187). Jennings agrees that *"masks enable feelings and reactions that otherwise would not be able to be expressed by other means"* (ibid., p. 189).

The deliberate wearing of a mask for therapeutic reasons is in contrast to the concept of taking off a false mask which therapy often enables a client to do. In dramatherapy the purpose of the mask is to amplify or focus a character or role. The mask affects the wearer and those who interact with him.

Ritual

We mark the seasons of the year and of our lives with rituals. Carol singing, regardless of religious belief, has become a part of every British Christmas along with rituals of sending cards and sharing rich and expensive food. The more modern ritual of the hen night marks the transition between single womanhood and the partnership of marriage.

Participating in ritual is one of the oldest forms of social drama, enabling expression of belief and worship, of celebration and mourning, in a socially acceptable form. Rituals such as a rain dance or communal prayer have been used to influence events, to mediate between man and the gods. Ritual has been an important element of healing, whether it be the Christian practice of the laying on of hands or the taking of grapes to a friend in hospital.

Jennings (1995, p. 90) summarises the importance of drama, including ritual, for human survival: *"I believe that drama and theatre, starting from birth and continuing until death, are crucial to our survival in all spheres of living. ... The root of our culture is at the foundation of human society, which came about through dramatic expression and dramatic ritual. Drama is part of human society*

as well as the structure which can effectively manage change. It is the means through which we understand both our individual as well as our corporate identity".

I believe that counsellors need an awareness of the significance and power of ritual. Through PCET they can create and help clients to create rituals which are specific to their own lives and healing. This will be explained further in chapter 8. Sue Jennings, a dramatherapist, and Ase Minde, an art therapist, have written about the overlap between their work. Minde writes "*I believe that to meet the needs of clients we need to know that we can cross each other's boundaries*" (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p. 81). She sees the different art media as providing a bridge between the client's inner and outer worlds and between the client and therapist. Meekums (1999) cites Winnicott's view that "*the creative process ... brings inner reality to bear on outer reality*" (p. 249). This has been my experience also, through PCET.

A reluctance to pretend, to act, can unfortunately inhibit counselling students and clients from participating in what seems 'not real' or 'fake'.

Winnicott wrote about 'the world of illusion' which a child enters through his imagination. Jennings writes (Jennings and Minde, 1993, p. 137) "*In order to create this world of illusion, infants must be able to project their experience into symbols - a particularly human activity*". She explains that "*the symbolic world of the child is illusory in the sense that it is symbolic - not that it is not real. The creation is real within the boundary of artistic and dramatic reality, which is necessary for explaining our fantasy life as well as helping us to grasp our everyday experience*" (ibid.). Grainger (1999) writes "*In the creative therapies the difference between 'fact' and 'fiction' is consciously explored. The 'as if' game is played openly*" (p. 13). Grainger acknowledges that a scientist would find it difficult to explain how any aspect of the creative media can take on "*a life of its own*" (ibid., p. 14) which it so often does as a client moves into an illusory world.

Conclusion

I have discovered that much of the theory which underpins the arts therapies in general applies also to PCET. A review of arts therapy literature enabled my understanding of the potency of ET. It confirmed my belief that the inclusion of ET in counsellor training encourages a more holistic understanding of the client's experience.

Chapter 6

An Anthology of poems

Introduction

In this chapter I present poems in which students indirectly answer my research question “In what ways does ET enhance counsellor training?”

The poems stand alone, without discussion, so that the voices can have the impact they deserve. As explained in my methodology, the fourteen poems emerged from the transcripts of fourteen individual, semi-structured, interviews. The words are verbatim although I have changed the order of some statements and included only those which I consider to reflect the main views expressed. I have used pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.

Fiona's poem

I think it's certainly freed me up
freed the separation between thinking and feelings,
that's been a help.

I like words
and I'm not so happy with materials.
I've been one of the doubting Thomases,
I really disliked the dream-catcher thing.
There's something fake about it that I don't like.
I had a particular anathema about buttons,
because there's a certain thing about buttons
which suggests triviality.

"Well now we're going to be spontaneous!"
and my spirit says
"Oh no, we're not!"

I've loved some of the exercises.
I was amazed to have some-one watching me

as a tree, unfolding my leaves.
I think having music, having beautiful music
and then doing a picture with the music
still continuing
or the music in my mind anyway
and this business of having a companion,
an empathic, silent witness
That was very powerful.

We had an evening where we were characters
and, you wanted the honest truth, didn't you?
I was actually going to be Heidi
but my instinct was to make for the door.
There was such a lot of play-acting about it.
I've never liked parties, I never used to like parties
and there was an element of a party.

The masks were absolutely wonderful,
Absolutely wonderful,
so that was very powerful,
that was a very beautiful exercise.
We all learned about respect for each other,
respect for humanity really out of that.
That was really creative
and it really set the tone for a long time I think.
Well, it's changed all of us.

The thing is you've got to be in a state of incongruence.
You can play around and you can fake it, but to me it's meaningless.
It's got to be real.
It's like a glass of water is a wonderful thing
if you're really thirsty
but nothing special if you're not.

Sally's poem

It's easier for me to express myself
in sort of artistic terms.

The expressive therapy bypasses the mouth
and lets whatever's in your head and heart
come out.

The movement is almost like raw emotion,
not sort of diluting it with having to think of the words.

Quite often you've said
just let it flow
just let whatever comes to you, just sort of write
and quite often at the time I think
"I don't think it's going to come!"
And then it has, just all flowed out,
reams and reams of it.
And then when I get home as well,
and read it afterwards
it really makes a lot of sense.

When we did the movement
it was like you were able to completely express yourself,
with like abandon really
but know that you were safe -
you had some-one there with you.
That's like letting your mind run away with you,
your head, your heart, your body, everything,
expressing everything from your top to your toes.

When we did the animal thing,
it was like the jungle thing with the animals,
it gave me an insight into myself as well.
It's the kind of thing where you just sort of

let everything
spill out of your mind,
do whatever comes to you.

Sometimes it doesn't immediately make any sense.
I go through everything in the car, on the way home
and I'll get back and I'll have another look
and I think "Oh gosh, yes!".
You know, like people have different opinions
of Alice in Wonderland
and a lot of nursery rhymes have meanings
that a child could understand.
Sometimes the things I've written sound
like a nice fairy tale
but then, I can really relate to what it means.
There's a little bit of seed there,
of knowledge.
But it hasn't really been watered.
but the creative work sort of nurtures it
and lets the deepest thoughts and feelings
come out into the open.

I had a sort of on-going issue
with a person I hadn't been able to have any contact with.
I really needed to put that person behind me
and my ritual was to do just that.
I remember, when we were sitting in the room, thinking about it,
I could almost see where I needed to be.
And I went outside
and I went round four or five little spots
until I found where I needed to be.
And I sat on this sort of tree stump.
I thought "This is where it's going to happen."
And I saw everybody else doing theirs

and it was so respectful
giving everybody the space to do their own thing.

Sophie's poem

In the second year
one big shock for me was when we worked on the masks
and I think I discovered there a sub-personality.
Afterwards I thought it was so obvious
why hadn't I seen it before?
And I think it wasn't that I hadn't seen it,
I had seen it, that sub-personality
But I hadn't felt it.
That was the difference.
I think it was because it was sort of slow and going very gradually into it
as we worked on the mask,
it was the process of making the masks
and at the same time thinking about ...
it was very meditative really.
A quality of silence
no, a quality of noise which was very close to silence.
Everywhere in the room there was a very pointed attention,
very meditative I thought.
I discovered, or rediscovered, my Cinderella sub-personality
and I'm still working on it.
I think it's probably the major theme of my life.

Sean's poem

In some cases it had quite a profound effect
it sort of touched something deep inside,
and unexpectedly so.
It just happened.
When we were writing with the left hand
so much came out
and I hadn't quite expected it.

On another occasion
it didn't sort of do anything for me.
At other times, despite myself
it actually got through.

I didn't actually do a ritual as such,
I didn't really get into what I felt I wanted to.
It was okay for me because
It was so intensely personal,
I wasn't ready to share it with anybody else.
We spent an hour just talking
And it was very very deep for my partner,
very meaningful.
It gave physical substance and an act
to what we'd been talking about.
It was like imagery I'd say
But a real image.
Something did actually happen, you could feel it, you could see it there!
We weren't outside,
we went into the chapel
which just happened to be the right place to be
as it happened,
it worked well there.

One of my wild sort of thoughts
- I think you may interest the client with music.
You say "You play something",
just to make things up expressively and free
and discussing how they were feeling
when they played
and why it went in a certain direction,
why the music moved that way.

I found the whole thing very difficult at first

but now I've thought about it
it's a lot more friendly than I realised.
It was comparatively new,
a new direction.

George's poem

We did a lot of work with dreams
and I did a nice drawing of one dream that I had.
I started to write my dreams down.
I got on my wife's nerves because the light was going on,
every half hour it seems.

There was a photo of the ritual
and that was quite good.
What happened there was that my thoughts
became tangible.
I actually burned something
and it was totally unexpected to see smoke.
Naturally, when there's burning you see smoke
but that smoke became symbolic in its way.
Something that was a feeling became physical
and I've still got the photograph.

I remember you putting a lot of objects on the table.
I thought "Well this is not for me!"
If something jumped out at you
then you could take hold of that
but nothing seemed to jump at me for quite a long time.
But about three or four months ago
I was an observer watching this client
and she had a red thimble.
This represented a drink thing, like a party-going thing
but then, she was looking at this object
and it meant a decision to give up part of her life

to become a mother,
so that was quite powerful that.

Then it was my turn to be client
and we had the same objects.
I could look at the objects on the table
and as I picked up an object the counsellor was with me
but it was quite a different experience.
I wasn't looking at the counsellor,
I was looking at that particular object.
And that felt different.

In my experience over the last six months,
not knowing whether I'd got a job or not, I picked up the same red tumbler,
and I picked up a dice and I put the dice in the tumbler
and this wasn't a conscious thing.
I was using the tumbler and saying things
Like if it came out a figure six I would keep my job.
I was shaking the dice
and I didn't want the dice to come out of the tumbler
because I was afraid of what that decision might be.

Now, looking back, the dice in the tumbler
didn't have any effect at all,
it was the meaning associated with that particular act.
When we got the feedback, and there were five or six people there,
they said the atmosphere was electric.
Just by the small objects being on the table
some quite powerful emotions came out,
emotions which I felt and hadn't experienced before.

Anne's poem

First of all I wanted to be Tigger
Because Tigger's a very happy, jolly character

and it's always that side of me I want to be,
the side that reality in the world
sometimes pushes out.
You get up in the morning and you face your day
and you've got practical things to think about.

I decided not to be Tigger.
I decided to be the cat out of Batman and Robin,
some-one who sat in the background and was a very strong character
but didn't push herself forward.
I think I saw that as me.
The character I interacted with was you
as Little Red Riding Hood.
When you came across with your basket
and you had food in your basket
I wanted to share the food.
But you got up and walked away
and I wasn't able to get the food.

It made me look at the relationships I've got.
There's a lot of people out there who are very friendly
but then all of a sudden they turn
and there's something in their character that I dislike
and I withdraw.
And this is where I see the cat in me.
I come down to earth and I mix among every-one
then when I meet characters I don't feel safe with
I retreat to the rooftops.

My values are much stronger now.
I prefer to spend time with people I can trust and relate to
rather than casual acquaintances.
I value trust and congruence and empathy.
Anything other than using the core conditions in counselling

would be wrong.

It would be like having acquaintances
but not having the trust and congruence between people.

Kelly's poem

It really took off with my client
and it helped her enormously.

It did take her to a deeper level,
made her think more laterally
rather than verbalise her feelings.

Drawing materials, coloured pencils
and I made available some other materials
such as buttons and fabrics,
different sort of textures in fabrics
but she wasn't interested in those.

She got more satisfaction,
I think it seemed more natural to her,
to use crayons and pencils.

She was able to choose.

She took it away with her
and worked on it by choice
from one session to the other.

She brought it back with her
and was quite proud of what she'd done.

And she hadn't got a great vocabulary
to express her feelings
but with the use of the materials
she was able to do that.

For me, as a person,

I find it a wonderful way of working.

It was a way for me to express
what I wanted to
and express things that I didn't expect to

and I found that very liberating.

I spend my life at work talking
but it's always constructed and restricted.
It's very limited in vocabulary,
confidentiality is the key.
Working in a way like that,
with art materials
and using the creative half of the brain,
having freedom,
gives me a wonderful chance to express myself
In a way I wouldn't normally do.

Jill's poem

I'm really really thirsty on this course
For theoretical input
And my view is,
or certainly at the beginning it was
with the expressive stuff,
that although I got into it,
I enjoyed it, and got a lot out of it
it's a drain on the limited time we have
for all the other theory we have to do.

I got over that block,
otherwise I would have spent every time
without participating fully,
sort of pretending to participate
and I didn't want that.

Two things that encouraged me
was the actual stuff itself,
and seeing your enthusiasm for it
was a real encouragement.

The stones, the stones are very useful.
It's got a lot to do with me
because I love stones.
I've got a million in jars, boxes, dishes,
I've got a lot of those kind of stones
and I like looking at stones.
Because I'm comfortable with stones
it seemed useful to bring them into practice,
it seemed more natural to do that,
and I have done it.

Cecily's poem

I had really forgotten that I was capable
of being creative in that way,
or had never fully realised.
At school we were sent down
the producing something beautiful route.
The idea that you could you could express yourself
without having to produce something beautiful for other people
was really a relief.
Being a scientist by training
I've been channelled into the logical,
analytical side of writing.
To be able to develop the other side
of my thinking, coming more from the gut
than through the sort of mental processes
has been really good.

It's changed the way I've journalled for years,
it's changed the way I've done that.
I just used to write, but now I sometimes draw.
And sometimes I write
but I sort of make patterns of the words
rather than just straight along the lines

and it just enables me to express myself
more thoroughly, I suppose, and in more depth.

Sometimes if I'm feeling fed up or something,
and I draw or something,
then I can see what it is I'm fed up about
or where I want to move to.
It's another way of discovering
and realising what's going on,
and often it's difficult to express in words.
Being able to draw it, or make it in clay or something
is a way of expressing something
which just doesn't work with words.
Words are too restricting, too narrow,
or you can't find a way to put it.
It's been a way of expressing myself
without having to be constrained with words.
Words aren't always my strong point.

I went for a character I loved as a child.
I was the girl who knitted jackets for the geese,
the princes who turned into swans.
I couldn't understand why I went for this character
and I didn't like liking it
if you know what I mean,
so it was quite challenging for me really.
But the story I wrote afterwards
was very revealing and, again, it was just me.
I wrote a lot - a lot of me came out in it
but I didn't realise until I read it.
And they were quite painful things
I looked at, as a result of that.
I'm sure I wouldn't have written about what I'd written
unless we'd dressed up as the character.

Lesley's poem

Personally I'm very protective
when doing expressive myself.
I didn't really get that much involved.
I did it but I didn't get as involved
as other students would have done.
I found it didn't fit into where I was at the time.

Stones I've used before in counselling
and I actually stopped using them.
Again, I think it's because of my own protection
the stones were getting too much information from the client.
My usual clientele were between two and six weeks.
It seemed very intrusive.
I was getting an awful lot of information
without being able to take that next step,
where the client could explore it.
I was the one getting all the information
and there was nothing going back to the client.

I was surprised with the ritual
because I didn't expect the response that I got from myself.
I was aware of what we were doing for the week-end
and again, my protective mode came in.
It was personal to me - my brother
and something that I just wanted to do by myself
so the preparation and the discussion
I did with a colleague
but I did the actual ritual by myself.
I didn't want it to be intrusive
because it's still quite raw
and it just felt better to me
and I suppose the quietness
and just being together spiritually I suppose.

It's what I find with the expressive
that even though at times I do put blocks up
to some degree it is helpful.
It sometimes throws something up.
I may not have been as responsive
as I should have been within the session
but afterwards I stop and think "Well, yeh!"
I'm a person who can write prolifically
but I have to stop and think.
To actually just write down was totally incoherent.
when I read it in the here and then.
It seems as though I can key into,
it might not have relevance then,
or even a week or two later
but at some stage I think
"That's why I reacted the way I did
and why I was so protective of that!"
It just gives me greater insight into myself.

Jean's poem

I kind of struggled for a while
between the ET side
and the kind of more just dull theory
because in my academic life so far
it's all been dull theory.

You know the very first thing we did, years ago?
I picked a duck, a little ceramic duck.
I just thought, well, what's all this about?
Then I started to write about this duck.
It was all about being closed off
and having a hard outer shell, ducking from life.
And just all of this stuff that I wrote
I thought "Wow!"

And even the one we've just done
on polarities, you know.
Some people were a bit sceptical.
but I put all that to one side and thought
"No, I'd better give it a go!"
and I picked a giraffe and an ant.
I found that they were just so far removed from each other
that they didn't have a clue that each other existed and yet they are both sides of me.

Was there something a couple of months ago
when we had to draw a dream?
I drew a really horrific picture.
I drew an awful picture of a nightmare
that I'd had the week before.
I'd been having loads of dreams about births
and loads of nightmares centred around babies
and births and things like that.
I've still got the picture, my husband's horrified by it.
It's full of blood, the page, horrible!
I thought "All that can't be attributed to the baby!"
and wouldn't you just believe it? It was!
That was a real birth fear.
And what it was was running away from it so much, running away from all the dreams
I knew were about birth.

It seems really strange
that in all these kind of expressive things
whatever you pick it hits the spot.

Angela's poem

I remember on that very first evening
there was an elder branch
and people gave different perceptions
and talked about that.

Everybody sees things differently
or lots of people can look at the same thing
from a slightly different angle.
I thought that was very useful.

There's been quite a shift as the course has gone on about ET,
the impression it's had on me.

I was beginning to get quite resistant to it.
What was making me so angry was people saying
"God, this is so much better than talking!"
So I think a lot of my reservations
were that people got so excited about it.
I remember writing in one of my assignments
"ET - is it a substitute for talking?"
Well of course it isn't and I want to prove that!"

But I suppose we did quite a lot of reading,
one of the handouts you gave us, I began to read.
There are as many ways of expressing it
as people to express it.
That's what I got from the course.
As long as it's underpinned with person-centred theory
and as long as it's an invitation.

The way I've used it in counselling
Is very much practising.
If they weren't talking,
particularly weren't talking in imagery very much,
they were talking in colour and drew it,
there was a real sense
of the person having found a way.
Such a positive thing for them - it was awful to talk about.
They drew this series of pictures
and then sat back and said

"That's what I was saying!"

Sheila's poem

I was very sceptical at first.
I'd always been told I wasn't any good
at anything creative.
So the barriers were already there.

The thing I most remember is certainly making the dream-catcher
which I still have.

I approached it very spontaneously
And I didn't know exactly what I was going to do.
It reaffirmed who were the significant people,
it also reaffirmed the fears and the hopes that I had.

I'm a logical and rational person,
I certainly don't write poetry!
But I've been shocked at how spontaneously
I've been able to write a poem
when I've made the decision to let myself go.

I am playful, I mean I've always danced
but I sort of dance and sing
at the drop of a hat now.

Jane's poem

We did that thing where you had to dance to music
and it was really powerful.
I wouldn't have thought I'd have been able to do that
but I did and I really got into it
And I wrote loads about it afterwards
That really impacted, you know.
The fact that I could do that sort of thing,
something expressive,

in front of some-one I don't know very well,
it helped me to measure where I was
in my own personal development.

The thing about rituals –

I was with some-one I was really close to
and felt really able to do what I wanted to
and it meant such a lot.

There was a bit of it that could have gone horribly wrong.

We were trying to get those tea-lights to light
and they wouldn't.

It felt like a really negative thing.

I caught myself doing something –

I was trying to burn a bit of me
so it sort of fitted in.

It's very easy to talk about things that you want to do,
to talk about how you want to lose a quality
but in doing the ritual

I was actually doing the thing I was trying to stop,
what I wanted to lose in the ritual,
and it sort of highlighted it,
so that was really, really useful.

We had to draw some sub-personality
and it was really painful for me.

I didn't like what I came up with,
and yet it kind of got below the level,
dipped into a bit of subconscious thing.

I draw a lot, I used to, and it really tapped in
very quickly to something.

That quite shocked me, like a short cut you know.

The mask was really powerful
because I really don't like to be touched.

To have some-one do that for me!
I felt badly at first but it was good both sides.
Obviously you felt very vulnerable
and it was very beautiful
and it was like a relationship thing
and made us very close.
We didn't know each other, not very well,
and that really helped the bond you know.
It was such an intimate –
and it really worked.
I've still got it actually
and I really like to look at it you know
and see how I've changed.

Conclusion

This chapter forms part of my results, complementing the next, more analytical chapter which analyses and discusses the same data.

Chapter 7

Distillations

Introduction

As I have explained in my methodology, I have chosen to present, analyse and discuss results within the same chapter. This seems to me more natural than dividing them into separate chapters. In this chapter I present and analyse data collected from fourteen individual interviews with students, two interviews with my co-tutor and a focus group. Although the data is the same as in the previous chapter, the presentation is very different. I believe that analysis there would have lessened the impact of the students' voices as heard through their poems yet the data is rich with points for discussion. In this chapter I look at the same data from a more analytical perspective. I have chosen to sub-categorise and discuss eight categories of data which I consider to be particularly relevant to counsellor training:-

- Self-awareness through ET
- Self-expression through ET
- Experiencing the value of person-centred attitudes through ET
- Awareness of prejudice and dealing with inhibitions through ET
- Experiencing theory through ET
- The particular contribution of ET to counsellor training
- Power and depth of ET
- Contribution of ET to clinical practice

These eight key categories emerged from the three central categories of Personal Development, Professional Development, and Benefits to the Whole Group detailed in chapter 4, pp. 81-83 and p. 86. I have simplified what my respondents said by translating most statements into the first person, with the exception of the sixth distillation - 'The particular contribution of ET to counsellor training', where this seemed artificial; this makes it easier for me to distil the essence. In my discussion, however, I use the respondents' exact words. My aim is to distil the essence of the students' experience in each chosen category; inevitably there is some overlap between categories. I then discuss the implications of my results for counsellor training with illustrative quotations from the interviews and focus group. Occasionally I use a quotation from an interview more than once; in illustration of different points. I do not differentiate between my respondents; in this chapter I present a composite voice. I am not making comparisons between students but using pieces of a jigsaw to

complete an overall picture. The composite voice makes it less easy to identify participants. All twenty-one participants have contributed however, either to this chapter or to chapter 8.

In this process I collapse the various student responses into broader categories; I then distil these into what I have called one key 'essence' of meaning. In order to arrive at these distillations I immersed myself in the data.

Category 1 - Self-awareness through ET

Self-awareness is one of the aspects of personal development which our course seeks to encourage. A counsellor who is self aware is less likely to confuse her thoughts and feelings with those of her client.

Sub-categorisation - breaking the category down to reach its essence

ET has helped me to:

- understand myself better
- discover new aspects of myself
- identify polarities
- understand relationships better
- release and forgive a person
- acknowledge what's important in my life
- confirm my values
- acknowledge feelings
- understand my behaviour
- understand how difficult it is when expectations exceed limitations
- realise I need more protection
- identify why I'm feeling fed up
- touch the hidden depths I wasn't aware of
- accelerate the process of understanding my inner self
- remember that I'm creative
- regress to times I had forgotten
- connect with my spiritual side
- experience myself as a multiple self



I have a greater understanding of my values, feelings and behaviour

I have remembered things I had forgotten about myself

I have discovered new aspects of myself

I have more insight into how I react with others



Essence I have greater understanding of who I am in the world

Discussion

The Johari window (Luft and Ingham, 1955) demonstrates the need for people intent on self-development to increase awareness of a) that part of our psyche which is known by others but unknown to ourselves and b) that part which remains hidden both from ourselves and others.

Interviewees reported how ET had aided their process of self-awareness and increased understanding of their values, feelings and behaviour. *"I decided to be the cat out of 'Batman and Robin' ... it kind of made me look at the relationships that I've got and that work which we did really just kind of brought it all forward, how I interact with people and how my values are now much stronger"*. This woman had appraised her relationships and values through an ET exercise which invited students to act and interact as favourite nursery rhyme or fairy tale characters from childhood.

"And I picked a giraffe and an ant and I found they were just so removed from each other that they didn't have a clue that each other existed and yet they are both sides of me - just having the time and opportunity to just go into yourself like that - it was just rich, like a gift, really". This student was appreciating an ET exercise on polarities which I describe fully in chapter 8. It had given her greater self-awareness and the opportunity to integrate apparently conflicting aspects of her personality.

In Rogers' terms the 'Self-concept', or what is known about the self, has been broadened. Mearns and Thorne (2000, p. 176) introduce the idea of psychological material which lies beyond conscious awareness but is *"at the edge of awareness"* rather than unconscious. *"An important and distinguishing feature of person-centred therapy is that it does not drift into the unconscious but works within the awareness and, we are suggesting, the emerging awareness of the client"*. One interviewee summarised well how ET supports this view. *"It's almost like there's a little bit of, say if there's something going on in my life and there's a little bit of seed there or knowledge, but hasn't really been watered, but the creative work really sort of nurtures it."* She implies that ET does not probe into the client's unconscious but illuminates what is known, and almost known or subceived. This has been my personal experience of ET, although Natalie Rogers, who was much influenced by

Jung, states that the expressive arts help us to become aware of “*an inner reality, or unconscious*”, (2000, p. 49) and, that “*the creative connection sequence plunges people into the deep waters of the unconscious*” (ibid., p. 97). Certainly the belief that ET accesses the unconscious was taught at PCETI and I used that term in introducing PCET to students. It is my view that a client remains the expert in integrating the illuminated material into the self-concept.

Many interviewees reflected a belief that ET exercises raised self-awareness. “*Every exercise I’ve found out different aspects of myself*”. “*From the very first expressive therapy that we did, all the way through, I think something that really comes forward for me is the unknown, you know how it touches the hidden depths that you’re not aware of*”.

There was usually an element of surprise in the self-discovery. “*And in some cases it had quite a profound effect, it sort of touched something deep inside and unexpectedly so, it just happened*”. “*I was surprised with the ritual because I didn’t expect the response that I got from myself*”.

Interviewees had been surprised, shocked, amazed by their self-discoveries but, because I believe that the revelations had been at the edge of their awareness, they were never destructive. “*I think sometimes I’ve been quite shocked at what’s come out but I think it’s always been copeable with. I’ve never had something I couldn’t handle*”. Bolton (1999, p. 21), in writing about the therapeutic potential of creative writing, says “*Writing does not seem to allow onto the page more than the writer can bear at that time*”. At the same time she believes that “*writing seems to create a pathway to the unconscious*” (ibid.). Although I believe some students were fearful of what they might discover from ET exercises, most were able to trust their inner process. “*It’s a bit like dreams - I think I’ve always been ready to look at whatever’s come up, it hasn’t been like something which has been dug out of me, which I haven’t been ready to let go of, it’s been a way of, I don’t know, accelerating the process or enabled me to see what’s going on sometimes when I hadn’t really realised. Yes, that’s perhaps more what it is*”.

Students were free to use the materials in their own way and knew that any self-discoveries they made could be kept private or, if shared, received with respect and without interpretation from others. The person-centred ethos of the group was a crucial element of the expressive therapy experience.

That ET accelerates the process of self-awareness became particularly obvious during the two residential week-ends of the course. There was more time to experience what Natalie Rogers (2000)

calls the 'Creative Connection', whereby one art form can stimulate another. During the weekly class session the students (and I) always felt as though there was insufficient time to develop a theme, to go deeper into self discovery. There was always some time to reflect and share discoveries but much of the illumination occurred between sessions. Administrative difficulties during the period of the course ate frustratingly and continuously into the time allocated for ET sessions. My frustration is frequently recorded in my Journal, as after a demonstration of how to use ET in client work - *"The demo. was okay as far as it went but too little time for A to move on her issue ... it's always too rushed. I think that this is incredibly frustrating research because of all the obstacles. I really see a lot of enthusiasm and important work being done, however, which spurs me on"* (**Journal entry - 20th June 2000**).

"It always felt as though we were rushing it, doing it, thinking and processing so much in your head that you didn't get any chance to sort of voice it really, or not enough time and in that big group as well you didn't share it as much as you planned". This student highlights the large size of the whole group (initially 26, eventually, 21) as an added obstacle to sharing her learning. Feedback took much longer than in our usual group size of sixteen. I felt that a safety net was provided by the hour-long Personal Development groups which ended each class. In these small groups of seven, students could and did share their learning and receive emotional support. Yet we all learned that self-knowledge stimulated by ET needed plenty of time for full processing. I realised more fully the value of my own spacious ET training in residential periods of seven to ten days.

I believe that ET enabled students to work more easily at relational depth, with each other and with their clients. Having experienced what it means to be more fully myself, without fear or restraint, I am able to meet my clients at similar depth.

Natalie Rogers (2000, p. 16) believes that one benefit of using the expressive arts is to *"discover intuitive, mythological and spiritual dimensions of the self"*. ET helped some students to become more aware of themselves as spiritual beings. *"I picked a certain miniature and it was a horse ... it felt to me like an embodiment of a lot of the things that I felt and strived for. I think it was my deeper, more meaningful, spiritual side seems to be coming through"*. This student had projected personal qualities onto the miniature horse, qualities which usually he kept very private and *"tended to push backwards in the day to day running of things"*. The miniature horse felt so important that it impacted on him when my miniature collection was later stolen.

Interviewees had experienced a spiritual atmosphere in the room during particular ET exercises. During the mask making *"There was a quality of silence, no, a quality of noise, which was very close to silence ... everywhere in the room there was a very pointed attention, very meditative, I thought"*. A deep 'sense of connectedness' had been noticed by my co-tutor. *"And it seems to happen whenever you do these sessions; everybody is working at a deeper level and they're somehow in touch with each other, that is so obvious"*.

Sometimes the group atmosphere was reported as intensity of involvement. There was an awareness of the whole group which intensified rather than disturbed the work in pairs. *"I felt like I was in a cocoon with this person. There were quite a lot of people in the room and there was a lot of, I suppose, what felt like vibrancy, you could see that something was happening - but the focus was completely there"*.

In the following chapter I describe an ET session 'A Mask Experience' in which students powerfully experienced themselves as multiple selves. I also focus on a session which helped students to become aware of the polarities within their personalities.

Category 2 - Self-expression through ET

We have a need to express ourselves, to be known by others and to communicate what is important to us. Over the centuries and across cultures men and women have communicated their experience through language or non-verbally, for example in cave paintings and arrangements of prehistoric stones.

Counselling students who have learned ways to express themselves fully can enable clients to do so. The self can be expressed as well as the concerns brought.

Sub-categorisation

Through the expressive arts in general

I can express myself:

- more authentically
- more easily than in words
- more completely and deeply
- with abandon
- more spontaneously

- privately, without having to explain
- in a new way

Through free writing

- I can very quickly feel free and this allows me to write more
- I feel liberated by not having to think about what I write

Through authentic movement

- I have permission to move freely
- I can express undiluted raw emotion
- I can lose myself
- I can play
- I can be taken out of the confines of my body
- my imagination can be stretched



I experience freedom from all restraints

I gain expansion of self-expression



Essence I express my authentic self more fully

Discussion

Whereas the essence of category 1 is concerned with integration into the self-concept, category 2 reflects the organismic self.

The students' responses highlight for me the degree of restraint which we experience in everyday life, both as children and as adults.

“Don’t get over-excited. There’ll be tears before bedtime”.

I learn to limit my exuberance.

“I’ll give you something to cry about if you don’t stop wingeing”.

I learn to hide my feelings.

“Your spelling and grammar are particularly poor”.

I take great care when I write, or rarely write anything.

“That doesn’t look anything like a tractor”.

I believe myself to be poor at art and therefore uncreative.

We introject false beliefs about ourselves.

For many students the experience of expressive therapy began to redress the balance, giving them permission to express themselves authentically and fully. The variety of media broadened their opportunities for self-expression. Many students hadn't used clay or experimented with dressing-up clothes since childhood. They had "*finished with childish things*" (St. Paul, 1961, p. 296).

One of the ways in which Western society restricts self-expression is in discouragement of negative feelings such as jealousy and despair. Unless we can express and discharge our emotional pain we carry it with us, often to the detriment of our health. Heron (1990, p. 57) writes "*Very many people need help with releasing the distress which society has conditioned them to deny and disown, but which they dimly sense is distorting their behavior; the incongruence between their self-concept and organismic experiencing*". Through authentic movement a student was able to express "*undiluted raw emotion*". Whereas psychodrama can help clients to discharge painful feelings through a cathartic process, the arts in general can transform painful feelings through what Heron describes as 'transmutation'. I remember drawing a picture to express my anger in a situation and in the process finding a new perspective; my anger transformed, as if by magic, into a sense of peace. "*This is not a literal recreation ... but an imaginative restatement and reformulation, expressed in music, in painting and drawing, in drama, in dance and movement, in poetry or in biographically based fiction*" (Heron, 1990, p. 81). The client uses his imagination to give symbolic form to a distressing situation. His experience of the world is stored in images which, through the arts, can be reconstrued.

The creative arts helped students to experience themselves at a deep level. The censor outwitted, they could experience and express feelings at the edge of awareness. For example a pregnant student had not consciously acknowledged her fear of shortly giving birth.

Sometimes I am unaware how I feel until I express it, verbally or non-verbally, or until it is reflected back to me by another person. My self-understanding can stay at the edge of awareness unless it manifests itself through, for example, movement or creative writing. I occasionally invite clients to express themselves in a journal, between sessions, to gain understanding of their inner process.

Deep feelings could be expressed safely through the creative arts because of the choice to keep the content private. "*It was so helpful that I got to the point where I really wanted to go home and digest it. I didn't think I wanted to share it publicly*". The process of this interviewee's creative work had

been sufficient for the moment. There was ongoing work which she could do alone. The person-centred ethos in the course group gave respect to each person's work without judgement or intrusion. *"The more his communication is a free expression, unmodified by a need or desire to be defensive, the more adequate will be the communication of the field"* (Rogers, 1951, p. 496). *"I could learn, experiment for myself and not feel that I was the one who got it wrong, I just did it differently and that's okay. Yes, acceptance, that's the huge, huge benefit of this course, when we're doing creativity especially, acceptance"* (Member of focus group).

Sometimes we experience a deep need to communicate what cannot be expressed verbally. Natalie Rogers used the arts to *"enable self-expression beyond the confines of language"* (2000, p. 205) in her cross-cultural work. *"The non-verbal, symbolic and mythic expressions that arise from our deeper selves when we express creatively are understood across cultures"* (ibid.).

Kelly's client *"hadn't got a great vocabulary to express her feelings"*. In introducing her to creative materials Kelly had enabled her to work at a deeper level and to *"think more laterally"* (p. 124). There is a sense in which the arts can speak for us. (Meekums, 2002).

"The expressive therapy bypasses the mouth and let whatever's in your head and heart come out". These words suggest that words can interfere with full self-expression. Sally (p. 117) has discovered that, when words are inadequate to express thoughts and feelings, we need a metaphor, for example in the form of a drawing, movement or ritual.

Cecily (p. 127) sometimes felt *"constrained with words"* which felt *"too restricting, too narrow"*. Often we struggle to find the 'right' word especially when we are expressing what is really important to us. It is as though we try it for size, to see if it fits, and sometimes no one word does. No single word encompasses the felt sense of our experience (Gendlin, 1978). I am reminded that the Inuits find it necessary to have over 50 words to describe snow. Like every counselling student Cecily kept a personal journal. Her experience of expressive therapy had *"changed the way I've journalled for years"*. Now she drew as well as using words; even when writing she made *"patterns of the words rather than just straight lines"* in order to express herself more thoroughly.

While many interviewees valued the greater freedom of non-verbal expression, a few clung tenaciously to verbal self-expression. *"I like words and I'm not so happy with materials"* said Fiona (p. 115). However, she acknowledged that ET has helped to integrate her thinking and feelings. Park,

a practitioner of the Alexander Technique, writes *"Because emotions have been devalued and intellect has been given status in our society, we tend to split off our emotional experience from our thinking"*, with resulting conflict between reasoning and feelings which have *"gone underground into the unconscious"* (1989, p. 141). Angela had been initially so angry with the focus on non-verbal expression that she had set out to prove in an assignment that ET was no *"substitute for talking"*. Gradually she learned that *"there are as many ways of expressing it as people to express it"* (p. 131). She began to incorporate non-verbal methods of expression into her counselling practice. Drawing had enabled one of her clients with poor vocabulary to find a way of expressing herself. *"They drew this series of pictures and then sat back and said 'That's what I was saying!'"* (ibid).

In therapy words alone can be sufficient for self-expression, although Angela had discovered how non-verbal and verbal expression complement each other. In some ET exercises the verbal preceded non-verbal creative work (for example, Rituals, pp 221-238). More usually students experienced how discussion with a partner subsequently illuminated the meaning of their painting or creative writing.

In ET written words can be the creative material as much as clay or paint. A focus group member drew a distinction between creative writing and other forms of ET. While inhibitions prevented him from self-expression through clay he felt more comfortable with creative writing. *"I found the expressive stuff even more alien, really difficult, and the clay almost made me think 'No, I'm going to pack this in, I just can't do this'"*. An academically able student, he had a strong preference for a left-brain approach to learning.

I noticed that the ability to express oneself through a variety of media depended largely on the degree of inhibition (see p. 157). For some students the legacy of childhood experience and introjects had strongly interfered with their spontaneity and ability to play. They felt shy, silly, exposed, inadequate, uncomfortable, awkward, especially when invited to express themselves in movement. Movement feels more risky in a group as I am more visible than if I am painting or writing a story. *"It was like 'Oh, I can't do that, I'll feel such a prat' ... I can remember thinking 'God, I hope no-one's looking' ... but because we were in the group and I looked round the room and everybody was doing it then I felt more comfortable doing it"* (Focus group member).

Memories were shared in the focus group of *"being forced to dance in tights"* of parents discouraging *"that kind of expression"*, of feeling *"naked like a three-year-old in my little plimsolls and my vest"*

and pants". As very young children they would have moved spontaneously and joyously, expressing feelings with their whole bodies. Gradually children learn to fear ridicule and judgement of their movement, for example in physical education lessons. "*Our bodies are vehicles for expression yet most of us freeze if some-one asks us to express what we feel through movement*" (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 36). My participants were remembering childhood experiences in which their self-concept was threatened. Anxieties such as 'Am I OK without all my clothes on?', or 'Am I really a boy if I have to wear girls' tights and dance?' were now being defended against in adulthood. As Biermann-Ratjen suggests "*every experience of not being unconditionally positively regarded means a threat to the self-concept*" (1998, p. 113). Park comments "*Our civilising process seems to necessitate this kind of repression at all levels of our being, physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually*" (1989, p. 149).

When words are inadequate we need a metaphor, perhaps in the form of a drawing, movement or ritual. Through education we learn to write with care and thought, to classify, analyse, punctuate. We are taught to speak politely, diplomatically, using socially acceptable language. In contrast, all restraint can be cast aside when using the creative arts. My interviewees used words like abandon, spontaneous, authentically, liberated, to describe their experience of ET. Authentic movement in particular expanded the horizons of their being; they experienced a freedom beyond words. In ET sessions they could play and feel young again, lose self-consciousness, allow their imagination to develop, even feel free of bodily restraint.

An early exercise in the course involved working with a partner, using clay and without speech. The purpose was to demonstrate the importance of psychological contact, Rogers' first core condition for therapeutic movement. Client and counsellor need to be willing and able to meet each other psychologically. One interviewee commented "*It was just so powerful, it never occurred to me that, not speaking, you could still communicate*". She and her partner had made psychological contact through the clay. They had expressed themselves and made a relationship without words.

Category 3 - Experiencing the value of person-centred attitudes through ET

Person-centred philosophy incorporates the humanistic respect for the worth and dignity of each person. The foundation of Natalie Rogers' work with the expressive arts was Carl Rogers' belief in the capacity of every person to grow to full potential. In therapy a client who sufficiently experiences the core conditions of empathy, acceptance and congruence reveals a capacity for self-direction towards personal growth. Counselling students need to experience these truths for themselves before they can offer them to clients.

Sub-categorisation

I experienced the importance of the core conditions.

Empathy

I discovered that:

- We can communicate without speech
- What is unspoken can be so meaningful
- I am able to pick up non-verbally what is important to another person

Acceptance

- I experience acceptance, particularly in creative work
- I can do things my way and trust it will be accepted
- It is acceptable for me to make a mistake
- I feel safe enough to learn and experiment without fear of getting it wrong

Congruence (Am I honest with myself?; do I perceive others as being honest?)

- I disliked what I saw as play-acting
- I wondered if people were pretending to participate
- I didn't feel there was a genuine offer to take part
- It was essential that the tutors joined in (i.e. modelled openness)
- I wondered whether the images coming to me were valid.
- I wasn't sure if I was being cognitive rather than intuitive
- It didn't seem real in a classroom situation

Respect (an aspect of acceptance, or Unconditional Positive Regard)

- My efforts are respected and appreciated
- ET taught me respect for other people too
- I didn't have to explain myself
- Every-one was given the space to do their own thing

Trusting the actualising tendency

- I initially doubted that anything meaningful would emerge
- I learned to trust myself
- I learned to trust the ET process
- Later I understood the meaning of my art



I have experienced non-verbal empathy

I have experienced the power of respect and acceptance

I have learned to trust my inner process



Essence **I trust the therapeutic value of person-centred attitudes**

Discussion

Although person-centred attitudes pervaded the whole course they often became more tangible during ET sessions. *"Yes, acceptance, that's the huge, huge benefit of this course, when we're doing creativity especially, acceptance"*.

An accepting, non-judgemental attitude towards a client becomes particularly important when she takes the risk of expressing herself spontaneously, without restraint, in a picture or movement. She is likely to have battled already with negative beliefs about her artistic ability. Students learned that the process of creativity was important, not the product. *"And we learned quite quickly it's not about being good at drawing, people feeling nervous having school memories "*. Natalie Rogers (2000, p. 15) promotes the need for an environment which fosters creativity, *"a climate in which external evaluation is absent"*. Organismic valuing can become more important than defending against criticism.

Creativity can be as easily squashed by interpretation as by evaluation. The creator is able to make sense of her own work. In a therapeutic context the counsellor accepts and empathises with the client's understanding of her creative work.

In ET the counsellor's congruence is demonstrated by her willingness to react to, rather than interpret, the creative work. She owns the feedback she offers, for example *"I notice that you moved very, very slowly"*, or, *"When I heard your poem I felt sad"*.

"If I've described my stories or whatever to the other person they've never sort of made any interpretations of it, just fed back, reflected or whatever and it's always, it's the purest form of person-centredness I would say because it's just coming purely from what the person's experiencing".

A sense of incongruence in ET exercises was experienced by several interviewees. There was a suspicion for one person that other students were pretending to be involved, merely conforming to

peer pressure or meeting my expectations. The group contract included a statement about the optional nature of activities. Additionally, I prefaced every ET session with the words "*I invite you to ...*" I was subsequently shocked to hear in the focus group how artificial the invitation had seemed to one student. "*I used to get slightly resentful when you said "I'd like to invite you to ..." I used to feel there's no invitation, that's how I felt*". Another focus group member acknowledged "*I'm sure when you offered it it was a genuine offer, but I had no choice because of the pressure; it would have taken more for me to get up and walk out*".

For some students there was a sense that pretence of any kind was somehow unreal, almost dishonest. One interviewee had particularly disliked "*the evening where we were characters ... my instinct was to make for the door because there was such a lot of play-acting about it ... I've never liked parties and there was an element of a party. People weren't being false but I felt they were being false*".

Jennings (cited in Palmer, Dainow and Milner, 1996, p. 158) comments on the assumption that "*Drama is 'only' acting: the issue here is the pejorative association with the emphasis on 'only' as if it is unimportant. What is crucial is that it is only acting otherwise we would be very confused. The dramatic imagination necessary in the acting process means that we can hypothesise about how life might be in the future and whether or not our perception of it can change from that of the past*".

An observer can see only the external acting, not the depth of inner experiencing. "*And to me it didn't look like a lot was happening as an observer, it just looked like people play-acting but I was aware when they were talking about it afterwards they had done some very deep work*" (Co-tutor).

For some interviewees a sense of incongruence arose from the classroom environment. "*I think in the classroom it might be an unreal situation, it tended to be an exercise rather than doing it for real*". Another interviewee rebelled against experiencing ET in a group- "*When we're doing group exercises it relied on the group conformity, which to some extent belies the essence of a creative approach*".

In a trusting therapeutic relationship in which client and counsellor have achieved mutual respect ET can be offered, accepted or refused spontaneously. An expressive exercise, or experiment, can be devised specifically to meet the client's needs. In a training situation an exercise might be experienced as imposed, unwanted, unhelpful. An interviewee summarised this vividly - "*The thing is you've got*

to be in a state of incongruence¹⁶, I think. Sometimes, some of the exercises imply, or just assume, that you are in a state of incongruence ... you can play around and you can fake it but to me it's meaningless ... it's got to be real and it's like a glass of water is a wonderful thing if you're really thirsty but nothing special if you're not". This interviewee had learned from experience the truth of Carl Rogers' belief in the necessary condition of therapy - "*That the first person, whom we shall term the client, is in a state of incongruence, being vulnerable, or anxious*" (1957, p. 95). This interviewee was suggesting that, in order to be valued, an exercise has to meet a need.

Focus group members commented on the level of tutor congruence during ET sessions. "*It's all about modelling, isn't it, if you can model the openness and everything else then we can feel a bit freer to take these risks ourselves*". "*Tutors will be strangers unless they participate*". Behar (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 109) refers to positivist research in which the researcher keeps herself neutral and safe. "*We ask for revelations from others, but we reveal little or nothing of ourselves, we make others vulnerable, but we ourselves remain invulnerable*".

In my PCETI training tutors had participated fully in arts activities and subsequent feedback. In ET sessions I similarly facilitated and participated rather than taught. *"I received a letter from 'C' today, along with some data, in which she thanked me for the ET work, saying how she realises that it was me as a person as well as the exercises which had influenced her"* (**Journal entry - 3rd October 2001**). This indicates the importance of my relationship with her.

Students were often amazed by the level of empathy which could be achieved when working non-verbally. In pairs, students were invited to work as they wished with a piece of clay. After the clay exercise, described on p. 166, one participant commented "*It just showed the powers of non-verbal communication, it really impacted on me*". *She and her partner had "started off individually and then it just seemed to merge"*, as they co-created a meaningful piece of work, without any words being necessary.

In the same non-verbal exercise one focus group member had expressed such accurate empathy that his partner had been shocked. "*I don't know whether it was from reading non-verbal things that were there, but sort of pre-empting what the other person was going to be doing and following their story,*

¹⁶ Incongruence refers to a mismatch between the experience of the organism and experience as represented in the self-concept.

but following it so accurately that they were in fact shocked about it but no words had been expressed".

Carl Rogers (1961) gradually came to acknowledge *"the psychic capabilities of the human person ... Human beings have potentially available a tremendous range of intuitive powers. We are indeed wiser than our intellects"* (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 46).

"This business of having a companion, an empathic silent witness, that was very powerful". (Interviewee). As she had moved spontaneously to music this student had been *"amazed to have some-one watching me as a tree unfolding my leaves"*. She had learned *"how powerful it is to have some-one when you're going through any kind of living process or any sort of developmental change particularly, how important it is to have some-one just with you, they don't need to be saying anything, they just need to be focused and have the core conditions"*. The 'witness' is a term initially used in 'Authentic Movement', as explained on p. 108.

Another student was surprised that she had been able to communicate her world through the making of a dream-catcher. *"I didn't think that it was possible for some-one to truly understand my world from one session and using the dream-catcher I was able to share with my colleague ... and I was quite alarmed at how accurate her feedback was, not necessarily how accurate but how much her feedback impacted on me emotionally"*.

ET helped students to trust in the actualising tendency which Carl Rogers believed to be the curative force in therapy and the 'mainspring of creativity'. *"By this I mean the directional trend which is evident in all organic human life - the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature - the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self"* (Rogers, 1951, p. 351).

Gradually students learned to trust the value of ET exercises and the validity of their creative expression. *"I think sometimes that things I've written sound like a really nice fairytale but then I can really relate to what it means ... it's almost like it lets the deepest thoughts and feelings come out into the open and then I can learn and I read about, I read it and I think, 'God, Yeah, like it, like it's almost clicking into place'"*.

This student began to trust that her creative writing connected deeply to her life., In trusting her creative process she discovered that *"it's like comforting yourself with something"*. She experienced congruence between her creative work and her deepest experiencing and this felt reassuring.

One interviewee was intrigued by the notion that through ET she learned what she most needed to know at that time in her life. *"I noticed the same thing with the animals exercise, somehow I notice that when there's something quite powerful that happens, some powerful exercise, and these were, something happens soon after which sort of tests the new insight, the new knowledge, understanding of self ... and it makes me think, do these things happen all the time, where they go unrecognised, or is it that there's a purpose in everything?"*

It was difficult for some students to know whether their imagery was spontaneous, emerging from a right brain perspective or imposed by their cognitive left brain. It was not easy to close down their usual thinking mode and doubts crept in about the authenticity of their experience. When they relaxed and allowed themselves to ignore their analytical censor they found value in the exercises. *"It got less of a struggle and I got more from them when I stopped worrying about what was going on ... I was prepared to do it and just allow, you know, something to happen even though from my own perspective it was just a craft thing. Once I'd done the craft piece I could then start attaching that to deeper, more emotional stuff. Whether the craft work was created by my self-conscious I don't know. I don't think that it's relevant either way. If it was created by my unconscious, and then I analysed it, that was great. If it was purely random and if I just used it as a tool to gain insight into the unconscious, I think that's fine as well".*

This interviewee had first externalised his experience onto what he saw as a piece of craft work; he had then made it meaningful by self-analysis. ET makes varied use of projective technique which Semeonoff (1976, p.vi) defines as *"a method of inquiry based on self-revelation through the handling of a perceptual or other structured stimulus or situation"*.

"Everything one does bears, to a greater or lesser extent, the stamp of one's personality"
(Semeneoff, *ibid*, p. 7).

On the strength of this a great variety of techniques have been used by psychologists to provide insight into a client's personality. In ET the insight is entrusted to the client. My research students experienced what Frank (cited in Semeonoff, *ibid.*, p. 17) describes as *"constitutive projective*

techniques” when they imposed structure on clay. In using miniature objects they used what Frank describes as “*constructive techniques*” (ibid., p.15) in which objects are ordered rather than moulded.

Category 4 - Awareness of prejudice and dealing with inhibitions through ET

Expressive therapy sessions brought students quite frequently into contact with the blocks to creativity which Natalie Rogers describes (2000, p. 20). She lists these as: the presence of an inner critic, our need for approval, and fear. I was taken aback by the level of inhibition and prejudice as ET was introduced to trainee counsellors. What I had not acknowledged was the fact that their expectations of counsellor training did not include 'playing' with miniature objects and dressing up in costume and masks. While a few students held back from full involvement others addressed and overcame their fears and prejudices, to gain richly from the ET experience. *"Part of the psychotherapeutic process is to awaken the creative life-force energy ... What is therapeutic is frequently a creative process"* (ibid., p. 1). Working with the creative arts I therefore see as an integral part of counsellor training, not as an add-on extra. Fortunately, all students were able to overcome the blocks to their creativity to some extent.

Sub-categorisation:-

Prejudice against ET

- I don't know how to express myself
- I'm left-brain oriented
- I prefer words to materials
- Words are better than ET
- I sneer at new things, like my father did
- This is childish
- I'm too old to play
- A classroom isn't a safe environment for deep self-learning
- Play is valueless
- I'm very sceptical
- I'm too busy to be creative
- I'm thirsty for theory
- I expected formal tuition
- I'm no good at art/being creative
- This is a waste of time

- Using buttons suggests triviality
- I have painful memories from schooldays

Inhibitions

- I don't like to be observed
- I don't like to be touched
- I feel silly, stupid, a prat, embarrassed, angry
- I feel naked, like a three-year old
- I feel anxious
- I feel self-conscious
- I might go too deep for comfort
- It exposes more than I want to
- I'm afraid of getting it wrong
- I'm afraid of being judged/getting it wrong



I'm not a creative person
This isn't a helpful way to learn counselling
I feel uncomfortable in ET sessions



Overcoming blocks to creativity

- Sometimes I just observed
- I stood near the door
- I knew that our group was very supportive
- I chose some-one I felt safe with
- I learned to jump off and to trust somebody would catch me
- I trusted my witness
- I saw that the tutor believed in it
- I learned that I can't get it wrong
- I could choose when to share
- I learned that no-one will interpret



I've remembered that I am creative
I am playful
I'm becoming more spontaneous
I dance and sing now at the drop of a hat
I've developed the other side of my thinking
I'm not self-conscious now about putting thoughts on paper



Essence **I am a creative being**

Discussion

I'd always been told that I wasn't any good at anything creative so the barriers were already there". Prejudice against ET resulted both from beliefs about poor artistic ability and expectations of what constitutes appropriate learning methods on a university counselling course. "Although much more accepted today, the world of lateral thinking, the world of experiencing and feeling, the world of imagination and fantasy, and the world of the supernatural have always been treated as second or third best" (Lahad, 2000, p. 11). This implies that we are encouraged to disown parts of ourselves.

Several interviewees had experienced criticism of their artistic ability at school, where the aesthetic product was all important. Knowing that they were unable to produce a 'work of art' as adult learners they were nervous about experimenting with paint or clay. *"We cheat ourselves out of a fulfilling and joyous source of creativity if we cling to the idea that we need to be 'artists', specialists, who have fully developed the craftsmanship of expression" (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 18).*

As a new PCETI student I had shared their belief that art is an aesthetic pursuit. I found it embarrassing and incongruent when my pin-figure drawings and awkward looking clay models were described as 'art'. In using art materials with students I preferred to avoid the word 'art', calling it 'your work'. When Jung encouraged patients to paint for therapeutic reasons he considered that, however beautiful the results were, they should not be called art. *"It is not a question of art at all ... but of something more, and other than mere art, namely the living effect upon the patient himself. The meaning of individual life, whose importance from the social standpoint is negligible, stands here at its highest, and for the patient struggles to give form, however crude and childish, to the inexpressible" (1966, p. 48).*

Bell (cited in Fleming, 2006, p. 136) expresses the belief that art should be valued for itself alone and not used for other purposes. *"Art transports us from the world of man's activity to a world of aesthetic emotions. For a moment we are shut off from human interests; we are lifted up from the stream of life"*.

Bell's views arise from Kant's concept of disinterestedness which Fleming describes as *"the ability to perceive without being unduly influenced by one's own distracting, practical concerns"* (ibid., p. 142). This reflects the separatist view of art as an end in itself, in contrast to the inclusive view of art which, as I believe cannot be separated from its social and cultural context. I can admire Monet's 'Waterlilies' for its aesthetic beauty and skilful brushwork but my thoughts soon stray to memories of waterlilies on the French canals and peaceful boating holidays. For me paintings trigger feelings as well as memories and what is stirred in me may be very different from the artist's mood as he painted. My reaction is unique, dependent on my personal, social and cultural background, a view which a focus group member shared; *"When you look at a painting the odds are you're not going to get from it what the artist put into it but you're going to get stuff from it which is perfectly valid - I mean we can't have the same experiences"*. His understanding encouraged him to make use of ET sessions despite his initial antagonism.

Silverstone (1997, p. 5) identifies four stages in working with images, the first being *"allowing images to present themselves to the inner eye,"* without censoring or thinking. The second stage of *"externalising the image to art-form"*(ibid.) is where those of us who are unskilled at art can feel frustration. *"I know in my mind what I have, the image I have, but I'm always very disappointed with the likes of drawing or using clay, it never comes out like I want it to be, whereas working with other mediums, like we used the miniatures, using pebbles and things like that, I found that to be more valuable to me and whether it's because I've not had to create something, it's just I found it personally more freeing"* (focus group member). The variety of projective media in ET sessions enabled this participant to benefit from expressive methods. Art can also be used more spontaneously than Silverstone suggest, allowing marks on the page to develop in a similar way to authentic movement which allows the body to move without conscious thought.

It was difficult for some students to acknowledge initially the complementarity of right and left brain activity. Predictably on a post-graduate course, in a university setting, they valued the left brain mode of thinking, defining, comparing, analysing, which is favoured in education. *"I couldn't see the point of it, didn't want to see the point of it ... it didn't seem relevant to what I thought was going to be the*

course content which was, you know, the theory and practice of counselling". This student shared his expectation of how the course would be taught. "Somebody speaks, you listen, you learn". Education can limit and stultify our learning. "The spontaneous painting I began to do helped me not only to discover my personal story but also to free myself from the intellectual constraints and concepts of my upbringing and my professional training" (Miller, 1987, p. xiv).

Although only one fifth of the course involved ET some students mistakenly believed that verbal skills were being devalued by the focus on expressive arts. *"What was making me angry were people saying 'God, this is so much better than talking' and I said 'I'm sure it's not instead of, it's as well as' "*

In counselling university students who are academically gifted I have discovered that they have often analysed their issues intellectually without that making any difference to their feelings or behaviour. Natalie Rogers (1980, p. 166) quotes from Dass *"We are living simultaneously on a number of levels". He encourages "the process of allowing other kinds of learning to be real for you other than the ways you know through your five senses and your thinking mind. Sometimes we call it the intuitive mind"* (ibid.). Rogers believes that the source of her creativity is a continuing dialogue between her logical, pragmatic mind and her sensual, intuitive, receptive mind.

Mature students who held responsible jobs initially felt indignant about the expectation to learn through what they perceived to be play. *"It's playing, and I've never been brought up to think that playing is of any worth - now, looking back at it I don't see it as playing but at the time I certainly did and I think for that reason I saw it as not being part of what I thought of as an academic and practical course. I was against it, I took against it". There was a sense initially for a few students that 'playing' with miniature toys was incongruent with their adult status. "The first exercise we ever did was with the miniatures ... it took me back to childhood in a way and to school and to, I suppose, needing permission in a way to play. I was thinking 'what on earth, this is a miniature, what is it supposed to mean to me?'"*

One student commented specifically on the use of buttons (a projective technique which had in fact been introduced to her on an earlier Certificate in Counselling course). The use of buttons as representations of relationships seemed to her to trivialise. The same student reacted strongly against an exercise which involved dressing up as a nursery rhyme character. I believe that she could not accept the invitation to play, to make believe. *"I was actually going to be Heidi but my instinct was to run for the door because there was such a lot of play-acting about it". It is possible that she suspected*

defensive 'acting out' rather than real engagement with the characters. "*Acting out' is defined as a psychological defence mechanism by which an individual discharges internal impulses through symbolic or actual enactment*" (Emunah, 1995, p. 154).

Another student had enjoyed the exercises but wondered whether they had any real value. She was "hungry" for theory and initially saw ET as an obstacle to her learning. "*Although I got into it and I enjoyed it and got a lot of out of it, I partly still feel that it's a drain on the limited time we have for all the other theory we have to do*". For this student theory was to be formally imparted rather than experienced.

I was reminded of Johns' (1996, p. 129) reflections on the four learning styles identified by Honey and Mumford (1986) – Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists. Irving and Williams (1995) compared these learning styles to attitudes towards group work; they translate well to attitudes towards any structured activity. Theorists and reflectors need to understand the purpose of an activity while activists just do it and enjoy it. Pragmatists need to see a connection between what they learn in an activity and how they can use it in practice. This helped me to understand the students' varying attitudes towards PCET exercises.

There was a marked level of regression in ET exercises which involved the physical, acting, movement, or touch. Interviewees reported the impact of childhood memories and strong feelings of vulnerability. "*I can remember doing that (movement exercise) and I felt like a three year old in my little plimsolls and my vest and pants and that's how naked I felt*".

Another, male, student was reminded of drama classes at school where he had been "*forced to dance in tights*".

Inhibition was often a self-protective by-product of fear. There was anxiety about revealing too much of ones-self to another person. How would it be received? "*That's a problem I have with my own poetry. I've got enough of it to publish but there's a fear factor of it not being accepted in the right way, or that it's all my deeper emotions being thrown out*".

While a few students at the end of the course still described themselves as inhibited others had worked hard to understand the origin of their fears and had overcome the blocks to their creativity. Accepting that they had a genuine choice about taking part in exercises and about the level at which

they self-disclosed had made a difference for many. The lack of interpretation had been reassuring. What made a huge impact was their experience of trust, in the cohort as a whole and with particular partners in the group. They had learned to trust in what Natalie Rogers describes as "*an environment of psychological safety*" (2000, p. 15). They had experienced what she believes to be particularly crucial in expressive arts work, a climate in which they knew they would not be judged - "*If judged or evaluated, most people halt their budding creative endeavours*" (ibid.).

For one interviewee, the ability to trust had been the key learning of the course. "*I think for me that the main thing I got off the course was being able to do that quickly, to go very deep, to trust to jump off and somebody's going to catch me. I mean, I was selective about who I was going to jump at but when I first started counselling training I couldn't trust anybody*".

Two interviewees reported that they had put their trust in me as facilitator. Despite her preference for a more academic style of teaching one interviewee acknowledged "*I think your enthusiasm for it has really really been well communicated to me, has overcome all the negative stuff. Patricia's got so much belief in this and wants to develop it so much further and there's got to be something in it for everybody really and that's been great. What I do is take out the bit that's useful for me*".

I believe that what most helped students to overcome prejudice and inhibitions was the experience of the power of ET which I discuss later (pp. 176-180).

Category 5 - Experiencing theory through ET

As I embarked on the teaching phase of my practitioner research I felt certain that ET would benefit students in their personal development. I hoped, but was less sure, that I could use ET methods to enhance their understanding of counselling theory. As I explained in chapter 5 (p. 91), discussion of theory had been discouraged in my own ET training and I had not fully thought through my experiential learning of person-centred theory, achieved through some of my expressive arts training. Making further links between ET and person-centred theory was a personal outcome of my research.

On our course the first term of each academic year focused on counselling theory. My teaching of ET needed to fit into the overall aims and objectives of each term, so aspects of theory, usually taught in a lecture format, needed to be taught through ET exercises. During the two years I focused specifically on the following theory in ET sessions:

- Phenomenological understanding - uniqueness of perception (Sokolowski, 2000)

(Exercise - 'The elder branch').

- Psychological contact - Rogers' first requisite of therapeutic movement (Rogers, 1957)
(The clay exercise)
- Congruence – a core condition (Rogers, 1961)
(Poetry evening)
- Psychoanalytical theory - reparation of early experience (Balint, 1968)
(The seed exercise)
- Sub-personalities - we are multiple selves (Rowan, 1990)
(The mask experience)
- The shadow self-polarities (Jung, 1940)
(The polarities exercise)

Learning from these exercises emerged in the interviews and focus group; the exception was 'The seed', about which comments concerned only inhibitions.

(Appendix B lists all ET sessions during the two-year course).

Sub-categorisation:-

- I learned that everybody sees things differently (The elder branch)

⇓

I have experienced that perception is unique

- I experienced the power of non-verbal communication (NVC) (The clay exercise)
- I learned that I can communicate even in silence (ditto)
- I understood what psychological contact was (ditto)

⇓

I have experienced Rogers' first condition of therapeutic movement

- I discovered new aspects of myself (The mask experience)
- I felt one of my sub-personalities (ditto)
- I became more aware of other people's sub-personalities (ditto)

⇓

I have experienced that I am more than one self

- I discovered polarities within me (The polarities exercise)
- I integrated two of my polarities' sides (ditto)
- I realised that the negative side wasn't as big as my favoured side (ditto)



I have experienced and worked with my polarities

- I experienced the value of being a witness (Through overall experience of ET)
- I experienced being fully myself in a safe relationship (ditto)
- I experienced the importance of the core conditions (ditto)
- I experienced acceptance (ditto)
- I learned respect for others (ditto)
- I understood that in the expressive arts I can't get it wrong (ditto)



I have experienced the value of a person-centred relationship

- I have observed an active way of teaching theory (Through overall experience of ET)
- I have observed how ET blends theory with all other aspects of the course (ditto)
- I have enjoyed learning theory through ET (ditto)



Theory can be learned experientially and enjoyed



Essence I can experience theory through ET

Discussion

In six ET sessions my specific intention was to teach theory; the data indicates that in five of these there was experiential learning of relevant theory. What it also shows is that there was additional learning about person-centred theory across most of the entire ET experience (see Experiencing the value of person-centred attitudes, pp. 150-157).

The first session of the course promoted a phenomenological approach towards understanding clients. *"As a counselling perspective that has been strongly influenced by existential philosophy, the person-centred approach employs a phenomenological approach towards understanding and knowing. In phenomenology, the knower arrives at deeper understanding by 'bracketing off' his or her*

assumptions, in order to explore, in so far as it is possible, the totality of meanings associated with a particular experience or situation" (McLeod and Wheeler, 1996, p. 6). How the client understands and experiences her 'world' is what is crucial in therapy. Students had experienced this truth through a simple exercise in which each person in turn had commented on the personal meaning of an elder branch brought into the room. *"I remember on that very first evening in the big group and there was an elder branch and people gave different perceptions of it ... and the point of that evening was something about the way everybody sees things differently, or lots of people can look at the same thing from a slightly different angle"* (interviewee).

Another interviewee expressed phenomenological understanding without direct reference to this specific session. *"I might look at a stone and think 'That's a beautiful stone representing everything that's good' and some-one else may look at it and think 'That's everything I have had and lost'. You know, everything has a different interpretation and I think if anything the expressive work has put life into perspective"*.

Working with miniature objects during clinical practice had vividly demonstrated for one man how each person has unique perception. *"I was an observer and watching this person who was a client ... and she had a red thimble (i.e. tumbler) and that to her represented a drink thing, like a party-going thing, but then she was an expectant mother and she was looking at this particular thing and that for her meant a decision to give up part of her life to become a mother, so that was quite powerful, that"*. The observer then became a client and *"I had, in actual fact, picked up the same red tumbler"* (sic) into which he put a dice. This represented for him a sense of being at the whim of chance about keeping or losing his job.

The session I describe as 'the clay exercise' involved working with a partner and sharing a piece of clay. Working silently they could create whatever they wished, either together or separately. This followed a brief verbal introduction to Rogers' first condition of therapeutic movement, the necessity of client and counsellor being in psychological contact. In practice some clients are unable, or unwilling, to make psychological contact with a counsellor. I hoped that students would experience how client and counsellor can move in and out of psychological contact within a therapeutic session.

One interviewee had her doubts initially about the value of the exercise. *"I was a bit sceptical about it, you know, and found it quite powerful, surprisingly, that there could be psychological contact just using clay as a medium; it helped me to understand what psychological contact was"*.

Another student had felt very uncomfortable with the exercise *"because there was that feeling of real strong psychological contact without the words and I found it really bizarre and odd"*.

What became apparent was that whatever the exercise, and my purpose in introducing it, students used it, and learned from it, in their own way. In working with clay the power of non-verbal communication made more impact on some than the experience of psychological contact. *"It just showed me the powers of non-verbal communication, it really impacted on me"*. The experience encouraged this interviewee to read about neuro-linguistic programming¹⁷.

Only my co-tutor briefly mentioned the evening on poetry, held early in the first year. The objective was to invite students to become aware of their inner experiencing as they listened to a taped selection of ten very varied poems read by poets. A second invitation was to choose one or more of their inner responses to explore further in art.

Carl Rogers (1961) described the importance of learning to listen to himself. *"So that I know ... what I am feeling at any given moment ... to be able to realise that I am angry, or that I do feel rejecting towards this person"* (Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 19). This was a first step towards being fully himself, or congruent, in relationships. Congruence involves full awareness of our continuous and ever-changing process of thinking, feeling and sensing. Initially this awareness can feel threatening to our self-concept.

There was potent feedback immediately after the poetry exercise but by the end of the course students appear to have forgotten the experience. I wonder whether this is because it lacked the drama of mask-making and rituals; it had been a relatively unthreatening exercise with nothing tangible remaining.

'The seed' exercise was introduced to illustrate one important aspect of psychodynamic theory. As always in ET sessions it followed a brief verbal introduction and was accompanied by a handout and suggestions for further reading. My inspiration for including the exercise in a session on psychodynamic counselling was the belief in psychodynamic theory that many psychological problems have their origin in the past and need to be addressed.

¹⁷ Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), developed by Grinder and Bandler in the 1970s, pays close attention to non-verbal communication as a way of understanding patterns of thought and behaviour.

Goddard (1996, p. 408) writes *"We cannot easily think of ourselves as victims of childhood. The commonsense belief that physical and emotional development run parallel with physical growth only adds to the difficulties that clients have in acknowledging infantile needs"*.

In 'the seed' exercise I invited students to work in small groups. One person could choose to be a seed growing. Other group members acted the parts of the sun, the rain, the wind, elements which the 'seed' could call on for vital nourishment. In this way the 'seed' could facilitate for himself what Balint (1968) describes as a new beginning. *"His emphasis lay firmly on the role of the therapist being able to facilitate a new beginning"* (Goddard, 1996, p. 409).

Inviting students to embody roles so soon in the course, in the first term, was, I believe, a mistake as there was insufficient trust of each other. There are four references to the exercise in the data and no indication that it had contributed to understanding of psychodynamic theory. *"I assume it was more to gain knowledge of interpersonal relationships and I could have done that from a book, without embarrassment - I don't feel it added anything in particular to the theory side"*. This interviewee reflected the high level of inhibition in the group during this exercise. *"Although I did drama at school I really don't like play-acting in front of people ... I don't like role play so I didn't like 'the seed' - in fact 'the seed I felt excruciatingly embarrassing"*.

As I have described earlier, embodiment play is the earliest stage of play in which infants in the first year of life explore and delight in their bodies. Later in life our appreciation for expression through movement needs to be reawakened (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 52). Meekums (1999, p. 253) describes how safety in a dance movement therapy group needs to be well established by *"continuing group-building interventions ... before the more exploratory and expressive techniques"* are used.

In observing two groups during this exercise my co-tutor had noticed how a group of four men *"were just huddled and the talking that was going on, the decibels went down as I approached so that it was like a whisper ... and I thought 'I don't think they want me to observe them, so I didn't'"*. In the second group of three, one woman had opted to watch while the other two *"entered into it very fully and enthusiastically and got an awful lot out of it"*. I wonder whether for many students inhibition blocked learning during this exercise.

After the masks workshop one student wrote *"I love the way expressive therapy cuts through directly and sheds light on theory in an experiential way, leading to a deeper understanding of it. I had read Rowan's book on sub-personalities and had found it extremely interesting ... but when we had our*

masks workshop I understood 'from deep inside' how powerful, often destructive, these fragments of ourselves can be ... I know I will not forget the masks experience. I might have forgotten John Rowan's book in a little while".

In chapter 8 I comment more fully on 'the mask experience' and 'the polarities exercise', from both of which students learned theory experientially, as I had hoped.

As the foundation of Natalie Rogers' work was her father's person-centred philosophy it should not have surprised me that ET sessions strongly augmented the students' awareness of person-centred theory. They had experienced person-centred attitudes through the work (see pp. 145-152). Exercises were sometimes described as having been, for example, "*very much person-centred*", and "*it's the purest form of person-centredness I would say*".

Category 6 - The particular contribution of ET to counsellor training

In a sense this category forms the crux of my thesis in its analysis of whether the expressive therapy experience made a significant contribution to counsellor training. The data is extensive as it arose from a direct question in both individual and group interviews about the particular relevance of ET in training. Although there had been doubts, inhibitions, resentment and prejudice against ET there was eventually 100% valuing of its inclusion in counsellor training. For example, I asked a student who described herself as "*one of the doubting Thomases*" throughout the last couple of years in terms of expressive therapy "*How appropriate do you think it is to include expressive therapy in counsellor training such as ours?*" She replied "*I would say invaluable and it would be very wrong to stay at a word-based level, particularly on a training course, so I do think, from an arch cynic, that there was a lot more goes on inside us than our words can convey*".

In analysing this category I have omitted statements from the data which I consider to fit more appropriately under other category headings, for example, 'Self-awareness through ET' On any counselling course growth in self-awareness is to be expected. My focus in this category is the *added value* of ET to counsellor training.

Sub-categorisation

ET:

- gets quickly into feelings
- enables deep work to be processed in privacy

- encourages right-brain activity
- stimulates creativity
- helps students to know themselves holistically
- enables personal development independently of personal development groups



speeds deep personal development

- augments verbal therapy
- provides powerful therapeutic techniques
- gives a different dimension to therapeutic practice
- provides tangible work which can be kept
- liberates from counsellor performance



enhances practice

- facilitates a way of learning which is exciting, fascinating, interesting, entertaining
- engages students even when tired



promotes enjoyable learning

- integrates all aspects of the course
- generates issues for discussion in personal development groups
- generates issues for further therapeutic work
- enables experiencing of theory
- raises awareness of issues powerfully



enhances all aspects of the course

- brings a level of connectedness to the group



enhances group life



Essence **ET contributes added value to all aspects of counsellor training**

Discussion

The ability of ET to reach feelings quickly surprised some students, alarmed others. For those who were ready to embrace deep personal development the speed at which ET exercises brought feelings to the surface was welcomed. For my co-tutor it was a key benefit of ET *“I think its value is that it gets straight into feelings”*.

However, there is often a reluctance within us to acknowledge our feelings.

One interviewee described his experience of creative writing which emerged from choosing a particular miniature. *“And I wrote a passage which was a bit like some of my poetry, it had a lot of feeling and the feeling was connected to this miniature ... the miniature was, I suppose, an embodiment for me”*. His discomfort arose as he shared his work with a fellow student. *“I misheard the instructions ... had it been that I'd have picked up on the idea that it would have been read to somebody I would have approached the exercise in a less deep way, but because there was a communication with me it was that exposure of something that I didn't really want exposing”*. He reported that he had learned a lot about himself in the process of reading his work aloud and acknowledged *“I was really, really distressed; I was quite happy to keep all the emotions locked in, which again, tells me something about myself”*. It had taught him also about a client's need for safety. *“I suppose that says something in counselling terms as well and I suppose links back with confidentiality and that feeling of safety and security in what you're bringing forth to some-one”*.

Johns (1996) advocates the inclusion of structured activities to enhance personal development, including those which include creative work such as drawing or movement. She warns, however, that *“that may inadvertently operate as a tin-opener, when the other person has insufficient time, support or control to avoid inappropriate distress”* (p. 109).

The students' experience had largely been restricted to verbal therapy and they sometimes felt unprepared for the depth of feeling which emerged from their 'clients' in counselling practice after an ET exercise. *“There were two exercises I did with this same person ... but the depth that we went to in a short space of time was very uncomfortable for this person to do ... but at the time I didn't know how to deal with it”*. There had been insufficient safety in the relationship for the 'client', and the 'counsellor' as yet had little experience of working at relational depth.

Some students more easily understood that they could keep the content of their work private whilst sharing what they chose to of the process. *“There’s always been the opportunity to share what you’ve written with somebody. Sometimes I’ve done that and I’ve sort of filled the other person in on what exactly the content of what I’ve done has got meaning for me but sometimes I just keep it to myself and keep quite abstract about it”*.

Material arose during ET sessions which could be processed privately at home. *“I think it was my deeper, more meaningful, spiritual side that seems to be coming through, the thing that I would in private probably take away and think about and feel”*.

Creative activities, introduced into an academic course, stimulated right-brain activity in every student. Each found value in at least one creative approach. *“Personally, I’m very protective when doing expressive myself ... I didn’t really get that much involved ... I did it but I didn’t get as involved as other students would have done”*. This interviewee went on to say *“The one I found really good was the clay. I wrote reams on that one, it was just so powerful”*.

An interviewee who described himself as *“being a bit of a left-brained nut”* had been untouched by the clay exercise and found the movement difficult because of his inhibitions; he reported *“In some cases it had quite a profound effect ... an example was when we were writing with the left hand(i.e. non-dominant hand), so much stuff came out and I hadn’t quite expected it”*.

The mask experience and the ritual exercise (described fully in chapter 8) made a strong impact on every student including those who had strong inhibitions about expressing themselves through painting or movement.

The introduction of creative writing was of benefit to every student. In writing essays and practice commentaries they were accustomed to writing from a left-brain perspective so creative writing felt less alien than drama or movement. It was also less exposing.

Interviewees acknowledged that I had given them permission to play and to be creative. Creative writing about a miniature horse had helped one man to *“jump the barrier, not forcing me to look at it, but giving me the encouragement I suppose to look at myself from another angle”*.

An interviewee who described herself as a logical and rational person discovered that *“I’ve been shocked at how spontaneously I can write a poem once I’ve consciously made the decision to let go ... I am playful, and I think that’s partly down to the course. I’m coming more spontaneous”*. She was now able to dance and sing more readily and feel less self-conscious about putting her thoughts onto paper.

“Before having done expressive therapy on the course I had really forgotten that I was capable of being creative in that way, or had never really realised”. As a scientist this interviewee had previously felt *“very much channelled into the logical, analytical side of thinking”*. She had thoroughly enjoyed being *“able to develop the other side of my thinking”*.

This interviewee recalled the exercise in which she had dressed up as a favourite nursery rhyme character. *“But the story I wrote afterwards was very revealing ... I’m sure I wouldn’t have written what I’d written unless I’d dressed up as the character”*. Enacting the part of a *“girl who knitted jackets for the geese”* had contributed to her personal development. *“I think for personal development it’s very very useful, and I think that on the personal development side I probably got more out of the expressive therapy than anything else we’ve done”*. She explained why. It had brought psychological material to the surface which she could then work on and journal about.

This interviewee believed that ET had contributed more to her personal development than work in her Personal Development Group. *“I enjoyed the PD groups but I wouldn’t say I personally developed; well, I’m sure I have, but I’ve never quite seen the point of them”*. She identified from her experience two barriers to learning within PD groups. *“There’s so much group dynamics and so much seems to depend on the group you’re in and how the group goes”*. She believes that *“the PD groups on their own wouldn’t have provided what the expressive therapy has. It’s brought in another dimension really which I found very important”*.

My co-tutor echoed her sentiments. *“Well, the PD group – I’ve been in so many that haven’t worked, a group is only as good as the sum of its parts and the commitment and generosity of its members”*. She believed that, in contrast, ET *“helps people to get to know themselves in a much more holistic or complete way and that happens, relatively quickly. It’s not dependent on a PD group, it’s something they can do on their own, they can do in pairs”*. I do not believe that she was devaluing the role of PD groups entirely, for example in their amplification of group dynamics.

ET enhanced counselling practice by bringing a different dimension to therapy. *“Expressive arts therapists are aware that involving the mind, the body and the emotions brings forth the client’s intuitive, imaginative abilities as well as logical, linear thought. Since emotional states are seldom logical, the use of imagery and non-verbal modes allows the client an alternate path for self-exploration”* (Rogers, N., 2000, p. 3).

On pages 182-186 I analyse the specific contribution of ET to client work as reported by my respondents. There are references to powerful therapeutic techniques; sometimes I prefer to use the term ‘experiments’, a word used in Gestalt counselling (Clarkson, 1989, p. 20). It suggests to me a shared playfulness rather than a therapeutic method known only to the counsellor.

Having largely been restricted to verbal therapy the students’ expectation was that words would be their sole therapeutic tool. At the start of the course many were struggling to perform well as counsellors by giving the ‘right’ verbal response, reflecting accurately, asking open questions rather than closed, summarising the client’s concerns. Such anxiety can become a barrier to listening well. ET set them free to meet their clients beyond words. ET augments rather than replaces verbal therapy. *“There are purists who define person-centred counselling as a process confined to words”* (Silverstone, 1997, p. 6). This was a view initially shared by some students. *“I like very much talking therapy ... what was making me angry was people saying ‘God, this is so much better than talking’ ”*. She had objected to *“other people saying ‘That’s brilliant, I’d never have got to that if it hadn’t been for ET’. I think that’s right but I said ‘Please don’t feel now that the only way to get to deep material is that way’”*.

Other students were relieved to extend their therapeutic repertoire beyond words alone. *“I’m extremely dissatisfied with a word-only based way of life with sort of token respect to non-verbal communication type of counselling. I get very frustrated with it. I think it’s so slow and shallow”*.

What has been spoken in a therapeutic session can be forgotten. Having tangible evidence of psychological content and process can be a useful aide-memoire. *“I think for me having something tangible to take away afterwards ... like the dream-catcher, and remember why you put each thing where, something like the movement one, it was good at the time but then it gets lost”*.

Many interviewees had kept their masks, pictures and photographs. *“Yes, there was a photo of the ritual and that was quite good because what happened there was that my thoughts became tangible”*. Seven years later I discovered that one student still had her mask (Appendix M1).

For one student her mask had become a marker of progress. *“I’ve still got it actually and I like to look at it, you know, and see how I’ve changed”*.

One interviewee recognised expressive work as being “a bit like a metaphor”. She had written a story about a violin which had felt important. *“I can still remember it. I suppose that’s the thing about stories isn’t it, you still remember them. And I suppose if I’d done it again it would have turned out differently. It’s a bit like a metaphor, isn’t it? A metaphor’s a picture in your mind which can change, and I found that with clients, that a metaphor’s something you can easily go back to and take from one session to another ... There’s a common thread. It’s interesting to see how the metaphor develops”*.

Students already understood the potency of verbal metaphor and many were able to develop the client’s metaphor therapeutically through the use of ‘clean language’ (Cook, 1997). I was impressed that this interviewee had broadened her understanding to include non-verbal metaphor. Meekums (2002, p. 22) applies the dictionary definition of a metaphor *“the application of a name or descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable”* (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1964) also to visual images and body movement. A movement, a drawing or a verbal metaphor can encapsulate a whole wealth of meaning to be explored in therapy.

Part-time mature students, attending an academic course at the end of a day’s work, are frequently tired. However committed to their training they can find motivation and concentration elusive. ET sessions provided a strong contrast to the usual lecture format. My co-tutor summarised this. *“When I think of sessions I’ve done and ‘X’ has done, it’s almost sort of predictable what’s going to happen ... but with this, it’s so exciting because you don’t know what’s going to come up”*.

One interviewee had *“really looked forwards to the evenings when you’ve come with your box of tricks”*. For others the unpredictability of ET evenings had felt challenging. *“I must admit in the first term, in looking at the time-table, I used to be absolutely filled with dread when it was an expressive art session”*.

The teaching room looked very different on ET evenings, more colourful and active. My co-tutor observed *“just how engaged the students were in the actual practical activity of doing something”*. In contrast to her own training, when she had found it difficult to stay awake during an hour-and-a-half theory lecture, *“it was wonderful to have that contrast ... it was just something that, regardless of how knackered people were when they turned up at five o’clock, they just always totally immersed themselves in it and got very deeply engaged”*.

What took me most by surprise was the influence of ET on the life of the group as a whole. While some interviewees focused on the individual impact of ET sessions, others were aware of the group as a whole. *“There were quite a lot of people in the room and there was a lot of, I suppose, what felt like vibrancy in the room, you could see that something was happening – but the focus was completely there”*.

This interviewee was commenting on an exercise very early in the course, prior to the mask experience week-end which made a huge impact on the group as a whole. *“One particular experience that we had this year was the mask experience which I found was a very moving experience, not only for me but for all the members in the group”*.

Another interviewee described the mask making as *“a very beautiful exercise and I think we all learned a lot about respect for each other, respect for humanity really out of that ... that was really creative and it really set the tone, I think, for a long time ... I think, well, it’s changed all of us ... and it was also great fun, it was a great sort of community activity”*.

The process of making the masks had felt very meditative to another interviewee. She had noticed *“a quality of silence ... no, a quality of noise which was very close to silence – yes, everywhere in the room there was a very pointed attention”*.

The mask experience and the ritual exercise particularly brought the group together in a shared emotional experience. My co-tutor recalled *“the level of connectedness and sharing that happened en masse in a big group ... it seems to happen whenever you do those sessions, there seems to be a – everybody is working at a deeper level and they’re somehow in touch with each other, their deep centres are in touch with each other, that is so obvious”*.

Category 7 - Power and depth of ET

In speaking about ET exercises interviewees frequently used the terms 'powerful' and 'deep work'. I wondered what they meant by powerful. Is it that a powerful exercise was one which made such an impact that they remembered it many months later? I notice that these exercises involve a variety of media; movement, miniatures, mask-making and rituals are all described as powerful. Linked to the impact of the exercise is an element of surprise, of a new and unexpected experience. This parallels the power of therapy which often lies in the unexpected, in seeing from a new perspective, or becoming aware of new aspects.

Mearns and Thorne (2000) describe client work which remains at a superficial level. The client might have rehearsed what he says or told the surface story many times. In contrast is work at relational depth. Cooper (2005b, pp. 16-20) describes the double aspect of work at relational depth. The client *"is digging down into the very depths of his being and sharing something of this with a person who can receive and understand it"* (p. 16).

I believe that when students speak of 'deep work' they refer either to work at relational depth or to uncovering unconscious material..

Sub-categorisation

- I experienced:
 - the power of having a therapeutic witness
 - the power of transformed feelings
 - the power of discovering what was out of my awareness
 - the power of projective techniques
 - the power of overcoming my inhibitions
 - the power of a symbolic 'letting go'
 - the power to increase closeness
 - the power to show me myself



ET is a powerful therapeutic tool

- I experienced:
 - uncovering the layers of a person
 - reaching deep work very quickly
 - the means of deeper self-expression

- I understood:

the need to use ET responsibly in clinical work

the need to learn how to work with deep material



ET leads to work at a deep level



Essence **ET is a powerful tool to be handled with care**

Discussion

The powerful impact of a witness to our experience is a factor in all therapy. I know from experience that if another person can stand alongside, understanding and accepting us, we feel less isolated, less judging of ourselves. One interviewee had experienced the power of the witness through an ET movement exercise. *“I wouldn’t have believed it without experiencing it, ... this business of having a companion, an empathic silent witness, that was very powerful for me ... and it certainly made me think how powerful it is to have some-one when you’re going through any kind of living process or any sort of developmental change particularly, how important it is to have some-one just with you, they don’t need to be saying anything, they just need to be focused and have the core conditions”.*

Experiencing how a feeling can be transformed through ET is a powerful experience. One interviewee remembered being afraid and vulnerable at the beginning of the mask experience; she had a fear of being touched. *“Yes, and that was really powerful, because I really don’t like to be touched, but, for me, to have some-one do that for me, I felt badly at first but it was good both sides because obviously you felt vulnerable and it was very beautiful and it was like a relationship thing and made us very close actually”.*

Interviewees frequently reported how their initial inhibitions about using the creative arts had disappeared after experiencing their power. *“We did that thing where you had to dance to music and it was really powerful for me because I wouldn’t have thought I’d have been able to do that, but I did and I really got into it”.*

It takes courage to look deeply into oneself and risk uncovering the unknown. For some students the circumstances of their personal lives prevented them from delving deeply into self-awareness; others welcomed the power of ET exercises to go quickly beyond what they already knew of themselves.

"We had to draw some sub-personality and it was really powerful for me. I didn't like what I came up with and yet it kind of got below the level of, you know, dipped into a bit of subconsciousness thing".

The implication is that what was unconscious has become conscious.

Mearns and Thorne, in discussing the importance of a therapist's congruence, suggest that once we have made "an unwelcome discovery" (2000, p. 97) it "is the therapist's responsibility to explore such experiences and to bring them to the light of day". They prefer to conceptualise new self-discoveries as the "promptings of the actualising tendency" rather than as "dragging something from the unconscious into the conscious" (ibid.). They make a comment of significance to ET "processes (i.e. of self-discovery) do not take place automatically, they need our connivance and co-operation" (ibid.). This echoes Natalie Rogers' belief that "it is necessary to stimulate the client or student by offering experiences that challenge her" (2000, p. 17).

ET exercises enabled students to experience the power of projective techniques. Many were initially amazed by the personal relevance of a miniature which they had allowed to 'choose them'. "Our next exercise was to pick a miniature, or rather allow a miniature to pick us ... I was amazed at what material unfolded for me in this exercise. It was in some ways an ending of one era in my life and the beginning of a new one. It gave me permission to move on".

An interviewee who had been initially dismissive of ET, seeing it as "rubbish, waste of time, you know, it's just froth" acknowledged "Now I don't see it as that, I see it as valid, certainly as useful for some people. That was brought home to me by, I think actually it was after the creative writing, we ended up with one of the miniatures and used them". This interviewee had been the counsellor in a practice dyad. "Somebody picked up the miniatures and it was really quite powerful because we got closer together than we would have done normally". He reflected on the process which had occurred. "We focused on the miniatures and it really did help –it helped the speaker to bring out some really quite deep stuff, something which she'd been moving away from for ten minutes. And it also helped me, gave me a deeper insight, a greater understanding of what she was feeling and saying and I thought 'Great' ".

The power of the symbolic was particularly recognised in the ritual exercise which I comment fully on in chapter 8.

Many students recognised the value of ET as a means of learning more about the deeper layers of ourselves. One student expressed her excitement at *“the power it has to look into the mirror very deeply”*. It was as though she could see her own reflection and recognise herself. The mask experience, discussed fully in chapter 8, particularly contributed for many students to a sense of self-recognition.

One interviewee, initially very sceptical about the value of ET, commented *“I like classical person-centred counselling and I recognise that it is a good, respectful way of working with clients, a good background for doing experiential work which is so much deeper. It doesn’t have to be a fully-fledged therapy (i.e. psychotherapy – my words); I think counselling can be done just as deep and ET I think is a key towards that”*.

In verbal theory it can take several sessions before a client moves beyond the presenting problem to the crux of her difficulties. Interviewees had recognised ET as being a ‘short cut’ to deep psychological material, which can be both a benefit and a reason for caution. *“I think what I have learned is how it sort of reaches a different level in a very short space of time and you need to be responsible”*. This interviewee expressed a common view amongst the group that responsible use of ET with clients arose from their awareness of its power. *“So I’m going to integrate ET into my counselling but I’m moving very slowly and gently and that’s probably to do with the fact that it’s been extremely powerful for me”*. This comment underlines the importance of personally experiencing a technique before using it with clients.

Interviewees had recognised that whatever the chosen stimulus relevant personal material emerged.

Category 8 – The contribution of ET to clinical practice

My training in PCET was more extensive in hours than my generic counsellor training. I had no intention in introducing PCET to counselling trainees of replicating my training. There was no sense of preparing them to use PCET in clinical practice, rather of providing a tool for personal

development and to encourage right brain creativity within an academic course. At a less conscious level I believe I was wanting to introduce some colour and fun, ingredients which had been sadly lacking in my own generic counsellor training.

At the beginning of every ET session I stressed that I was not teaching techniques to be used in practice; this would have felt irresponsible because of the lack of time to practise. I was therefore shocked to discover at the end of the first year that students in tutorial groups other than my own were beginning to collect miniatures and other creative materials for use with clients. I quickly changed tack, providing an advisory handout on working creatively with clients and incorporating demonstrations of client work into ET sessions, during the second year of the course.

Sub-categorisation

- ET sessions have encouraged me to:
 - collect miniatures
 - provide drawing materials and different textured fabrics
 - collect buttons and stones, shaped glass pieces
 - introduce drawing and creative writing to clients
 - think about using clay and plasticine with clients
 - use ET with clients in the future
 - make it available for some clients



I want to use ET in my practice

- ET sessions have made me cautious about using ET with clients because:
 - it isn't pure person-centred practice
 - I don't want to be directive
 - clients need to be in control
 - clients say they can't draw
 - clients may feel it's like going back to school

my clients are very short-term

I'm unsure how to introduce it into a session

I should hate to trick my client into disclosing too much



I have doubts about using it in my practice



Essence There is a mixed reaction to using ET in clinical practice

Discussion

I was impressed by the responsible attitude expressed by interviewees. Even the most enthusiastic recipients of ET from a personal perspective felt appropriately cautious about introducing very powerful media to clients.

Many interviewees reported having collected and displayed creative materials in the expectation that clients would use them of their own volition. *"I've got in my counselling room some, a great variety of miniatures, and they're all positioned there and waiting. I thought that I would wait for people to go towards them, if anybody moves towards them I would then ask then whether one of the characters attracts them, calls them, repels them as we have done with animals and the other miniatures"*. This interviewee was questioning whether clients were assuming that the materials were there for her benefit not theirs. *"I've put there pebbles and buttons and colours ... there are also some postcards displayed and very rarely students comment on them but I think I'm going to make them more prominent because they think it's for me"*.

Some interviewees reported introduction of drawing and creative writing, what they saw perhaps as the least threatening media. One interviewee introduced ET to a client after discussion with her supervisor. *"We thought it might be a useful part of my client's self-development if it was at her pace and if she thought it appropriate"*. The client had a poor vocabulary and chose to express her feelings using crayons. *"It really took off with my client and it helped her enormously ... it did take her to a deeper level ... it sort of made her think more laterally I think than she would have been able to"*. This client was proud of her art, working at it during and between sessions.

Whilst acknowledging that ET would not be suitable for every client one interviewee added *“But having said that I had some-one who was a real rough-arsed trucker and he’s done all of this stuff with me and he’s got an awful lot out of it and it actually brought out his feelings, which, you know, from a rough-arsed trucker it’s not cool to show feelings”*.

When an impasse is reached in verbal therapy ET can be useful. One interviewee had recently introduced art to a client who was ‘stuck’. *“We’ve been working together now for twenty-two sessions I think and she thinks a lot in pictures but we got stuck on one or two of the (mental) pictures which are very strong but she doesn’t seem to be able to move. We keep going back and back to them, and I suddenly thought last week of suggesting putting something down on paper ... which might help her to look at it from another angle”*. My interviewee had tuned in to her client’s mental imagery as a clue to the appropriateness of introducing art. Similarly, another interviewee had heard her client *“talking in colour”*. She had found her issue *“awful to talk about”* so she *“drew this series of pictures and then sat back and said ‘That’s what I was saying’. They put the lid on it then”*. This interviewee added *“I’m grateful really I’ve found a way of bringing it into the counselling in a way which feels natural and comfortable”*.

Drawing an image had also proved useful to a client who *“was talking about an image and was using her hands to try and explain the image.”* In reporting this the interviewee added *“and she drew the image and then the following week I had crayons and they were there if she needed them ... but she only used them twice, from then on she never used it”*. Some interviewees had felt disappointed when clients preferred to work verbally as they had looked forward to practising creative methods. In one instance a client had taken the initiative. *“I was pleasantly surprised in one particular relationship that I had with a client ... she herself introduced the idea of art therapy which helped me to understand her world ... and it also helped me to understand where she wanted to grow in this difficulty ... and I felt the imagery she used was a very powerful tool”*.

One interviewee had realised by the end of the course that, for some clients, ET could be helpful, leading to deep work and enabling him to empathize better. He stated his reluctance to introduce creative methods but acknowledged the usefulness of having creative materials available.

My co-tutor reported *“There was one woman in my PD group who said that it (i.e. ET) really wasn't for her and she didn't change her opinion on that throughout the two years but she could really see the value of it in terms of adapting it for client work.*

Several interviewees expressed their desire to work creatively after gaining more general experience or more specific arts training. This was particularly so if they were to consider working with movement. *“I think, personally I'd have a go at all of them ... With clients, I wouldn't try movement with a client. I thought we got in very deep very quickly, and I don't know – I would want to be trained before doing that”.*

There was a strong person-centred ethos in the course with an emphasis on the client's autonomy and non-directive counselling. It was difficult for some students to reconcile this with the introduction of ET, which seemed to them directive. Lietaer (1998) describes how person-centred practice has, for some practitioners, evolved from non-directive to experiential. She points out (p. 62) that although *“client centred therapy was born under the star of non-directivity”* in practice all therapists influence their clients. She also asserts that *“directivity is often associated with the contrast between entering a relationship as an expert and entering it as an equal”*(ibid.). Lietaer argues that while both client and counsellor are equally valuable *“they do not enter the relationship as equals. ... It is the therapist's task to facilitate the client's process of change”* (ibid, p. 63). And this is why therapists train. Lietaer asserts *“Almost all task-oriented interventions may be carried out with respect for the client's freedom and autonomy”* (ibid. p. 64). I agree and notice that my interviewees, in describing creative work with clients are invariably respectful in offering it as a choice.

An interviewee summarised this attitude by saying *“As long as it's underpinned with person-centred therapy and as long as it's an invitation. Not ‘What we're going to do now’”*. I am aware, however, that when I invited students to experience ET themselves they did not always perceive it as a genuine invitation, rather a polite directive. I notice that one interviewee had worked with her client for twenty-two sessions before offering art work, by which time I imagine there was a high degree of mutuality.

Clients can react to ET, as students did, with prejudice and inhibitions, which can seem daunting for inexperienced practitioners. The ability to refuse any experiential work is important. One interviewee recalled asking me how could clients politely refuse. *“That’s what worried me a bit, sort of, counselling trainees in their exercises feel as though it’s difficult not to join in, then how is it - you answered the question very well because I asked you a few months ago - ‘How does a client refuse politely without offending, without making the counsellor feel rejected and without the client feeling rotten?’ ”* She had learned that it’s possible because – *“in therapy you’re much more tentative about it”*.

Uncertainty was expressed by several interviewees about how to introduce ET into a session. One focus group member reported that she feels scared when her clients enquire about her creative materials. She explains that she doesn’t want to be directive. *“We’ve had a chat about this and I say because I don’t want to be directive, because anything I say is going to put something on you, so you use it how you want”*.

She had found expressive methods so useful personally that she wanted to introduce them to clients but her fear of being directive was *“a big barrier for me at the moment”*. Others agreed that they felt awkward, anxious and unprepared. *“Well, I feel you have to learn and watch somebody else ... and that’s why I’d like to have had more time to do that and watched and learned”*.

The power of ET to reach deep material quickly discouraged some students from using it at all with clients, particularly if they were involved in short-term counselling practice. They realised from experience how much time is needed to process deep work.

One interviewee worked in a student counselling service during term-time only and therefore where counselling contact was relatively brief. *“Although we have a contract with clients they’re really free to come and go and I would really hate to leave them sort of, with something strong they hadn’t really processed”*. She drew a distinction between *“working with buttons, postcards, dreams even”* in one fifty-minute session and working with rituals or miniatures when *“I should really want to give myself time for follow-up”*. She wouldn’t like students to *“feel tricked into being totally open suddenly”*. She *“would like them to grow into things”*.

Another interviewee had stopped working with stones. In her short-term client work she felt that stones gave her more information about her clients than there was time to process.

Summary

From individual interviews and a focus group I drew the following essences:

- I have greater understanding of who I am in the world
- I express my authentic self more fully
- I trust the therapeutic value of person-centred attitudes
- I am a creative being
- I can experience theory through ET
- ET contributes added value to all aspects of counsellor training
- ET is a powerful tool to be handled with care
- There is a mixed reaction to using ET in clinical practice

In the following chapter I analyse a different set of data to compare and contrast with my results in chapter 7. This comprises immediate feedback audio-taped or entered into Journals immediately after three ET sessions. This complements data from interviews which relied on recall at a distance.

Chapter 8

Three sessions - three voices

Introduction

Richardson (2000) suggests that crystallisation in research means looking at a phenomenon from various angles. In this chapter I therefore look at the contribution of ET to counsellor training from a different perspective. The data presented and analysed is more immediate than in the previous two chapters, reflecting the views of students collected immediately after three ET sessions. I have named these sessions 'The Mask Experience', 'Polarities' and 'Rituals'. The aims and objectives of each session are detailed in Appendices I, J and K. As in all ET sessions there was specific relevance to the task of counsellor training. I hoped that students would gain in personal development and in relevant theoretical knowledge. I had no expectation that students would use the exercises with clients.

I present excerpts of the expressive work they produced in one session and include photographs of all three. My hope is that the reader will gain an even stronger flavour of the students' experience of ET through my deliberate presentation of narrative linked to relevant theory. As explained in my methodology the data lends itself particularly well to narrative analysis. I have adopted the ethnographic technique (Shu, 2006, p. 39) of juxtaposing 'episodes' or stories, with 'positioning', that is, placing the stories into theoretical context.

The data is rich and detailed in contrast to that of chapters 6 and 7 which emerged from recall at a distance. I preserve the participants' original spelling and sentence construction to stay as close as possible to the data.

I analysed the data from which this chapter emerges (Appendix H) in such a way that I can draw comparisons between the participants' immediate feedback and data emerging from the, much later, interviews. The narratives demonstrate consistency between the two sets of data in that all statements can find a place under eight headings:-

- Self-awareness through ET
- Self-expression through ET
- Experiencing the value of person-centred attitudes
- Awareness of prejudice and dealing with inhibitions through ET
- Experiencing theory through ET

- The particular contribution of ET to training
- Power and depth of ET
- The contribution of ET to clinical practice

Emphases may differ between the two sets of data but in essence they tell the same story.

In selecting points for discussion I chose what seemed, in each story, most relevant to my research question. I am aware that other researchers would position themselves differently to the data, dependent on their particular foci.

Two of the three sessions I have chosen to highlight ('The Mask Experience' and 'Rituals') made a significant impact on the student group. They both took place on separate residential week-ends when there was much more time to work expressively and to process the results. The third session on which I focus ('Polarities') was part of the usual evening course and demonstrates the power of spontaneous creative writing, the medium most valued by students, possibly because it seemed less threatening than movement, less childish than working with miniatures. The mask experience belonged to the first year of the course while the other two sessions occurred during the second year.

Three important voices are heard in this chapter, the collective student voice, the voice of my co-tutor as expressed through her journal rather than in interviews, and my voice as researcher, also recorded in a journal. The reader can view the material through three, potentially different, lenses. I believe that all three voices contribute to my research focus. The student voice, drawn from transcribed audio-tapes, learning journals and immediate written feedback in class, describes the experience of trainees relatively new to the field of counsellor training. In contrast, my co-tutor speaks with the voice of an experienced trainer. In my own voice I hear a sometimes uneasy balance between trainer and researcher. Without combining both roles I could not have conducted the research; from both an ethical and practical point of view I found the dual roles of practitioner research difficult at times, as the following Journal entries highlight.

Journal entry - 9th November, 1999

'I should have liked to spend more time on the theoretical input, giving space to students to discuss what they have learned so far (i.e. about congruence). I felt obliged to rush on to ensure enough time for the experiential exercise as all the components of that were essential ... The students agreed to me taping feedback and, as I had decided to do this in two groups for twenty

minutes, I have forty minutes of feedback. Again - I was frustrated; by simply reflecting back something of what each student offered I offered respect, acceptance and understanding, and was delighted by their generosity as each student contributed and there was a rich variety. As a tutor I was well satisfied in my person-centred responses; as a researcher I wanted to ask probing questions, as in a focus group*.

Journal entry - May, 2000

The arts therapy research which I have read so far refers to working with clients to discover their experiences, whereas I am working with students. This makes a difference somehow. The researchers are still encumbered by a dual role and it's even more awkward perhaps to 'use' clients than students. What is the difference? The students haven't agreed to it - some would but they are all experiencing ET. Sometimes I wish I could just be a tutor introducing ET and not also a researcher. It puts more pressure on me a) not to put pressure on the students, and, b) to record everything I do and think.

Session 1 - The Mask Experience

Theoretical Introduction

The theme of the first residential week-end of the course was 'Getting to know ourselves and each other'. Appendix I contains Programme, Lesson Plan and Theoretical Introduction.

My co-tutor and I planned to co-ordinate our skills to introduce Rowan's concept (1990) of sub-personalities. Rowan defines sub-personality as "*a semi-permanent semi-autonomous region of the person capable of acting as a person*" (p. 8). The personality becomes 'differentiated' so that, by about four years of age, areas of the personality have been split off into "*various regions within ... to deal with the people and situations which have been noticed*" (Rowan, 1988, p. 204).

Rowan emphasises the element of fantasy in this formation. "*this specialization is not done in relation to the environment as it might appear to an impartial observer, but as it appears to a panicky person with a rich fantasy life, very willing to make up stories and paint pictures*" (ibid.).

Although Mearns (2003), from a person-centred perspective, uses the term 'configurations of self' to describe the notion of multiple inner selves I prefer what seems to me the more dramatic term of sub-

personalities. Sub-personalities can so easily be visualised and brought to life. O'Connor (1971, p. 207) suggests that in humanistic psychology the term sub-personalities is used rather than regions or repertoires because they are easier to use in practice and because *"it seems truer to the pictorial way in which they are laid down in the first place"*.

In my own life an understanding of the presence and purpose of sub-personalities had been profoundly therapeutic. Psychosynthesis (Ferruci, 1982) reveals the full therapeutic power of the concept of sub-personalities, adopting and refining it as an intrinsic part of the healing process. A client is encouraged to dis-identify from his sub-personalities in order to integrate them fully into his personality. At the residential week-end awareness of sub-personalities was the aim. Focussing on one key sub-personality, students were enabled through mask and costume to amplify characteristics, needs and desires.

The counsellor works from the assumption that all sub-personalities have a basic motivation for good, although some might need transformation. Their needs are positive, although their desires might not be. If I were to summarise the aim of Psychosynthesis in relation to sub-personalities it would be: recognise, accept and integrate. Although it can be difficult for clients to accept a sub-personality which differs dramatically from their self-concept, acceptance can lead to the discovery of its true potential. Beneath every sub-personality lies a higher potential which, if treated with respect, can reveal itself and become transformed into its essential nature. Whitmore (1991) highlights the tendency of sub-personalities to polarise, resulting in inner conflict; both polarities need to be heard and understood before the dissonance can be alleviated.

During my PCET training I had been introduced to a form of mask-making which involved forming a 'plaster-cast' of a partner's face by using modrock.¹⁸ The exercise was intriguing but seemed irrelevant, unconnected to purpose or theory. It left me untouched psychologically but my teacher's antennae were twitching with excitement as I recognised the potential for linking masks with sub-personality work. The residential week-end provided the opportunity I needed for this integrated and time-consuming experience.

From eighteen written responses I present four in full. I chose responses which indicate learning particularly relevant to counsellor training. I also use excerpts from others to illustrate emergent

¹⁸ Thin gauze impregnated with plaster-of-paris

themes. The responses are mostly anonymous, as requested; there was opportunity for students to be as critical as they wished, but some students chose to include their names.

Voice 1 - The Students

First respondent - week-end, 21st - 23rd January, 2000

In her Journal 'B' gives a broad description of the week-end's activities and some personal reflection on her experience:

"The residential week-end at Parkmore Hotel, Stockton, proved to be a very productive enjoyable experience. Our group joined in October 1999 and I have had the opportunity to get to know members of my personal development group and skills group. ... I was aware on this first evening away that I did not know at least two thirds of our group very well. The introductory session explained the sub-personality work we were about to explore and left us in suspense as to how to use the Vaseline? We had all contributed to the expressive art therapy by supplying various hats, scarves, macs, cloaks, lengths of material, etc. ... Saturday's explanation began with the theory behind sub-personalities and mask experience. Wearing old tea shirts (sic), armed with Vaseline, strips of plaster, dishes of water, hair bands, etc. our experience began.

Splitting into pairs we each prepared our faces, pinning our hair back and smothering our faces in Vaseline. My partner then began a very slow, therapeutic process of wetting each strip of plaster and overlapping it strategically around my face, eyes and nostrils, leaving sufficient gap for air to be inhaled and exhaled.

This proved to be a very relaxing/humorous experience. The whole room was taken up by activities, some people lying down, others sitting up. Music played and despite there being 26 people or more in the room I was aware of only two or three. I felt safe, calm and confident that X (her partner) was in control but allowed me my space to live in my world before we exchanged places for me to complete her mask. The music I heard took me to my own ballet (lessons). (I had my own private agenda). I avoided looking around the room 1 - because I wanted to completely fall into the experience and 2 - for practical reasons I was unable to move freely and I did not want to laugh or change my expression for fear of ruining the mask. I felt a strong psychological harmony between myself and partner but a much stronger harmony with the group as a whole.

Taking off the mask when dry was another experience. Initial surprise - was this me? Did I look like that? Listening to others experiencing the same I heard words like 'giving birth'. 'seeing myself in the

mirror'. It was quite unique to see something that represented myself. Later in the afternoon we then painted/decorated the masks to demonstrate one of our sub-personalities.

Our afternoon involved looking at three of our sub-personalities. ... This was a strange experience but helped me to understand my strong and weak personality and allowed them to communicate. Since this week-end I have been able to identify moments of each personality and have been able to control and work through some of my own feelings.

Our final morning was quite an emotional experience for all. I chose Vexatious Vera at first but realised as I was collecting items to wear I had to be Spirited Sam as well. I came to the conclusion a few days later that subconsciously my sub-personalities had been communicating for a while and I found it unreal to be one or the other”.

On returning home – *“I felt like the cat who had got the cream. My daughter's opening words when she saw the mask was "It's my mum!"*”

Discussion

This is by far the longest entry in this student's Journal, demonstrating the impact on her of the first residential week-end of the course. I notice particularly that she moves from not knowing "at least two thirds of the group" to expressing a strong "harmony" or connection with the whole group through the mask experience.

Wharam (1992, p. 94) describes a similar group exercise within a psychiatric hospital in which patients used plaster-of-Paris to make masks directly onto faces protected by petroleum jelly. His observation echoes the students' experience *"The warm, wet cocoon, that seems to envelop you, can be very pleasant if sensitively handled, and my experience in these sessions is that the level of sensitivity and safety increases as every-one shares the activity"*. On reading this I understood why the mask-making had left me psychologically untouched during my own ET training. The tutor being ill, a former student had facilitated the exercise in a practical, almost mechanical style, without any reference to the importance of the relationship between partners.

My respondent's daughter immediately recognised her mother's face in the mask but she herself experienced surprise. The mask enabled her to see her physical self more clearly while the complementary sub-personality work enhanced understanding of her psychological self.

This student had overheard phrases such as 'giving birth' and 'seeing myself in the mirror' describing the mask experience. They also echo the counselling experience in which the counsellor reflects verbally, as in using a mirror, what the client has said. (Rogers, 1942, in Kirschenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 128). There can be a similar therapeutic surprise. "Is this really how I feel/behave?" There can be a sense of meeting oneself for the first time. Counsellors are sometimes described as midwives to their client's re-birth as they emerge from long-held and distorting memories, fears and beliefs (Yalom, 1980, p. 408).

The student experienced trust in her partner whom she describes as being "*in control*" yet not intrusive. Feeling "*safe, calm and confident*" the student had relaxed and been reminded by the music of an early memory. I have a sense of her being temporarily enclosed by the mask in a womblike inner world.

This respondent refers briefly to my theoretical introduction to sub-personalities. All ET sessions were preceded by a brief theoretical input, placing the session into context. As I have previously mentioned theory was avoided during my own PCETI training to free students from the constraints of left-brain thinking. On a generic counselling course, however, particularly in a University context, I considered it important to provide theoretical input. I could also ensure some benefit for those students who were, at least initially, sceptical about experiential learning methods.

Second respondent - Written feedback on the Mask Experience

"Knowing the exercise about sub-personalities was to include having my own personal face mask was for me very symbolic. One of the major reasons for joining the course was to try and understand 'me'. I feel that I am so complex at times and I yearn to unravel myself. Some of the parts of myself are shrouded in mystery with feelings running riot. To take off a mask and not be afraid of what is underneath is a superb starting point for me. I know now what my physical face is and now I am positive I will delve deeper and become so much more enriched by what I am about to find. Thank you".

Discussion

The mask exercise has encouraged this student's desire for greater self-awareness. Her words reminded me of Rowan's view that a counselling trainee needs to be in touch with "*one's whole self rather than just the surface persona*" (2005, p. 4).

Third respondent - Written feedback on the Mask Experience

"I enjoyed the whole process. It brought out the artist in me. I found the experience very calming. My attention was focused. I felt a great sense of closeness, awareness and responsibility to my client ... I felt that we two were as one.

As client: I became aware inch-by-inch I was becoming a sort of prisoner although I had every confidence in my partner's ability. ... Her eyes and facial expressions showed interest and attention and achievement. All in all,

Great

We captured a significant moment in time".

Discussion

I particularly notice *"It brought out the artist in me"*. Although the activity was structured several respondents commented on their sense of creativity in making a mask. "It was a pride in creating something" said one. "It was wonderful to see the creative energy released by the making of the masks" was another comment.

Intimacy is a second theme highlighted by this respondent and shared with several others. *"I felt a great sense of closeness to my client"* echoes another respondent. *"Psychological harmony"* is another phrase. The exercise had amplified the quality of the therapeutic counselling relationship in which two people meet at psychological depth.

The theme of **responsibility** emerges. Counsellors need to be responsible **to** and not **for** their clients. The theme emerges in many responses. *"I felt a great sense of responsibility toward my partner that she would like and recognise herself"*. I find this resonates with my desire as a counsellor for clients to see themselves as they are and to learn to love themselves. So often their self-concept is distorted and, sadly, many clients dislike or even hate themselves.

This respondent gradually has a sense of being imprisoned by the mask. Others describe a sense of welcome withdrawal. *"As the mask stiffened I felt withdrawn and separate from what was going on around me. It was almost a relief not to have to talk"* and *"The ability to be hidden for a while was an extremely enriching experience as I could shake off all responsibilities and rules, to be the me that I was 'in the moment'"*. A mask can hide and protect us from having to portray our everyday social mask. *"I liked to watch every-one from safety, and felt invisible, unobserved"*.

What made the sense of imprisonment feel acceptable to the respondent was trust in her patron's ability. The theme of trust pervades the responses. One student wrote *"Although trust was already well developed between my partner and me I feel that, if that had not been the case, this exercise would have deepened my existing rapport, by demonstrating care, tenderness, etc."*. What is also highlighted is the importance of non-verbal communication which, as in any therapeutic relationship, reveals *"interest and attention"*.

The third respondent highlights particularly experiential learning about the counselling relationship.

Fourth respondent - Written feedback on the Mask Experience

"I was already noticing two sub-personalities at the beginning of the exercise - one excited and looking forward to doing the exercise and the other very nervous and apprehensive.

'D' made my mask first. To begin with I wanted to talk to her - but as the mask began to 'close in' I shut my eyes and felt very relaxed - her stroking the Modrock felt very soothing. As the mask stiffened I felt more withdrawn and separate from what was going on around me. It was almost a relief not to have to talk.

I found taking off the mask extremely painful (I don't think I had put enough Vaseline on beforehand). I was very curious to see what it looked like. It took a little time to see that it was my face when I looked at it - it looked more like me in profile I thought. Others said it was a very good likeness (not surprisingly!).

I really enjoyed making 'D's mask. I wanted to do a very good job of it for her and it helped me to have experienced it myself first, so I would have some idea how she may be feeling and what it felt like physically. I took great care not to trap any of her hair after my own experience of taking the mask off.

One of the most amazing aspects of the exercise for me was seeing people emerging from their masks, soft and full of colour and life from behind the hard white shell".

Discussion

The theory of sub-personalities becomes real for this respondent as she recognises conflicting feelings around doing the exercise.

She highlights the surprising fact that, although we see ourselves often in a mirror, we might not recognise our own face! *"I was very curious to see what (I) looked like"*.

This student had enjoyed the soothing touch of her partner. Touch was particularly important to another student. *"For me the significance of the exercise was to experience the very real giving and receiving of therapeutic touch. I realise anew how I can connect with some-one through touch, without words"*.

Despite the healing potency of touch, counsellors are aware that in their practice touch can easily be misunderstood by clients or experienced as intrusive. Some students had felt very wary about touching during this exercise. *"Applying the mask to another person - I felt I was almost intruding on his privacy - touching where I would not normally touch"*. This contrasted strongly with *"Her delicate touch massaged, slowly, in a delicate and non-intrusive way"*. One student had been initially challenged by the exercise. *"I feel uncomfortable with physical closeness with people I don't know very well, so it was awkward at first, but once I'd jumped in, it felt good. There was a mutual trust and respect which permitted the sharing of touching. It was a good learning experience"*.

The almost universal use of masks throughout history incorporates a complexity of meaning. *"The emphasis of the term in England is on the act of concealment"* (Mack, 1994, p. 12) but Mack (ibid.) describes mask-making as *"a technique of transformation"* which creates a tension between what it reveals and what it conceals. There are elements of both revelation and concealment in the students' experiences. There are also echoes of the use of masks in ceremonies around birth and the naming of children (ibid., p. 20).

The students painted their masks and chose costumes, both of which helped them to 'step into' a sub-personality which they had chosen to project. Jenkins (1994, p. 151) describes the similar role of the mask in ancient Greek and Roman drama as *"to define the category of the person portrayed"*. The audience saw the mask and not the actor's personality. Similarly, through each student's mask we saw one sub-personality rather than the usual personality revealed to us.

In the Sunday morning presentation many students were able to overcome their usual inhibitions around acting. Irvine (1994, p. 149) explains how donning a mask can enable the release of inhibitions.

Voice 2 - Co-Tutor (Journal entry, 22nd January, 2000)

“Patricia provided a very clear and useful overview of the theory of sub-personalities for the students and then explained that we would be: making masks in the morning, doing activities and exercises when we met in the afternoon in order to get in touch with some of our sub-personalities, and decorating the masks in the late afternoon prior to choosing costume to perform/be one of our sub-personalities in a small group presentation which would be shown to the whole group as a closing activity on Sunday morning.

My experience as a model

P. did a demonstration for the group of how to make a mask and I was the subject. She helped pin back my hair and let me apply lots of Vaseline to the area which would be covered by the wet modrock.

Every-one was in good spirits; there seemed to be an air of anticipation and excitement, also lots of humour.

P. explained the importance of the relationship in what is a very intimate and potentially risky, shared activity. She asked me what I would like to have happen in order to tune into/connect with each other and I asked that we could sit close, hold hands and let our breathing become attuned. I closed my eyes and felt calm and centred and safe. Then P. got a minor coughing fit (she'd breathed in some Modrock dust). We were both laughing but I felt fine for her to start the demo. The atmosphere of hilarity still pervaded. There were lots of jokes and it felt weird not being able to join in with the laughter.

I really felt wonderful having the mask applied. It was like a very gentle facial massage and I felt very safe and cared for.

There came a moment where I had to remove myself psychologically from the group, because people were wanting to interact with me and I couldn't answer so I closed my eyes and went within; meditating on the feeling and sensation of love, focusing on my heart. I totally lost awareness of the group for some time and when I allowed myself to come back I was aware that the group was more hushed. They were whispering now. So different from when I'd closed my eyes.

Much sooner than I'd anticipated P. suggested it might be time to wriggle my face around to allow the mask to loosen. It felt so strange detaching myself from my face. It was like being born. There were so many people around all rooting for me, saying things like "It's coming, it's coming, keep going, nearly there". I found this hilarious, also moving - it was so like a birth. I was expecting them to shout "Push, push".

When it came off, I pretended to cry like a new born and held it. I looked at asking "Is it a boy?", "Is it a girl?" It was a really shared experience, enjoyed by the whole group. Before it had come off 'T' had said "You look really peaceful" and 'M' said "I think she looks vulnerable." They asked if I felt vulnerable and I shook my head.

I really liked the mask. In a way it was a bit like holding your newborn and trying to decide which bits it had inherited from you.

When it came to the group members' turn to make masks in partners, every-one participated. No-one opted out (although two requested not to be photographed).

Soothing taped music was played and apart from the moments when the masks were removed the atmosphere was very calm and soothing. 'Peeling off time' seemed always to be a time of fun, excitement, jokes, satisfaction and achievement As others were emerging I heard comments like "It's nice to be out, it's also nice to be in". Really, it felt like people had let go of their inhibitions and really entered into this. It felt like a very shared and intimate group experience".

Discussion

In her Journal entry my co-tutor 'N' combines her role of observer with that of participant. She notices particularly the changing mood of the group from hilarity to hushed observation of the demonstration. I wonder why this change occurred? 'N' and I were sharing a cosy intimate relationship as I made her mask and perhaps the students sensed and respected this. She notices the effect on the whole group, something I found unexpected.

As a mother 'N' experiences a strong connection between removing her mask and giving birth to a child. She jokes "Is it a boy? Is it a girl?" Yet I sense in her account a deeper emotional response.

'N' is impressed by the students' willingness to participate and *"to let go of their inhibitions"*. I had not anticipated the level of inhibition expressed by some students of being touched. The lack of inhibition amongst students in my PCETI training had ill prepared me for working with students on a generic counselling course.

Voice 2 - Co-Tutor (Journal entry, 1st February, 2000) (Reflecting back on the previous week-end and Tuesday evening)

"By the end of Tuesday evening I was feeling euphoric and like a born again creative expressive devotee. I kept feeling throughout the week-end that I wish could have been a student, to have had the total experience. I kept remembering 'C' (student) saying "life will never be the same again".

Things that have really stayed with me are:

*the sense of connectedness amongst the group members
like we'd shared something very deep and we were all, in some way, involved in each other's transformations. People shared their deepest parts - sometimes exhilarating, sometimes scary and painful, and it felt such a privilege.*

'M's Sunday morning presentation was chilling - I'll never forget it

'T's presentation touched a very deep part of me. It was so brave to show that part.

I'm really impressed by the courage of the group for the hard work they continued to do over the five days (and I guess are still continuing in their lives outside of the course) and I'm really impressed by the methods which have enabled this 'unlocking'. Well done Patricia!

Another bit of feedback remembered later was how many individuals felt neglected by their partners (at home) or not understood - no interest in the transformations they were going through".

Discussion

The week-end had strongly impacted on 'N', convincing her of the value of ET She acknowledges again the powerful effect on the whole group as well on individuals. Part of the purpose of a residential week-end is to develop relationships and enhance group cohesion. (McLeod, 1993a, p. 211) speaks of a residential week-end as a *"cultural island"*, away from the usual training venue, where relationships can be strengthened. I was taken by surprise by the improved emotional climate which was a lasting phenomenon after the 'Mask-Making' week-end. Some of this undoubtedly

resulted from the residential element but personal communication identified ET as contributing added value.

'N' is aware that the learning process is ongoing. Seeds of self-understanding will continue to grow. 'N' adds comment about the lack of interest and understanding which some students experienced on returning home. Counsellor training accelerates personal development, and as Johns (1996, p. 46) acknowledges, frequently puts a strain on close relationships outside the course. Students becoming accustomed to a high level of empathy and intimacy with colleagues may, unrealistically, expect a similar degree from others who have not experienced exercises such as the Mask Experience.

Voice 3 - Researcher (Journal entry - 22nd January, 2000)

"I became anxious during the night about protecting the very luxurious carpets in the Function Room and about five men with beards - would their beards come off? I asked at Reception re. the carpets and they gave me large bin liners to protect the floor from paint - I relied on these and newspapers for the mask-making. Otherwise I felt relaxed and expecting the students to enjoy the experience. One man asked 'Have you experience of bearded men doing the masks?' and I was congruent and said no - just put on loads of Vaseline. In the event one man shaved! And the others needed gentle easing off with my finger. What I hadn't expected was the smoothness of every-one's skin once the Vaseline was washed off!

I was delighted with the whole experience. The demo. went well - I stressed the need to care for their partner, including waiting with them until the mask was off (later some had been left alone and felt abandoned; one student wanted to be left alone as their mask came off he later reported).

I didn't do a very professional masking job but it was fine, looked like 'N' (co-tutor) and probably this helped the students to feel less in awe. There was a much nicer atmosphere in the room than at PCETI. - I felt it really was very person-centred. I suggested they start before I'd quite finished 'N' because of the time. I'd given them lots of tips as I worked, e.g., 'don't make it too wet'.

The students were, on the whole, very quick to get started - in a jiffy they were towelled and protected with an amazing array of headbands, shower caps, etc. A few women were anxious about putting Vaseline on their faces - from an aesthetic point of view! and several asked me to check whether they'd put enough on.

I put on classical music and the atmosphere became quiet and purposeful. I had been very organised in preparing the equipment and it paid off. (I was up at 8 for a 9:30 start). The only thing I'd forgotten was hair grips, which 'G' went to buy.

As I was demonstrating - this took quite a time - I noticed times of jokey noisiness and periods of quietness, some students taking notes. No-one had any trouble making a mask. I had permission from all but two students to take photos. With the wonderful School of Ed. digital camera. I tried to capture every-one, who wished, on camera, unobtrusively.

I really liked seeing it all happen, after all my planning. I was amazed by how little Vaseline and Modrock we used! I had 10lbs. and we used 4 - barely. One jar of Vaseline would have done but at least there was a jar easily available for people. The students were great - they had brought everything I'd asked for.

I loved seeing their pleasure as they took their masks off and thanked their partners. I'm still ridiculously amazed by how realistic they all look - we could recognise people easily as they were propped up on chairs.

There was sufficient time as they put their masks to dry to ask for written feedback. I also passed my Lesson Plan around but they never seem interested. We then had a short whole-group feedback session. I can't remember what they said except for 'H' who said "That was the best person-centred experience we've ever had." I received lots of compliments on the experience and eighteen sheets of feedback (with at least one more promised) - this felt like a breakthrough for my research. This was far more than I'd ever had before - I think they felt grateful and appreciated my preparation and anxiety about the beards! Several students wrote "Thank you" on their feedback and I was thrilled. I find it quite moving to see the men working, especially two men working together. 'N' (co-tutor) wrote six pages of notes" (Photographs, 1 - 5, pp. 203-204).

Journal entry - 22nd January, 2000

Painting the Masks (Photograph 6, p. 204)

"We only had twenty-five minutes to do this so some people finished theirs later in the evening. The silver spray and the gold paint were extremely popular. I thought they were all going to look the same at one point but they ended up very different. People were proud to take them home - something to show their families. There was one very large group of about twelve students decorating theirs, sitting on the floor in a circle, enjoying the experience and laughing. 'C' needed pipe cleaners so went and bought some, but otherwise everything was there. The coloured feathers and sequins were popular. Miraculously by the next morning they had been elasticated and people got dressed up very quickly".

Photographs 1 – 3 Making the masks



Photographs 4 – 5 Seeing our selves



Photograph 6
Painting the masks

Photographs 7 and 8 Celebrating us! Presentation of Sub-personalities (1 and 2)



Photograph 9 Celebrating us! Presentation of Sub-personalities (3)



Photograph 10 Celebrating us! Presentation of Sub-personalities (4)



Photographs 11 – 13 Celebrating us! Presentation of sub-personalities (5-7)



Journal entry - January 23rd, 2000

Celebrating Us (Sunday morning) (Photographs, 7 - 13, pp. 205-208).

"I was anxious that this wouldn't fall flat because every-one seemed tired the next morning after a late night partying. I felt I needed to put a lot of energy into bringing the whole thing together - I played it in the end by ear, regarding the timing. At one point I thought there was going to be too much time for the celebration as more than a quarter of the students didn't take part. But some had two turns and then there was some delightfully spontaneous interaction. I think it helped enormously that I spontaneously stepped into a sub-personality myself and introduced the whole exercise (small groups to prepare and then present something to the whole group) as a very flamboyant, sensual 'Countess of Somewhere', a version of 'Rebel Woman' (one of my sub-personalities). The students found me very funny and I think I shocked every-one by my confidence and humour. I maintained it right through the session and enjoyed myself!

I was really surprised that every-one worked individually - no group 'performance'. There was a variety of humour, poignant moments, fun. It was difficult to hear some people through their masks, which was a pity. Some people later said they hadn't been ready to show a sub-personality, others were delighted that they had taken the risk.

The ones I remember (some captured in photos.):

- 1 happy, playful child "I'm happy, happy, happy", wearing a jester's hat
- 2 'debauched', 'degenerate', a 'crazy' teenager, a party animal (**Photograph 9**)
- 3 a bigotted 'common man', in a bowler hat, hands in jeans pockets (**Photograph 10**)
- 4 wearing a pipe-cleaner halo, which he had painted yellow - 'Mother's Little Angel' - a 'good' boy (**Photograph 11**)
- 5 a sub-personality he wanted to leave behind - an aggressive corporal forcing trainee soldiers to be tough and violent. (He actually comes across as sensitive and gentle in his front person) (**Photograph 12**)
- 6 an American - 'Clark' - ruthless, womanising
- 7 The 'Countess of Somewhere', sensual, sexy, flouncing, posh, aristocratic, sickly charming, confident

I asked for written comments on the whole experience but so far haven't had any, which disappoints me".

Discussion

I notice my focus, in my role as facilitator, on practical details, such as protecting carpets. Even so I was aware of my feelings. The aim of the Sunday morning session was to work in small groups interacting as chosen sub-personalities. The students found their own way of working, however, preferring to work individually. Although every-one stepped into a sub-personality through mask and costume, a few preferred to go no further. They observed and supported as others enacted and revealed their sub-personality to the group. In ET a structure can be offered but the client finds his own way to use it.

The level of student involvement both in the exercises and feedback is striking, as is their high level of enjoyment in experiencing the reality of sub-personalities.

I include below my Journal entry from the class session two days after the residential. After the palpable impact of the week-end a follow-up session was essential to process feelings and learning. In receiving feedback on the week-end I experienced satisfaction in my dual roles of facilitator and researcher.

Journal entry - 25th January 2000

Session on Expressive Therapy

"I was concerned that maybe the students would be sick of expressive therapy and want to get back to the usual routine - skills practice, etc. One student had said when she saw the programme at the beginning of term that she would have preferred a Personal Development group. However, I also thought that maybe it was OK because the week-end had prepared them for ET - this proved to be the case and it was a brilliant evening. 'I' came up afterwards and appreciated the whole week-end and evening experience, aware of all my work and how tired I must have been - I appreciated this and also 'N' (co-tutor) saying it was a brilliant evening - "you've won them over". I feel as though the whole group has seen the power of ET

It felt good to me to have the luxury of a whole four-and-a half hour session. I knew the place to start was with a check-in session after the week-end, going home and going back to work (for

most people). They all reported having had a great week-end, although for some it had showed disquieting things, for others exhilarating things - some were still on a high, others sad and needing process time. A few had already processed via supervision/being listened to. Some had been surprised by a) a meal got ready, b) the interest of a partner; some were saddened by their partner being completely uninterested, non-understanding. Many felt 'bereft', missing what one student called 'the family' - "We are a family". They had longed to be back together tonight and every-one felt the week-end had made a difference to themselves and to the group.

'P' (a colleague) said at lunch-time (meeting) that he'd heard it had been a 'magical' week-end and introduced me as an expert in ET

One student brought me two miniatures tonight, another said "You know when we leave don't you, that we'll all bring you a miniature?" Another decorated some belts and a few bits and pieces for my dressing-up box. Several said that their children wanted to make masks - and every-one had been exhausted afterwards!

I now feel ABSOLUTELY CONVINCED that ET enhances our course and that I've gained the students' interest. It was lovely to hear 'G' saying that he's beginning to experience from the right brain and this makes such a difference to his counselling. What I now need to do is to enable them to become CO-RESEARCHERS".

Summary

The data has demonstrated that the Mask Making and Sub-personality work encouraged confidence in the power of ET, increased understanding of theory, raised self-awareness and contributed to individual and group bonding.

Session 2 - Polarities

We each present a particular persona to the world, by which we are recognised. Usually we try to show our most pleasant and admirable qualities to others while perhaps dimly aware at some level of uglier characteristics which need to be kept well out of sight. *"Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be"* (Jung, 1983, p. 88). In Rogers' terms, whatever does not fit into our self-concept is denied full awareness, becoming what

Jung describes as our 'shadow' self. *"The shadow embraces all those characteristics whose existence is found to be painful or regrettable"* (Jung, 1940, p. 173). The shadow is not evil but *"inferior, primitive, unadapted, awkward; not wholly bad"* (Jung, 1983, p. 89).

It often manifests itself in projection of disliked and unacknowledged aspects of ourselves onto others. I might see myself, for example, as kind and generous while projecting onto others the anxiety and meanness of which I am also capable.

"To become conscious of it involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance" (ibid., p. 91)

If we do become aware of our shadow we need to find a way in which it can co-exist with our conscious self, or, in person-centred terms, be integrated into our self-concept. *"But if we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem has been solved. The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form."* (Jung, 1968, p. 20). Jung acknowledges that the reconciliation of these opposites is difficult. In introducing the polarities exercises to students I hoped that they would become aware of polar opposites within their personalities and begin the difficult process of integration. I experienced the exercise during my PCETI training, although not presented in any theoretical context. I later recognised it as an oblique method of uncovering part of the shadow self, an enjoyable route to greater self-awareness. The only alteration I made to the exercise was to present my collection of toy animals on painted boards which represented their natural habitats (Photographs 14, 15 and 16, pp. 214-216).

The Polarities lesson plan (Appendix J) indicates aims and objectives as well as the format of the evening. The main activity is a projective exercise involving creative writing. Students were asked to choose two animals, firstly one which attracted them and then an animal which repelled them. Each animal choice led to a story written from its perspective. A third story brought the two animals together and was written in the third person.

The student voice

Story One

a) The admired one.

I am a tiger. I rule the jungle. No-one crosses my path without knowing it. I am fierce and frightening. I move stealthily through the undergrowth, my lithe body glistening with health. My roar is wild and I can feel the power of the sound as I let it out - I love the feeling of being live and powerful. I am magnificent but I have few friends - most of the animals are terrified of me and scatter when they hear me coming. I love the chase before the kill, the feel of my sleek muscles and sinews as my feet pound on the ground, the wind through my mane, the sense of speed and beauty. Then I pounce and tear into the flesh of my prey. I drag it to my mate and cubs and we eat it together, ripping off chunks of fresh, juicy meat - so satisfying to an empty stomach. The feeling of solid meat in my stomach is heaven on earth. I curl up contented next to my mate and we sleep in the evening sun with the cubs snuggled into us. She appreciates all that daft stuff more than I do - I am just happy to have been king again, king of the JUNGLE ROAR. Cross me if you DARE. I will kill for all my family and protect them from all who challenge me - tiger or any other animal. No-one else can have my mate. My cubs have to fight for themselves when the time comes. I AM KING, KING OF THE JUNGLE!

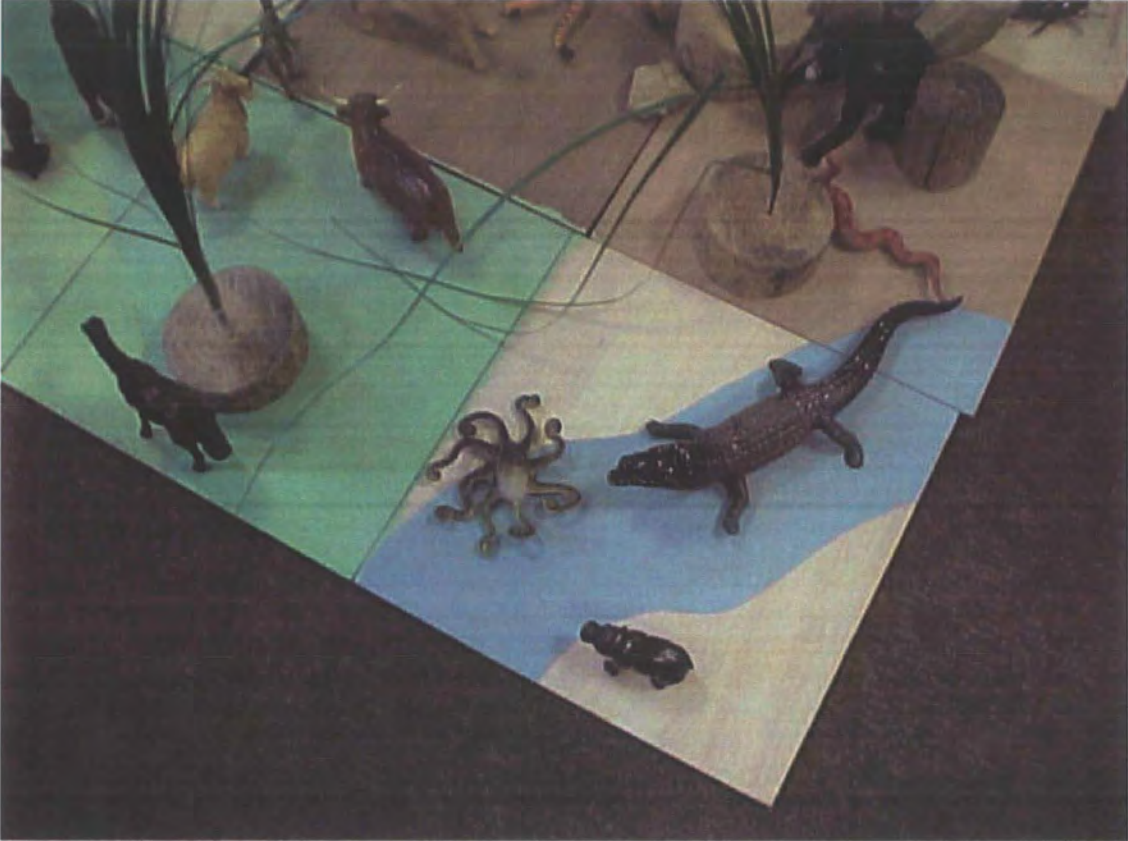
b) The loathed one

I am an octopus. I am all legs. I am soft and slimy and cold. I live in the murky depths of the sea and attack any unsuspecting creature that comes my way. I can use my legs to wrap around my victim and slowly suffocate it and put it into my gaping mouth. I love the cold and depriving the seascape of the beautiful fish I eat. I am a trap. I like to wait and grab my prey as it swims past, oblivious of me with my shiny legs. It struggles to be free but I hold it in my grip until it is strangled. I move slowly along the bottom, focussing on the next victim, not needing to move far as they come to me. I am sly and covert; the darkness is my friend. My legs are my life and I am especially good at co-ordinating all eight, an ability I am proud of. I love the feeling of my victim's struggle - their helpless flailing - I am a bully.

Student's reflection

(This is) the part of me that stifles creativity/freedom.

Photograph 15 – Polarities - animal habitats (2)



Photograph 16 – Polarities - animal habitats (3)



c) The integration

One fine summer's day the tiger was walking along the beach under the palm trees smelling the salt air and longing for the jungle. He felt quite out of place. He wondered what the waves would feel like on his feet so gingerly put a toe into the water - it seemed so vast and alive and different from the familiar streams and pools of the forest. The hot dry sand under his feet and in his toes was uncomfortable and burnt the soft pads of his feet, and as he dipped his feet into the water he felt the cool waves lapping over it and liked the sensation. He felt a bit more confident and walked out into the waters feeling the small waves ebbing and flowing against his legs. He felt relief from the hot sand and stood looking around, feeling self-conscious and incongruous in this unfamiliar setting. He felt a soft tapping sensation through the fur of his left front leg and then a tightening around it like a tendril from a tree in the forest. He looked down and saw a tangle of legs floating in the water, with some tightening round his leg. It was a small shining green creature, with a bulging head in the centre and two dark eyes - clinging onto his leg with one of its soft legs. It looked up at him with its black eyes and he looked at it with interest. It was obviously trying to hang on to him but it felt to him like an inconvenient truckle? through his thick fur. He felt sorry for it as he raised his leg and shook it off - it had picked up something too big this time. He was tempted to play with it, nosing it and tossing it in the air, but decided he would rather leave it to swim away. It was beneath him to tease and it didn't look edible. He turned, crossed the beach and went back into the jungle.

d) Reflection on the stories

(i) On feedback tape

I found it a really helpful process doing the two stories and then the integration at the end. I loved my tiger and I absolutely hated my octopus. I felt quite physically sick actually as I was writing about it. And then when I put the two together, somehow had to get the tiger and the octopus together in the same place which was difficult. So this tiger was on the beach where he didn't feel particularly safe. But when the octopus met the tiger it was so small and insignificant and couldn't do anything to the tiger because tigers have fur and there's no way an octopus can damage the tiger. The tiger just shakes it off and goes padding back into the jungle. And it was inconsequential for the tiger although for me, when I was writing about the octopus, it really horrified me; it was horrible and it sort of reduced in size from something enormous when I was writing about it, to something really very small and very manageable and very sort of, rather pathetic actually in the third story. And I could understand where they'd both come from and yes, it was just very helpful seeing that horrible bit was more manageable I suppose, not as frightening, that's how it felt. To begin with I didn't want the octopus to come into the story, I wanted to keep it out. When I did it was fine, so it was really helpful.

(ii) In Learning Journal (13th February, 2001)

I had a wonderful time this evening. I always enjoy expressive therapy with Patricia - find it very liberating. I've written a 'tiger' story, an 'octopus' story, and one with both in it - an amazing process. In the third story the horrible octopus (made me feel physically ill writing about it) shrinks to insignificance next to the tiger. 'X' and I were partners, sharing our stories together. We both chose the same animals (!) but had written very different stories. It is hard to acknowledge that the octopus is part of me. The dark side. There was no reconciliation between the tiger and the octopus - the tiger shook the octopus off and walked off. It ended up inconsequential. The octopus stifles. Part of me stifles freedom and creativity - need to be being responsible and doing all the time. Have to value that in counselling - I know what my clients use most and value most is space and to be accepted and attended to/listened to and valued, etc. But there is a bit of me that wants to achieve and do and produce results - rather than allowing the client to be. In my last session with 'P' I was trying for the one hour and ten minutes then relaxed and let her be - she talked about all sorts of deep things because I gave her the space - need courage to do it. Freedom can be scary and can be wonderful.

Another link to this - my neat and tidy house ... a bit of me doesn't like it, wants a mess and freedom to leave it.

There is a lot of detail of my feelings/thoughts/process as we did the exercise, where we pictured the block to bring about what I want to be! My block was horrible when I became it. It was snide and evil sounding "Ha, ha - I've got you!". I talked about it further in skills - it was extremely enlightening and helpful - shows how it is important to process cognitively stuff that comes from a creative exercise. Perhaps why clients, after a session where they go deep or are very emotional, tend to have a more cognitive session next time to integrate and process what has come from the previous session.

Discussion

In person-centred expressive therapy the client makes her own analysis of her stories. I make no attempt therefore to analyse the content of the students' stories but analyse, where appropriate, their reflections.

The first storyteller

- enjoyed the process
- gained theoretical understanding of 'The Shadow'
- experienced her dark side

- discovered that her dark side was not as large and fearsome as she had imagined
- understood that her creativity is suppressed by her tendency to be responsible, active, busy, tidy
- made links with counselling practice and the client's need for space to 'be'
- appreciated the need for cognitive processing after creative work (Meekums, 2000, 2002, 2006)

Story Two

a) The admired one

I am a fox with deep, thick red fur. I explore my world with stealth and cunning. I observe at a distance but I am not afraid to mingle. I see things that would make your spine tingle. I have many friends; we live quite apart but congregate at night, deep, deep in the dark.

At times I feel my world is invaded by creatures and other species. I observe. I keep my distance but will intermingle if I desire comfort, nourishment and support. When my needs have been met I am content to roam on the outskirts of civilisation, not far from my home.

I stand in the sunlight, in the wind and in the rain, steadfast in my intentions, powerful in terrain. I will share my world with others and will trustfully implore that others feel safe in my territory and happy to explore. Though there are outside dangers and adventures to explore I will travel headlong onto them at a risk of a damaged paw. Though times I have bled, in time it heals. I have learned during my transition that my time is not at an end but only just beginning.

b) The loathed one

I am a crocodile, all slimy and green slithering under the murky waters. I sloth around seeking out my prey and lunge, jaws wide, on the unexpected. I can move like lightning when least expected and can devour my prey, severing, disarming, decapitating at will.

I bask in the sunshine till the clay on my back dries and cracks, my wounds can dig deep but I will always fight back. I can stand steadfast in wake of my prey, prepared to devour ruthlessly. I instil fear and despair, hatred and cunning dare enter my den or I will attack. Once ventured you will never be free, you will never leave without a trace of me.

c) The integration - when the fox met the crocodile.

It was a beautiful sunny day when it happened. A day when you would least expect it to happen. There were no tell-tale signs, hints or clues that could have informed me earlier of events that were

about to take place. I was wandering around in my world as I always do at a time of day that instilled peace and tranquillity. A time of day when the early activities were the birds singing and the bees beginning to stir. Even my whiskers stood still apart from the odd bracken that flicked my fur in a friendly mischievous way. I stood awhile in one spot when the sun beat down strong, sheltered by the thickening bush which surrounded me on three sides. I took one or two steps forward to noisily explore what was ahead, aware of an increasing breeze and cold that crept from behind. I blinked twice to make sure I was not dreaming, or was it a nightmare. There ahead stood a green vicious slimy creature creeping out of a muddy hole. It was not looking in my direction at first but I knew it had seen me and I knew it knew I knew it had seen me. My world stood still in fear, not sure which way to turn. I pretended that if I didn't move it would not move or harm me.

We stared each other out, each willing for the other to crumple. I stood steadfast in my world, determined to fight it out. In the corner of my eye I saw a gap in the hedge. I knew only I could get through there. I knew that if I walked forward the crocodile would win so in a flash I turned on my heel and sneaked through the gap. I walked slowly at the side of the hedge which ran parallel to my foe's den, observing cunningly at a safe distance. The evil creature remained in sight but I left it with the contempt I felt deep inside.

Discussion

In this second set of three stories the student misunderstood the instructions for the third, integration, exercise. She continued to write in the first person, from the perspective of the fox and so fails to integrate the two aspects of her personality. A note in her Journal gives her perspective on the stories - *"The good side wins"*. She has not understood that both polarities need to be equally valued.

However, she acknowledges insight into her strong-willed polarity. *"Awareness of self others see, what I choose not to see. My dark side - strong-willed"*.

The stories demonstrate writing at speed, without editing of sense, spelling and punctuation.

Story Three

a) The admired one

I'm the fox, a country dweller. I've been here for years. Some people love me, some people hate me - for the wrong reasons I may add. Yet I don't know who to trust at the moment. I kill, yes I kill. I kill to eat. To live, to feed my family, to keep the family going, you know, continuity and all that. Yet these humans with preconceived ideas tar us all with the same brush - pardon the pun, being a fox!

They don't realise there are always exceptions to the rule. I'd have a pretty good life if I could settle down, but I can't. There's always some-one who wants to harm me so I understand why I have to be cautious in my travels.

b) The loathed one

I'm the fly, a scavenger, parasite, spreader of infections and diseases. My defence is my agility and my ability to live in all kinds of conditions. You can't imagine how much damage I can do by biting and sucking and vomiting on my prey. I have to be quick because nobody likes me but I serve a purpose. I lay my eggs which turn into larva. My young, in turn, they eat the likes of rotten flesh and vegetation and yet I have a family to support, hundreds, although I don't really support them, I just give them a life and then bugger off! - excuse the pun again. I can't help what I look like but I tell you what, I bet they wish that they had my eyesight and reactions. I don't know why I do all these things. It's not on purpose, it just happens and that's the way I am.

c) The integration

So this is the integration. This is the story of a fox who lazily observes his prey in the sunshine yet he doesn't realise that **he's** being observed also in the heat of the day. The fox is cunning and stalks his prey and then chases on freely as he, the fox, was unseen until the last moment. Meanwhile the fly can feast on the remains of the fox's prey and lay eggs inside the carcass, out of the sun. The fox dozes in the sun, his belly's fed, his family's fed. Time for a - that blooming itch! "What's that beneath my knee? I can't get any peace here!" His protestations are aimed at a miniscule stalker, a fly, who is already negotiating a road through his hair, just behind his left ear. "Scratch", he says, "scratch till you're sore. If it's sore, even better for me" says the fly, "then I can get in there and have somewhere to lay my eggs!"

d) Reflection on the stories

The fly in the second one was a predator to the fox so that was interesting. It just looks like I cannot get any peace in my life. I'm going to be for the rest of my life certain things like being an observant kind of person, you know, traits like that, traits like trying to provide but also aware of other people's perceptions, things like this, help to make the best with what you've got and change with the conditions of the time.

Discussion

This student shows much less reflective ability. He acknowledges a main story theme of being unable to find any peace in his life. He finds a surprising connection between his two polarities in the ability of the miniscule stalker to be a predator of the killer fox.

Story Four

a) The admired one

My first animal was a leopard, I really enjoyed leopard. I found it absolutely exhilarating trying, just writing about it.

b) The loathed one

And my second animal, I was surprised at my own choice. It was turkey and I found turkey very boring and stupid and black and red and pretentious and dignified and all that stuff.

c) Integration

Once upon a time a leopard was prowling with long strides in the thick of the forest. The smell surprised him, a smell he'd never smelt before. It was sweet, like a white and flat sort of smell. He, the leopard, moved very swiftly and silently towards the smell, lost in the clearing. As he drew closer to the smelly thing it turned round. It was red and black and produced an awkward sound. It seemed panicked. He pounced, but the thing flapped its wings (yes - it was a bird!) whilst screeching strange words. He, the leopard, peered into his eyes; the bird quietened. As he got closer the leopard could smell the bird and the smell was intoxicating. It pounced again. The bird resisted his powerful jaws but soon its neck snapped. The bird was dead. "What a stupid bird" thought the leopard. "Why didn't it fly away?. That's the one thing I can't do. It would have got itself out of my reach with a flap of its wings".

d) Reflection

When we put them together I couldn't think of a happy ending. I was very intrigued myself as to what sort of ending could happen. Going through that process I realised that probably my primary process is to be leopard and my secondary process, I was glad to discover, was to be in turkey. I hadn't thought of the resources in turkey, that turkey can fly, and so that was good to discover as well ... discovering that turkeys, while stupid and pompous and boring and all that, also have hidden resources.

Discussion

The student had discovered that the despised part of herself has useful resources. McLelland (1992, p. 192) comments on primary and secondary processes, terms which Mindell (1982) coined to reductive conscious and unconscious. *“Primary processes refer to the process of identifying with certain behaviours, gestures, feelings and thoughts; secondary processes are all the verbal and non-verbal signals in an individual’s expression with which they do not identify, and which conflict with the primary identity.”*

Story Five

a) The admired one

Dolphin

b) The loathed one

Cockroach

c) Integration

Many, many years ago, when the earth was in its early stages of development, many of the creatures could survive in more than one environment. For example, the dolphin could spend long times basking on the sea-shore or exploring the area around whilst the cockroach could be on both land and in the sea. The ability to achieve these qualities meant that the dolphin's skin at time became hard and dry and the cockroach's outer skin softened under the water. Although of very different genetic calling both the dolphin and the cockroach had the ability to survive. The dolphin, with its worldly knowledge, sensitivity and compassion for others was able to see the usefulness of the cockroaches as the cleaners of the environment. The cockroach, with its limited knowledge and understanding, understood the need for the all-knowing, compassionate dolphin. By being compassionate to the cockroach who had been deprived of nurture and compassion it gave another element to its existence. Both creatures are needed in this great, wide world. As the earth developed, their ability to live in alternative environments disappeared, leaving them as they are today, isolated within their own species, loved or hated for qualities which made them unique.

d) Reflection

Cockroach was, just talking about them send shivers down my spine. I just detest them so actually writing the story was very difficult in the first part with the cockroach. What I found when I integrated them only came to light during the conversation with my partner because I hadn't really

realised it. And what came through from our discussion is how, I suppose, within ourselves we tend to go for the positive quality of oneself without an understanding of the dark qualities. And with me I don't like travelling down the dark pathways at all and yet just bringing the two together was quite a learning experience - that there is positiveness and why hide it away and not bring it to the surface every now and again? I only tend to acknowledge it when it comes unchallenged and then I'll acknowledge it. I don't invite it out, the dark qualities tend to stay hidden within me, so I found it quite interesting.

Discussion

This student needed courage to allow herself to be free her shadow self. She seems to be acknowledging that her darker side does have positive qualities.

Several students expressed anxiety about integrating both chosen animals into one story. The exercise had encouraged them, however, to consider the qualities of their shadow selves, to be less fearful of them and more aware of what they could contribute to their lives.

Voice 2 - Co-tutor

In this session, which required working with partners, there was an uneven number of students. This allowed my co-tutor to take part in the session rather than observe. As she had no previous experience of ET she enjoyed taking part in it whenever possible. For my research purposes, however, this was disappointing as the quality and unbiased nature of her observation in other sessions strengthens my results. It highlights for me the dependence of the researcher on others.

Voice 3 - Researcher (Journal entry - 24th January, 2000)

"I joined in as the ET model suggests and to encourage others to become animals - but not another one did, even 'N'! (co-tutor). However, they still seemed to get a lot out of the exercise and I got very good feedback in the recorded session.

It was a lovely sunny evening and most of the students went outside to do their story so they had about forty minutes altogether, which they appreciated.

It was interesting that at least three couples discovered that they had chosen the same animal, although often they represented very different things.

I didn't have a partner, which meant I didn't get as much out of the exercise but I couldn't allow myself to go into it very deeply anyway because I was keeping the time, etc. But I did write three stories and read the third one out. It's important for tutors to be willing to share.

As always there was a lot to carry - R. (husband) came to take them home as the animals and accessories are heavy. 'N' (co-tutor) helped me to put the animals out and two students packed them away. But I was initially hot and bothered with the rushing around, setting up the music and, later, the recording equipment. This is not a method for the lazy!"

Discussion

I always found it difficult during ET sessions to gauge the level of interest. Faces were often impassive as the students wrote or painted, becoming much more animated during verbal sharing. Gradually I realised that, as they moved into a right brain modality, ordinary social interaction, including facial expression, was suspended. I felt very involved in preparing and introducing the exercises. In facilitating feedback I became fully involved again but there was a time while the students were working when I experienced them moving into their own worlds, away from the usual student-tutor relationship. In individual work, with clients who are painting or writing I find it easier to stay involved as an empathic witness.

As a tutor I always have part of my attention on facilitation, which in ET exercises keeps me partly in a left brain modality. This is similar to the counsellor's involvement in the client's world whilst maintaining partial and necessary contact with her own.

Modelling appropriate attitudes is crucial for a counselling tutor who accepts the value of congruence. Similarly, as a facilitator, I found it important to model all aspects of ET exercises, to be willing to show vulnerability as well as strength.

Surprise was expressed about choosing the same animals as a partner. Certain animals seem to have symbolic characteristics, in the West at least, with which we generally identify. Yet each student gave individual meaning to their animals, demonstrating the power of projection.

I comment in my Journal on the time-consuming nature of setting up the exercise. When I did the exercise in PCETI, training the animals were placed randomly on the floor. As previously explained I decided to group them according to their natural habitat (photographs 14-16, pp. 214-216), hoping to make the exercise more realistic. I painted hardboard to represent a variety of habitat and collected props such as shells, polystyrene 'icebergs', rocks and miniature trees. In retrospect I believe I wanted to raise the status of the exercise by demonstrating the care I had taken with detail. I wonder if I was unconsciously trying to counteract potential criticism that this was purposeless play.

Summary

The Polarities exercise helped students:
to gain understanding of theory
to become more self-aware

Session Three – Rituals

The theme of the second residential course in February 2001 was 'Loss and Bereavement'.

Three tutors shared the programme which addressed the theme from a variety of perspectives. I planned to use ET - a) to demonstrate the therapeutic value of ritual by inviting students to create a ritual connected to the week-end's theme, and, b) to draw the week-end to a close in a 'Celebration of Life'; this involved creating a composite painting in three different groups (Photographs 18-20, pp. 234-236). It felt important to close what was a potentially heavy and emotional week-end with a reminder of life, and shared relationships within the training group.

Rituals were formally incorporated into my PCETI training. What most impacted on me was a spontaneous, informal ritual developed by the students to mark one student's sense of loss on the day she sold her deceased parents' home. The meadow, woods, waterfall and stream around the training venue became the scene of numerous rituals involving celebration, transition or mourning and I experienced the added dimension which our natural surroundings brought to these. I felt the value of work in natural surroundings without understanding it. Linden and Grut (2002) believe that present-day lack of contact with the natural elements is a cause of psychological damage. "*Nature as a source of metaphor for the human condition is at the heart of psychological work. Because plants grow, regenerate, acknowledge and react to their surroundings, are open to manipulation and possess very varied properties and characteristics, they are the ideal focus for the therapeutic activity of exiles*" (p. 16). Hover-Kramer (2002) also believes in the importance of connecting with nature, to enhance our

creativity – *“Connecting with nature brings us into palpable psychoenergetic harmony and connects us with the creative energy”* (p. 152). Counselling is usually, for ethical reasons, confined to a designated room although Grove, as I have experienced, frequently takes clients into the natural world.

The venue for the residential course from 23rd to 25th February was a Diocesan house, formerly a stately home, set in extensive and beautiful grounds. Although it took place in January I hoped to use the grounds as a setting for experiencing therapeutic rituals. We were fortunate with dry and sunny weather, a heavy snowfall occurring the same evening!

A ritual is defined (Wikipedia, 2006, on-line) as *“a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value, which is prescribed by a religion or by the traditions of a community”*. Rituals are a universal experience in helping to mark the seasons and transitions of life. Words, music, costume and a variety of props such as fire, light and water are traditionally incorporated.

My aim on the residential week-end was to highlight the potential value of ritual within a counselling relationship (see Appendix K for Lesson Plan and Theoretical Introduction) focussing on the theme of loss. Research data was collected during the week-end. As the quality of the feedback tape was disappointingly poor, six students, none of whom was in my Personal Development Group, volunteered to be interviewed individually. I felt that this was a mark of their growing consideration for my research as they wanted the impact of the rituals to be recorded; they were willing to miss part of the evening video or to sacrifice some of their free time to be interviewed. Excerpts from these interviews, which were tape-recorded, provide the data for the student perspective.

Voice 1 – The Students

First respondent – ‘D’

During the day my respondent had been thinking about the difficult relationship she had experienced in childhood with her grandmother. The ritual had enabled her to begin a process of ‘resolution’. She had been able to talk about her painful memories to her partner (‘T’) before expressing her feelings in a letter.

“My grandmother was a deeply religious woman, but didn’t like me. And I knew it and I think that was the painful thing, even as a child I knew it ... and it sort of brought me back a memory of when I was a child, as my grandmother sent me up from the kitchen to the sitting room to get something and

when I got back she was gone with my sister – she'd taken my sister out and left me ... and that really hurt, that hurt so much and I've never been able to talk to her about that".

While 'D' inherited a legacy of anger from this favouritism her sister continued to be burdened with guilt. 'D' then describes the process and impact of the ritual. *"So I wrote this letter and I picked up stones and stuff and I picked up kindling for a fire ... and I organised it how I wanted, I had lots of elements with me and I'd picked up a branch from a fir tree, it was quite dead so it was quite dry, and on it were two cones and the more I looked at these cones, they were either side of this branch, and I felt that they were very representative and symbolic of how my grandmother split my sister and I ... and some of the theory was going through my head as well about Rogers' core conditions and about growth and if you get the positive elements you'll grow and blossom and in the two cones my sister's cone was all out and beautiful and mine was small and tight ... and my sister, when I take her back to the past, has blossomed because she got the nurture and love from my grandmother.*

So I thought, "right I want to", and I read the letter to 'T' and she asked me what I'd like to do with it ... so I ripped it up in long pieces and then I burned it on the fire I'd made and the stones were from where I live now so that was quite special to me – this is about past meets present stuff as well".

What had surprised 'D' was that, as she burned the letter and then the branch, both she and her partner smelt *"this strong, really strong perfume and it wasn't there for long but it was strange and it didn't smell like a pine cone or anything like that, it was perfume, and it just came straight up and then it was gone ... what I felt I'd gained from that experience was the knowledge that that relationship with my grandmother which was distant and cold and a very rejecting woman, but in doing this exercise I gained warmth and a gift of this lovely scent and like a release almost".*

'D' acknowledges that she has more work to do on this relationship but the impact of the ritual is clear. *"I mean, even 'T' said "God"! I mean my face changed and I felt a lot lighter and I felt very clear focused and just bright in myself, optimistic for the future. I definitely would do this again – for me – so thank you".*

Discussion

Most clients have 'unfinished business' from the past which influences the present. Where a relationship is involved, writing a letter to express strong feelings is a fairly commonplace practice encouraged by counsellors. The client discharges painful memories and related feelings and thoughts

in a letter which is usually never sent; the cathartic process is sufficient. Sanderson (1995, p. 169), for example, describes this method for counselling adult survivors of sexual abuse. *“One way of releasing feelings of pain or anger is to externalise them by writing letters to others”*.

What makes ‘D’'s experience of partial resolution around a painful childhood relationship much more vivid and effective was the burning of the letter. The ritualistic burning of a letter and a symbolic branch involves her senses of touch and sight and smell. She is left with a picture in her mind which symbolises destruction of painful memories, and ending. ‘T’ has heard and witnessed as no-one else has ever done and the memories have been visibly transformed. What ‘D’ and ‘T’ experienced together resonated with what Shreeves (2006, p. 240) calls a ‘transcendent moment’ *“when everything seems to come together”* and the participants experience *“an altered state of consciousness”*.

“I really enjoyed, I just let it burn away and I liked it when it burned and all the paper, which was quite surprising as it was quite windy out there, had stayed in one place and it was quite beautiful, it was like silver and grey, it was beautiful, so I just left it there for a while until it had finished”.

‘D’ felt a sense of loss in her grandmother’s inability to love and nurture her. She understands from experience how essential it is for a child to receive Rogers’ core conditions. The ritual exercise has confirmed the value of key person-centred theory as well as enabling personal growth.

I notice the Person-centred way in which ‘T’ facilitated the process whilst placing the responsibility on ‘D’ to work in her own way. *“‘T’ helped me to look at them (the branch and cones), to look at them in different ways ... and I’m not very good at lighting fires ... but we did this together and I organised it how I wanted ... and I read the letter to ‘T’ and she asked me what I’d like to do with it”*. ‘T’ demonstrates the skill and sensitivity which effective work with rituals requires and which ‘D’ has recognised.

Second respondent

Respondent 2 had used a ritual to mark the life and death of a baby she had lost. *“I had a particularly complicated grief, a loss, and I realised this morning ... that there were aspects of it I was stuck with in me ... that I hadn’t really processed or that I was surprised about, that were still there, and when it came to the ritual that I really wanted to get rid of because they weren’t doing me and good and also I wanted to celebrate but I felt I couldn’t celebrate until I’d got rid of those things.*

And it was wonderful – we went under a tree on the drive – it was a magnificent, huge tree that had been there for years and years and there was something very secure about that”.

Like other students she had used fire to destroy, in her case, unwanted feelings, written on pieces of paper. The way in which the paper had burned had been very significant. *“I put each one on the fire and it was almost like the way that each one burnt seemed to be as significant as the actual burning of them and a feeling that I’d had that had been particularly intractable, a feeling of confusion, the flames went up to here, they were really high”.* The fire had died down of its own accord as the last piece of paper burned. *“I’d built it the right size to do what I’d wanted to do and no bigger so that was quite a surprise”.* Then she felt free to celebrate her baby’s life.

Reflecting on her experience she said *“And I think the thing that I’m going to find helpful is the visual aspect, that it was something I did with a witness and so it will always be a landmark that I can look back on if the feelings come back. I can think “well, I actually did something about that at Wyedale and it’s a marker”.*

Discussion

This respondent’s experience demonstrates aspects of the process of grief, the theme of the residential week-end. When the pain of loss has been fully experienced happy memories can resurface.

As for other respondents, the presence of a witness had been significant, echoing a major factor in therapy, the acknowledgement and witnessing of a client’s pain and process.

Third respondent

Respondent 3 had worked very closely with her partner in performing rituals. The shared experience had made it special and enhanced their relationship. *“Well, right at the beginning we decided that we wouldn’t, it had felt very personal what had gone on so we didn’t want to share it with the whole group. But what we both did was we went away, we ended up somewhere where we both felt safe and comfortable which was in our beds ... we had ten minutes in silence and wrote down how we thought our ritual would be and neither of us said what it was going to be about, we kind of knew we’d be letting go and we wrote down how we felt on pieces of paper and we went outside and made a fire and it became, sort of circumstances, nature, just sort like took hold of us and there were lots of elemental things going on”.*

Although they had had a plan of what they wanted to do nature seemed to have its own plan; the fire wouldn't light and the candles went out. Disappointed, they decided to follow their instincts.

"And then we both, together, said what we wanted to say ... and we both had ways of finishing and getting rid of the process. It was really spontaneous but there was something about having shared it that was special and perhaps prevented me from thinking "Oh, you stupid person, what are you doing ... grow up ... because it was so special to 'M' (partner) and it was important about the relationship, 'L' and 'M's relationship, and trust and supporting each other, and silly things like candles not working became irrelevant ... so afterwards we both had a big hug and felt very very peaceful".

Smelling of bonfire smoke they had planned to have a shower, a cleansing, after the exercise but changed their minds. *"We may be grubby, we may smell of bonfire smoke but that's part of it. I don't want that smell to go just yet like the incense burns but the smell's still there."* *Something like I've read, very much to do with life and death, you may die but you linger on in other people's memories".*

Discussion

There is a marked spiritual flavour in this response, in the willingness to adapt and to go with the flow rather than to impose a rigid structure. The impact of the experience is reflected in the holding on to its essence, symbolised by the lingering smell of a bonfire.

Fourth respondent – Photograph 17 (p. 233)

"When I did the exercise this afternoon, one again I wasn't quite sure what to expect and then I started to think about it and some inspiration came when I started to do some creative writing, of what I wanted to do. And the things which were personal in my life, which had been around for some time and I felt were holding me back, I felt I wanted to do something tangible to recognise these things and to move away from them".

This respondent had written on a sheet of paper regrets and things of which he was ashamed. He then ripped the paper into pieces which he burned. He continues: *"And I had 'H' there as a witness to this, and it was very important that everything was burned. And when the burning came, a surprising thing and unexpected, was the smoke and the wind took the smoke and ? it actually away from me".* He had wanted to *"get rid of the evidence on the paper and then the natural elements of the smoke and the wind made it quite tangible and carried them away from me and, just to be in the presence of that and to allow that to happen, and as the fire and embers died away and to look at what was there which I didn't want to be there and that felt like a release for me and it was quite cleansing for me as well".*

Discussion

This ritual reminds me of the ritual of confession prior to forgiveness. This respondent used the ritual to cleanse him from regrets and shameful memories which seemed to be holding him back in life. The past was encroaching on the present and on his future. It was important that they were all removed, symbolised by the burning of every piece of paper. After his tangible experience this respondent felt different and, this resonates for me again with a religious concept; sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inner and spiritual meaning.

I notice how this respondent made spontaneous use of what Natalie Rogers describes as the 'creative connection'. He felt stuck for ideas so preceded the ritual with creative writing which inspired him. He has understood how one art form stimulates another.

Photograph 17 – A ritual



Fifth respondent

Going through a difficult time at work, in which she felt diminished, this respondent used a ritual to provide her with a supportive resource. From the privacy of her bedroom she wrote on slips of paper *"I want to burn my fears, may my fears burn, may my ties burn, may my timidity burn"*. She had thoughtfully qualified her desire to burn all of her fears *"may my fear die but may I be frightened of injustice"*.

In addition to burning her strips of paper as she read these sentences aloud, she had made a shrine containing *"matches, shells, feathers, and it was each of the elements, and a pine cone for the earth"*.

This respondent knew that her ritual needed to be powerful *"but I decided that because what I wanted to do was quite big for me I wanted to perform a ritual which felt similarly big, a strong ritual which had to hold me"*.

After the papers had burned *"I stood up and I used sentences which I'd heard, which came back to me ... I stood in front of my shrine and I said "Arise great warrior, take the sword of wisdom"*.

Later that afternoon this respondent reflected *"It felt a really very strong procedure, very powerful, and now, a few hours later, as I came out of it I felt really really happy. I don't feel high anymore, I feel tired but I feel as well a growing, almost steely, determination that it's going to work. And I think the ritual is now in my memory and I'm using the images. The imagery of the ritual and the sentences, the words that went with it, I'm keeping as a sort of resources - so I shall see"*.

Discussion

Each ritual was uniquely choreographed to meet the student's need yet there are common elements such as the transformation of feelings. There is a marked contrast between such words as 'fear' and 'timidity' and 'steely determination'. I notice this respondent's tiredness once her initial euphoria had passed and this equates for me with the tiredness clients frequently report after an effective counselling session.

Of the six respondents only this woman had created a shrine with its spiritual symbolism but others were aware of the elements playing their part in the drama of their ritual. I sense their awareness of the eternal, of powers beyond ourselves, which resonated strongly with what Jung (1968) describes as the *"collective unconscious"* which subconsciously influences us all.

This respondent draws on her knowledge of literature to add powerful and ancient exhortation to her ritual.

Sixth respondent

This respondent had already used rituals to help her to work through issues around her sister's death. *"But the difference yesterday was having the witness and also your sort of suggestion that I should take care in preparation and that made it feel a very special occasion, that I was taking more care over it, and actually the taking care over it became integral to it because of the caring attitude within the relationship anyway. So that was a double symbol kind of thing ... but actually sharing it with some-one really deepened the meaning and I think made it much much more effective and changed it, actually changed it; the rituals had helped before but they hadn't done anything to change it and this time it did - the issue's still there but it feels as though it's changed and it's much more fluid and there's something different about it and I've got lots of new perspectives on it, and having the new perspectives, and knowing that it feels different, has given me more motivation to take it out and look at it more. And I don't think I've had that motivation for quite a while; I sort of forced myself to do it yesterday. It's been very valuable; it was really hard but when I started on it I thought 'well, I'll do this' and it's a lot easier and that's been a gift ... and I do ritual things with clients sometimes and having done this yesterday I've just got a better understanding now".*

Discussion

This respondent had gained at both a personal and professional level. Unlike other respondents she gives no specific details of her ritual but reports the common themes of transformation and the importance of a witness.

Careful preparation had contributed to the efficacy of her ritual, as if sufficiently honouring its significance; *"taking care"* in preparation, had become integral to the ritual, representing a symbolic taking care of her much loved sister.

Experiencing a personal ritual had deepened her understanding of using rituals with clients and I wonder whether the valuing of preparation was a part of that.

Of the six respondents this student was the only one to have had generally negative views of ET because of her thirst for learning theory. In the ritual exercise she had allowed herself to learn experientially.

Overall discussion - Symbolism

Jung (1978) defines the symbolic as “a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning” (p. 3). “Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend” (ibid.). I particularly like Hobson’s (1985) idea of the symbol as a bridge between inside experiencing and outside reality. Rowan (2005) suggests that counselling trainees “need to be initiated into the world of symbols and images ... this is the realm of intuition, creativity, altruism and the transpersonal in general” (p. 36).

In performing the rituals the students were very aware of symbolism, particularly in the natural world. A branch with two fir cones either side was “representative and symbolic” of how a grandmother split her two granddaughters apart.

The wind played a part in many rituals, snuffing candles out or blowing smoke away at significant moments. “And nature just ... took hold of us and there were lots of elemental things going on”. (Respondent 3). “A surprising thing and unexpected was the smoke and the wind took the smoke blew it away from me”. Respondent 4 understands the symbolism of the natural elements having taken what was holding him back in life.

Brun, Pederson and Runberg (1993) suggest that symbols of nature such as the wood, sea, humans, animals and plants are probably the oldest form of symbol. For respondent 2 the ancient tree under which she performs her ritual seems to symbolise security. Amongst its roots there are “protected places”, appropriate for her poignant ritual, which celebrates a baby’s life. The need for a sense of security is also illustrated by the number of students who planned their ritual from the safety of their beds. Candles, as symbols of light and spirituality, were frequently and spontaneously incorporated into rituals. Respondent 5 consciously gathered symbols of each of the elements in matches, shells, feathers and a “pine cone for the earth.”

The rituals provided tangible evidence of transformation, as for example fire turned a letter into beautiful ashes of silver and grey. The rituals had made a difference as Respondent 6 describes. She had previously performed rituals which “had helped but they didn’t do anything to change and this time it did – the issue’s still there but it feels as though it’s much more fluid and there’s something different about it and I’ve got lots of new perspectives on it”.

McDonald (cited in Payne, 2006, p. 63) refers to Brun, Pederson and Runberg (1993) who “*advocates the power of fairy tales to offer rich symbolism and therapeutic distance to different themes*” within human experience. Similarly, rituals provide a sufficient distancing from traumatic experience to enable clients to deal with it. For a long time Respondent 6 had been unable to motivate herself to deal with her sister's death. She felt as though she had to force herself to face the issues but the ritual had provided opportunity and sufficient distance.

Voice 2 – Co-Tutor (Journal entry, 24th February, 2000/1) (Rituals - Residential)

“Patricia talked about RITUALS – what they are – why we have them – where we have them – when we have them, and ritual in the counselling relationship. She read three accounts of different rituals:

Mbuti pygmies of Zaire birth rituals

Courtship ritual in Lapland

A couple's ritual on ending their marriage

We had all brought various materials – shoe boxes – rich fabric – tea lights – pine cones – seed heads – pebbles – flowers – twigs – jars – shells – feathers – paints.

The previous evening the students had each chosen a partner for the week-end, to be their support person. It was suggested that they may want to work with their partner, although it was also OK to work alone. An aspect of ritual is that there is normally a witness, and in therapy the client's ritual can be something you create together.

Some people immediately started selecting materials for their own ritual and others immediately went into pairs to talk about their transition and what it was they were wanting to let go of”.

Discussion

‘N’ describes the detailed preparation for the exercise, which included the students’ collection of relevant materials and the reassurance of adequate support in a demanding and potentially emotional exercise. In introducing the topic of rituals I wanted to indicate a breadth of choice, including the potential of celebration as well as transition and letting go. ‘N’ then recorded brief details of feedback from six students and I omit those I have already discussed in the Student Voice.

Co-Tutor (Journal entry, 24th February, 2001)

‘T’ letting go of some sort of breaking up, military terms. Played tape of bugle music.

‘C’ wrapped up all the bad things in a jar but that became her fears bottled up – bashed in lid and stuff came out - wrapped in gold wouldn't go back in. Lit candle and it went out on its own.

- 'M'* shared that it took a life of its own even though she was reticent at first about the whole thing. She is going to do the ritual another time when she can light the tea lights and let them burn through. She's made a beginning.
- 'B'* her ritual helped her let go of 'responsibility for' her client and have 'responsibility to'. Also she had been a scribe for 'C' and she felt with her, in her frame of reference. Working with miniatures had separated her – no psychological contact – but the scribing was the opposite.
- 'Q'* wrote letter on loo roll and flushed it down the pan

Discussion

These entries demonstrate the breadth and individuality of the students' use of ritual.

Celebration of Life – in three groups

"Lots of laughter. All three friezes have swirls and spirals" (Co-tutor's Journal) Photographs 18, 19 and 20, pp. 239-241.

Photograph 18

Celebration of life – spontaneous group painting (1)



Photograph 19

Celebration of life – spontaneous group painting (2)



Photograph 20

Celebration of life – completed group frieze



Discussion

With reference to the theme of the week-end this very brief entry aroused my interest in 'swirls and spirals'. Hayes (2006, p. 214) describes a dominant circular pattern in movement which included spinning, turning and spiralling. She writes "*The circle is an ancient symbol of spiritual being, representing the timeless cycle of birth and death, creation and destruction ... present in spiritual dance forms*". I have included photographs 18 and 19 and 20 to show the students' enjoyment and the composite frieze which they created. In co-creating this frieze it seemed to me that they were celebrating Life itself and the life of the group.

Voice 3 – Researcher (Journal entry - February 2001)

Rituals

The students seemed reluctant to start – tired after lunch, a heavy morning and a late night! However, they had brought things – some students began straightaway to choose objects. Others sat in pairs talking about it at first as I'd suggested. No-one seemed to be taking musical instruments but some people had brought their own music and players. Quite a number of students wanted matches (which I hadn't brought) but we had enough between us. The students were slow in getting started but after about fifteen minutes every-one was ready. Some people preferred to work alone initially, for example 'I' and 'G' but they met up later, I saw. Many people went outside but not all.

The feedback, as always, was great – to my surprise again!, but the machine didn't pick it up. Several students were very generous and came out of the film to talk to me. 'T' didn't want to watch the video because she needed to process her work; 'M' said she hadn't wanted to do the ritual but she had a beautiful arrangement of candles and snowdrops – she said it had just come – but she knew it needed a long time to do it so she wanted to do it on her own. 'H' gave me written feedback; 'B' gave me feedback and said "T said "Patricia has come up trumps again, masks last year and rituals this." 'B' says she'll write something rather than record something".

Discussion

What I notice most is the difference between my feelings as I observed the exercise and after receiving feedback. I recognise my anxiety as I notice the slow start to the exercise. I obviously felt the need to record positive comments; it was important to me that the exercise was effective. In using ET methods extensively I felt I was taking a risk on which my ability as a tutor would be judged by students and colleagues.

Summary

I have described and analysed three ET sessions to give the reader a flavour of the students' experience. The 'Mask Experience' had a particularly strong impact on all aspects of their training as

counsellors, particularly in raising self-awareness. The effect on group cohesion was marked. All three sessions contributed to theoretical understanding and professional knowledge. This learning was achieved experientially and enjoyably.

The three sessions provided enjoyable and powerful learning, enabling freedom of expression within a suggested structure. The facilitation was person-centred, encouraging a safe and trusting environment in which creativity could flourish. The ritual exercise brought a new dimension to the students' awareness, the symbolic power of the natural world.

Students learned, experientially, the power of therapeutic ritual. Through carefully planned rituals clients can celebrate, let go of unwanted memories, transform feelings, re-symbolise elements of unfinished business. The importance of the counsellor as witness to their clients' experience has been strongly reinforced.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

In previous chapters I have described the purpose of my research, my method of discovery and the results of six years of gathering and analysing data. In this chapter I draw tentative conclusions from the research and consider its strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly I attempt to answer the question “So what?” What difference, potentially, does the research make to the field of counsellor training?

I have stated my belief that knowledge is socially constructed and that my data is similarly a co-construction between my respondents and myself. I cannot provide certainty in my conclusions but can offer knowledge gained in context. *“The relativist is more at home with questions than answers”* (Fleming, Merrell and Tymms (2004, p. 180). I agree, yet there seems to me to be no point in doing time-consuming research unless one provides some answers, attempts tentative conclusions.

At the beginning of my research I wondered to what extent, and in what ways, ET might enhance counsellor training. In formulating tentative conclusions I used the results from two sets of data, as discussed in chapters 7 and 8, which correlate well with each other and with the literature on the arts therapies. I could have tried to contradict or disprove the data; instead, I use the data to tell the story as I see it. In completing the study my tentative conclusions are that:

1 **ET accelerates personal development**

As respondents pointed out, the quality of PD groups is variable, depending on membership and group dynamics. It is possible for some members to remain, unchallenged, as observers. The conversation can stay at a superficial level. Some participants believed that ET exercises had been more beneficial in their personal development than PD Groups. Through ET exercises every student can learn about themselves at a deep level very quickly, sometimes too speedily for comfort. *“I think that was one of my problems with it, whenever I used any of the creative stuff it got me to somewhere really quickly and quite a lot of the time it got me to somewhere really scary quickly”*. This focus group member had experienced real challenge and provided the support for herself by always choosing a partner with whom she felt safe.

2 **ET enables trainee counsellors to experience theory rather than learn about it** through more traditional means such as lectures and discussion. Learning becomes known from ‘the inside’. Brandes and Ginnis (1986) wonder why, after two thousand years of student-centred methods of teaching, traditional didactic methods remain so dominant. The traditional teaching methods were still expected by some students on our course in 1999 when my research began. Although traditional teaching can be creative, learning is under the teacher’s control as the imparter of knowledge. Some students prefer this style, which is less demanding on them.

In contrast is the teacher as facilitator, and resource person. Carl Rogers wrote “*I see the facilitation of learning as the aim of education*” (Kirshenbaum and Henderson, 1990, p. 305). Brandes and Ginnis write “*all of his (sic) expertise, knowledge, attitudes, training, are the resources he has to offer the students, and they must be offered in a context of availability, not of insistence; the student may freely accept or reject the offerings*” (1986, p. 16).

Kolb (1984, p. 20) describes how in education “*We lost touch with our own experience as the source of personal learning and development*”. Carl Rogers was a key contributor to a focus on experiential learning originating in the work of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1951) and Piaget (1951). “*I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behaviour is self-discovered*” (Rogers, 1969, p. 153).

This applies equally to the counsellor who offers ET to a client, accepting the client’s right to refuse. What I find particularly interesting is the fact that some didactic teaching is seen by Brandes and Ginnis (1986, p. 29) as “*deliberate suppression*” of the students’ creative powers “*which may be seen as a threat to the central task of ‘learning’*”.

ET provides an enjoyable method of learning. One participant (P) reported the following conversation about the ritual week-end with a friend (F) on a different counselling course.

- F. “*My course is very academic, we don’t get experiential stuff*”.
- P. (I think, “*God, they’ve really missed out*”).
- F. “*Do you do that in your own time?*”
- P. “*No, as part of the course*”
- F. “*We have to get that out of a book*”.

3 ET enhances work with clients.

It encourages deep client work. Students had experienced the depth to which expressive methods can quickly take us. Having worked at a symbolic and metaphorical level and experienced meeting another at psychological depth I doubt whether they will ever be satisfied with what Rowan (2005, preface, unnumbered) terms an “*instrumental (I – it)*” approach to counselling.

It can speed up the therapeutic process. It enables trainee counsellors and their clients to reach very quickly the crux of their issues by by-passing their intellectual censor.

It enables deep work without the necessity of disclosing content. Not only may clients feel embarrassed or unsafe in disclosing content to a counsellor, they can also be retraumatised by painful memories and feelings. A client can ‘hide’ in symbols and metaphors “because he (sic) can ‘say’ how he feels or what he did without really saying it” (Cox and Theilgaard, 1987, p. 10).

What is perhaps even more significant is that clients may not have cognitive understanding of an issue or find that left-brain knowing is impotent in bringing about change. Some things are inexpressible verbally. Whilst talking ‘about’ an issue can be initially helpful re-symbolisation at a deep level is potent and lasting.

4 ET re-awakens in students awareness of their creativity. “Inside you is an artist that you don’t know about” (Jelaluddin Rumi quoted by Blanchard, n.d., on-line).

This may not be an artist in the colloquial sense but be experienced as personal creativity, which has importance, both individually and professionally for trainee counsellors. Hover-Kramer (2002, p. xviii) expresses her “*personal belief that counselling is a fine art, a new human art form. Finding the words, suggestions or images that assist clients to unblock their own blocked inner wisdom requires a high form of creativity*”. There is often for me in an effective counselling session a sense of delicate brushwork and sensitive application of shape and colour in just the right place. Through ET trainee counsellors reconnect with their creative, spontaneous and playful selves and can help their clients to do so. Having the tools to help clients rediscover their creativity is, as Grudermeyer (cited in Hover-Kramer, 2002, p. xv) asserts, enabling them towards “*high level wellness*” as “*characterised by a state of creative flow*”.

Wilkins (1997, p. 130) believes that creative methods contribute to a “*sense of well-being, particularly helpful for clients who are tense, anxious or exhausted*”. All forms of expression, including creative connection and movement “*tend to reduce tension and therefore induce a more relaxed state ... I think it could be a part of any counsellor’s programme of pursuing personal fitness*” (ibid.).

Bolton (1999) reminds us that a client who produces a piece of creative writing is no longer just a sufferer, having become a creator. This seems to me important in seeing in the client the person rather than the problem.

In making a link between “*the creative process and the person-centred approach, both being accepting unconditional modes*” Silverstone (1997, p. 107) adds “*To bring the two together seems most apt as a means towards self-awareness*”.

5 ET gives trainee counsellors awareness and experience of a variety of communication channels other than verbal..

All trainee counsellors understand the significance of facial expression, pace and intonation of speech, the quality of eye contact, the numerous manifestations of non-verbal communication. ET demonstrates non-verbal communication at a deeper level, demonstrating how the client can communicate with herself and with the counsellor beyond words rather than simply without words. Meekums (2002) makes the point that if counsellors work with words alone they are not holistic, ignoring mind-body interaction.

6 ET stimulates right-brain activity.

“*We need to re-connect and re-value the right side of the brain wisdom in order to function more fully ... we need to function with both hemispheres to be whole*” (Silverstone, 1997, p. 107).

We may use right brain wisdom unawares, for example through our dreams but, once aware of its potential we can use it, for example, to imagine how our future could be without the problem which currently overwhelms us.

7 The psychological climate for ET work needs to be based on Rogers' core conditions of empathy, acceptance and congruence.

Knowing that they would be accepted and understood was crucial for students in taking the risk of working with miniatures, movement, masks. They very soon became aware that expressive methods were less safe and predictable than words. They needed a reliable external form of safety provided by their partner (counsellor) and the group as a whole. For some students an apparent lack of congruence in other students held them back, to some extent, from experiencing their creativity. The congruence of the tutors was crucial in encouraging participation in ET.

8 The ET facilitator needs to be prepared for and to work sensitively with students' inhibitions.

I was unprepared for the high level of students' inhibitions as in my own PCET training I felt little inhibition myself or was aware of any in other students. In retrospect, I recognise that we had specifically sought out ET training whereas students in my research had not. Furthermore, most of us were either experienced, and confident, practising counsellors or already practitioners in the fields of music, art, dance and drama. The students in my research experiment were relatively inexperienced novice counsellors on a generic counselling course.

I initially addressed the issue of lack of artistic ability, stressing the importance of process rather than product. As I became aware of the students' fears I also took care in preparing them for ET exercises, for example by giving an outline in the previous course session of what to expect. Ideally, with a generic group of trainee counsellors, I believe it is important to allow more time than I did for fears to be aired and valued.

9 The ET facilitator needs a theoretical understanding of the therapeutic arts.

As I have stated (p. 91), my PCET training included no overt theory. The valid argument against discussing theory was that moving into left-brain mode interrupted the intuitive flow of our creative process. We were encouraged to enter into a lengthy altered state of consciousness - what Csikszentmihali (Farmer, 1999, on-line) calls being "*in the flow*", that is, a state of mind in which one is "*completely involved, focused and concentrating*", unaware of time passing, as when involved in the arts.

On a generic counselling course, however, particularly in the context of a University, I believe that there needs to be a balance between left and right brain activity. For this reason I began each ET session with a short theoretical input, for example, placing the theme of 'Sexual Abuse' or 'Rituals' into theoretical context. I distributed a brief handout with suggested reading. I wanted to provide useful material for those students who preferred to learn in a lecture style and this did not seem to impede the right brain experience which followed. What I was unable to do, at that time, was to place the expressive work into the theoretical context of the therapeutic arts. Providing information, for example, about projective techniques, embodied metaphor, symbolisation might have benefited students who enjoyed theory; some knowledge of process has given me greater confidence in teaching ET.

10 Ideally there needs to be a shared valuing of the expressive arts by all trainers involved on the course.

It can undermine confidence in both students and the ET facilitator if one trainer has reservations; openly shared, however, these could be helpful in supporting students who also question the value of ET in a counselling course. My co-tutor's enjoyment of ET and lack of inhibitions was noticed whilst my own enthusiasm had been encouraging. It had been noticed when the third tutor sometimes joined in, and when he at times left the room without explanation.

11 Careful thought needs to be given to timing of ET work.

The focus group was particularly helpful in raising issues about training. Concerns were expressed about the lack of time when doing weekly class sessions to benefit fully from ET.

"I found that it took me a while to get into it and just as I was getting into it, when I was sat listening, and then it stopped... so from my perspective I'd find it slow, but for other people they were in straightaway" (focus group member). Another participant had gained more benefit from the week-end ET sessions – *"I don't know whether that was just through me relaxing into it, feeling more at home with it ... whereas when it was an hour, at most, of the session it seemed as if ... I don't know if disjointed is the right word, but then I felt as if I was just getting into it and that would stop me doing what I was doing"*. When a creative process has begun it is frustrating to be interrupted, as I find in writing up this study.

Focus group participants suggested that a whole term of ET or *“blocks of the work that consolidated it”* might be useful. There was a valid objection - :*“I think if you were to do that I think it would have to be brought up at interview – yeh, if I’d been faced with a term ...”*

Adequate time is often necessary for verbal reflection on creative work, to ‘ground’ it. A focus group participant would have preferred *“more time for discussion and sharing”* whilst another acknowledged *“we want more time but we also want our skills groups and our PD groups ... we want everything I guess”*. There was insufficient time to practise fully the “Creative Connection” which Natalie Rogers (2000) describes.

As a result of my research I recognised the wisdom of the PCETI model of training over lengthy residential periods. With subsequent cohorts of generic counselling trainees I was less ambitious; although I included fewer exercises, I know from student feedback that courses continued to be enriched by ET.

Suggestions for counsellor training.

In the light of these tentative conclusions I suggest that trainers on humanistic counselling courses, and in the context of the core conditions:-

- use and enjoy their own creativity
- enable the natural creativity of students
- encourage right brain wisdom within students and their clients
- acknowledge the therapeutic potential of the creative arts
- provide planned experiences of the creative arts as an integral part of their course

The expressive arts are powerful media and trainers wishing to work with them need to undertake appropriate training in order to work within their level of competence. Students working with deep material may need to be psychologically held and contained and I therefore consider the presence of a second trainer to be important.

Theory

Person-centred theory is not set in stone, but continually develops in the light of practice. *“In fact, over the last half century, and the last decade, in particular, the person-centred world has been awash with new developments in thinking and practice ...”* (Cooper, 2007, p. 33).

I had not expected any new theory to emerge from my research. It was only in retrospect, after writing it up, that I gained new understanding of what Natalie Rogers (2001) calls the ‘creative connection’ in the context of education. My research brings a new dimension to education. The ‘creative connection’ is relevant not only in terms of personal development in counsellor training but as a way of understanding the process of education itself as a creative act. Pupil and teacher, student and trainer, co-create learning which occurs in the ‘creative connection’ between them. Moreover, I would argue that the harnessing of their natural creativity is crucial in the process of learning. What works with clients works also with students.

Both as an educator and as a counsellor I use myself as my main tool. By allowing myself, for example to experience and value colour and images in my life I have enabled my students to do so.

I reflect on myself as a child when my educational experience was limited to children sitting in rows and learning facts. Then I demonstrated the simplistic thinking of a child by representing boys and girls with black and white draughts. I compare this to an evening of PCET on our course, with its abundance of colour and texture, the valuing of individual experience and difference, the freedom to learn ‘from the inside’. I recognise how the arts enable us to engage with complexity through metaphor.

The PCET approach had linked together, was the connecting factor, in all the theory and topics I had introduced over the two years of the course. It had merged seemingly different theories such as sub-personalities, the shadow self and reparation of early experience. It had blended together verbal and non-verbal, personal and professional development. I recognised that within the context of the core conditions, that is, provision of a safe psychological climate, learning can be experienced seamlessly through the creative arts.

My research gave me a new understanding of the importance of congruence in education as much as in counselling. In colloquial terms this could be expressed as practising what I preach, or, as students

sometimes expressed it, being seen 'to walk the walk'. The BACP ethical framework (2007, on-line) uses the word 'sincerity' to describe "*a personal commitment to consistency between what is professed and what is done.*" I can best communicate what I believe in and my enthusiasm for the creative arts inspired similar excitement in many students. "*So I think two things that encouraged me was the actual stuff and seeing your enthusiasm, for it was a real encouragement ... I think your enthusiasm has really been well communicated to me, has overcome all the negative stuff*" (Interviewee). I remember seeing a student in tears after observing my demonstration of authentic movement.

Strengths and limitations of the research

Strengths

- 1 In 'Practitioner Research' the dual role necessitates a matching of values between practitioner and researcher. There is a consistency in this research between my ethical stance as trainer and researcher. In both I demonstrate respect for the students' autonomy and for maintaining confidentiality. In both I value the relationship with students.
- 2 I have analysed the data from a variety of perspectives, which enhances authenticity.
- 3 I demonstrate my willingness to adapt methodology in the light of experience. For example, having begun my data collection with questionnaires I used post-its instead to gain a greater breadth of views. I abandoned the ET file as students showed lack of interest in my aims and objectives for each session.
- 4 My process both as a trainer and researcher is made transparent through lesson plans and Journal entries.
- 5 My prior experience as a counselling trainer and as a student and practitioner of ET informs the research.
- 6 I invited feedback on my results and conclusions from my co-tutor and three student respondents (Appendix M).

Limitations

Limitations within my role as trainer inevitably influenced the research. These include:

- 1 Insufficient expectation of inhibitions. In the research group these were more strongly manifested than in any other cohort with whom I have used ET exercises. I have wondered why. One reason may be that the research group was unusually large. In smaller groups students may feel safer, know each other better. As facilitator I may have been more relaxed without the added researcher role.

- 2 Lack of theoretical knowledge about the psychological processes involved in the creative arts. Only one participant expressed interest in theoretical understanding of ET. She was *“really, really thirsty for theory”* and had felt that ET was *“a drain on the limited time we have for all the other theory we have to do”*. She acknowledged that I had included some theory about ET but more would have lessened her reservations about the time spent on it. Experiential learning may not be the best style of gaining knowledge for this student and others who feel more comfortable with *“abstract conceptualisation”* than having *“an orientation towards concrete experience”* (Kolb, 1984, p 18). Kolb (ibid.) describes the abstract conceptualiser as a person who *“focuses on using logic, ideas and concepts”*. There is an emphasis on *“thinking as opposed to feeling, a concern with building general theories as opposed to an artistic approach to problems”*.

I believe that greater theoretical understanding would have increased my confidence. In future facilitation of ET exercises I shall include more theory about how the arts ‘work’. Experience of ET and knowledge of theoretical context will both increase confidence in counsellors to use it, where appropriate, with clients.

- 3 My use of poor recording equipment resulted in some incomplete transcriptions. Quiet speakers in a large group were difficult to hear despite having several tape-recorders and microphones around the room (Appendix L).

- 4 Although the focus group provided useful new ideas the views of the participants were not as clear to me as those in individual interviews. Had I subsequently interviewed individual

members I could have explored their views further. More importantly, I should have given equal weight to their views.

- 5 As I have explained in my Introduction participants in my research cohort were mature students, many of whom were in full-time work and some with additional family commitments. I knew from experience that it was difficult to find such students willing to facilitate even a short class session around an area of expertise. They felt constantly under the pressure of assignments, particularly as the academic standard seemed daunting to those who had not been in full-time education for many years. In retrospect, it was unrealistic to expect that they would be interested in designing ET experiments; their expectation was that it was my role to do that while they contributed feedback for my research.

Other limitations relate to research design and methodology:

- 1 As a practitioner researcher I have acknowledged a tension between my dual roles. I considered my primary role to be that of trainer, as I was being paid for this and at times I gave more consideration to this to the potential detriment of my research role. For example, being aware of students' anxiety about completing assignments I relied less than I would have liked on written feedback. At the end of the course I was reluctant to conduct follow-up interviews after the focus group; I knew that the students wanted closure on the course and a well-earned break.

My role as a tutor could have influenced the students to respond positively to ET. They were, however, by the end of the course, practising counsellors who valued congruence and respected me enough to give honest feedback. Some interviewees and focus group members did express reservations.

- 2 I collected too much data, some of which remained unused. I sought views wherever it seemed ethical and considerate to do so. Audio-taped feedback after several ET exercises remains transcribed but not analysed. I would argue however that all feedback contributed to my expertise as an ET facilitator.

Further research

Six years after the end of the course it would be interesting to know to what extent students are using ET, either in their client work or to enhance their personal lives.

Further research, which would be more ethically difficult, would be to discover the impact on clients of expressive ways of working. How do they initially react to seeing a group of miniatures or ready mixed paints and brushes in the counselling room? Did the counsellor explain their purpose or introduce them into a session? How useful were the expressive methods they experimented with?

Impact of the research

On student participants

I believe that the trainees who experienced ET as part of their course have been enabled to see greater depth and resources within their clients than can often be reached through purely verbal means. Irrespective of whether or not they use the arts in their practice they will have a respect for the client's right-brain wisdom, and understand the power of the symbolic. They have added to their potential tools for working with clients who become 'stuck' in the course of verbal therapy. They are more likely to use creative ways of working with clients who have poor verbal expression or challenge those who are highly cerebral. Should they choose, they have creative ways of enhancing and maintaining their personal development, of understanding their inner process. They can bring holistic wisdom to solving issues.

On my co-tutor

The impact of observing and participating in ET was a key factor in leading my co-tutor towards later training as a play therapist. She also began to use ET methods in her training role.

On CESCO

I continued to use ET as a significant part of my role as a trainer. Having become recognised within CESCO as an ET specialist I was invited to facilitate ET sessions as a guest tutor on other courses. Some students, in cohorts preceding and following the research period, began to include expressive

methods in counselling practice, one later training as a Person-Centred Arts Therapist. Sadly CESCO was closed before the full benefits of the research could be felt.

On myself as a researcher, trainer and as a person

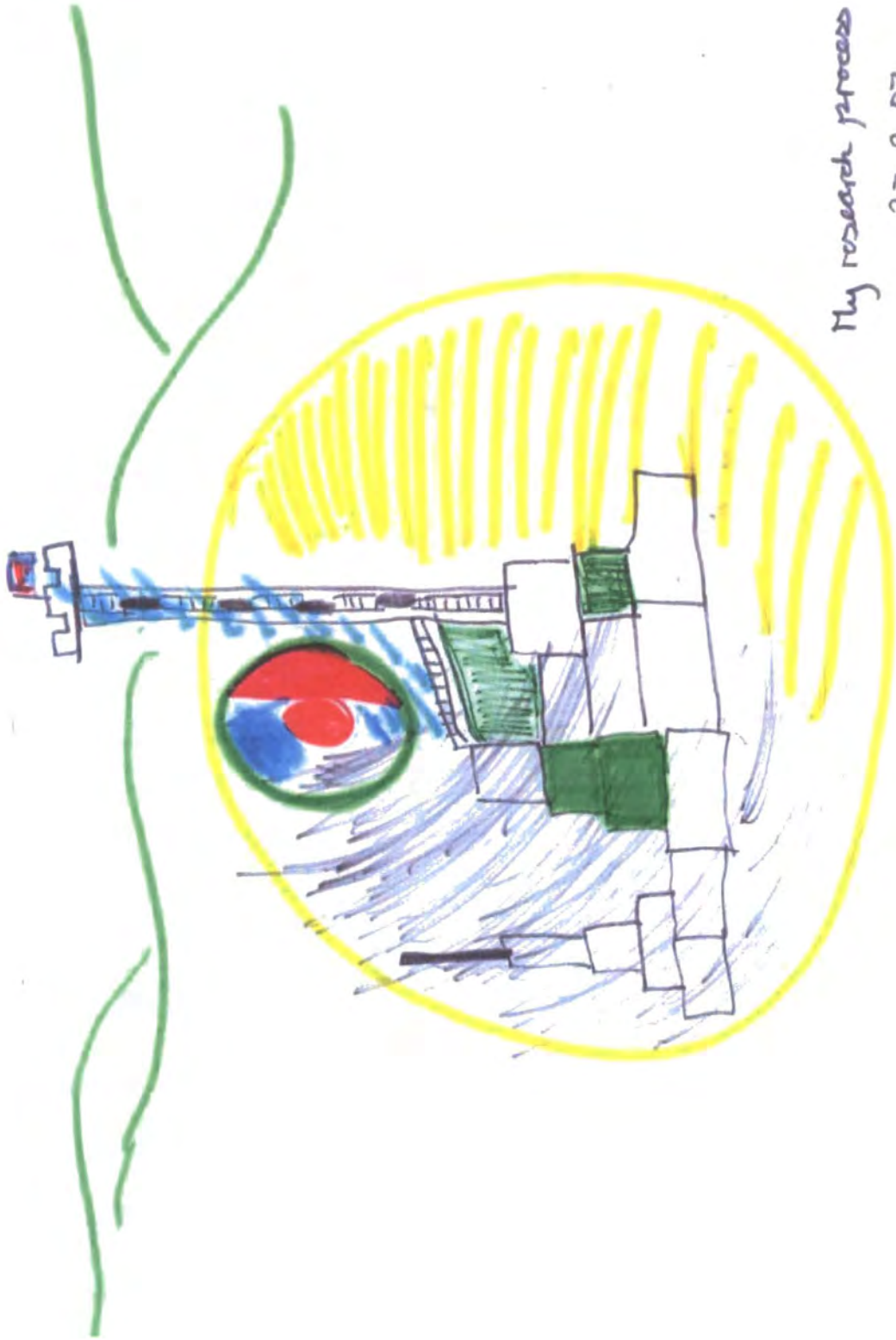
The research process for any-one setting out to ask a question, explore an issue, indwell an experience, is one of great learning. Through my study I have increased my knowledge of research, gained confidence as a facilitator of ET and made personal discoveries.

In completing this research and submitting it for a Ph. D. I have achieved an academic ambition. As I am now semi-retired it has also felt like a satisfying culmination of my career as teacher, trainer, and counsellor. Whilst bringing up a family I would not have wanted to undertake time-consuming research. I have needed space to enjoy it, and I have.

I had not realised prior to this research the importance in my life of colour. I recall my instant attraction to the colourful materials at PCETI and my pleasure in buying similar paints, beads, sequins and bright fabrics for teaching sessions. Choosing from a wealth of materials can, I believe, satisfy my inner child who was once constrained to self-expression in pencil on the back of card from cereal packets!

Although I am no longer training student counsellors, my research encourages me to provide PCET workshops for practising counsellors. Its value, both personally and professionally may be even more easily experienced through residential week-ends. Dissemination of my research will be achieved by submission of articles to relevant professional journals.

I have been very aware of research as a creative process, and have been writing about enabling others to use their creative potential. I am therefore choosing to complete this period of research by using what Natalie Rogers (2000) calls the “*creative connection*” to end with a picture and a poem, as recorded in my journal.



My research process

27.2.07.

Journal entry - 27th February 2007

"I felt too tired after a day's counselling to think or write about my research. I drew, spontaneously and without conscious thought. I felt a need to share my picture, to make sense of it. In the absence of anyone to talk to I communicated my thoughts and feelings on paper, listing words which immediately sprang to mind.

Factory - industrious

Bricks - bricoleur

Success

Ladders

Embryo

Colour

Bridge

Messy

Dead end

Castle - Durham castle

Anger

Contained

Using the concept of the 'creative connection' I then wrote a poem which encapsulates my whole experience:

Colour

It began with colour

or maybe the absence of colour

long ago.

There was a playground

with a garden, meadow and a bridge

where I could be the Queen of Anger,

a dolphin or a feisty woman

who made people laugh
and she didn't care a damn
what she said.

Showing other learners the playground
was easy work.
Buying the colours
and the sequins and the glue
for them, was fun.

Can they play too?
Will it help them in their work,
or to be whatever they want to be?
Writing down the answers,
that's when the colour nearly fades
but never does".

"It is not so much about the acquisition of knowledge, but rather the gaining of wisdom" (Rowan, 2005, p. 4)

My research highlights potential benefits of incorporating ET into counsellor training. My belief is that it enables students to have a more holistic awareness of themselves and their clients. Through ET they have access to the wisdom of the right side of the brain and to wisdom somatically experienced.

In writing about the importance of self-awareness in counsellor training Rowan (ibid.) suggests that there is generally insufficient emphasis on "*the importance of body-mind wisdom*". Counselling depends on relationship; I believe that expressive methods deepen the quality of relationship between client and counsellor and, even more importantly, deepen the counsellors' relationships with themselves.

I end my research as excited in the potential of PCET as when I began.

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