The representation of the concept of Personal Growth by Counselling Psychologists: A Longitudinal Foucauldian Discourse Analytic Study.

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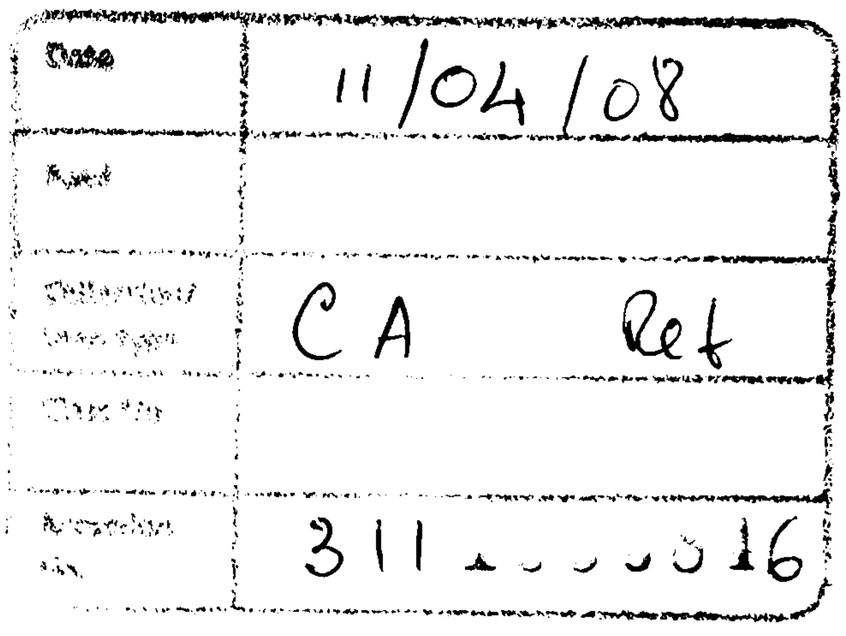

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1. Abstract

This piece of research investigated representations of the concept of 'Personal Growth' through the discourses that emanated from the talk of three Counselling Psychologists as they moved from their final year of study into chartered status. Previous research in this area has highlighted the confusion between the terms 'Personal Growth' and 'Personal Development' (e.g. Irving and Williams, 1999; Donati and Watts, 2005). The research and literature looking purely at the 'Personal Growth' dimension is limited to a humanistic framework and in particular Carl Rogers' conceptions of self-actualisation emanating from his person centred approach (Rogers, 1957; Gillon, 2007). In this research a novel longitudinal methodology was applied to Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, with participants taking part in semi-structured interviews at three time points over a one-year period. Eight discourses were identified, four of which related to traditional conceptions of personal growth: Rogerian, Psychodynamic, Cognitive-Developmental and Self-Reflection/Self-Knowledge and four of which were identified as subjugated discourses of personal growth: Postmodern, Discipline, Institutions and Entitlement discourses. The emergence of the subjugated discourses provides an alternative view, which represents 'personal growth' as being relational, contextual and historical, with traditional discourses being implicated in the oppression of already marginalised groups in society. The implications for the training and practice of Counselling Psychologists in terms of the 'personal growth' element are considered.

2. Introduction

With the formation of the Counselling Psychology section of the B.P.S in 1990, the personal development dimension became an important part of the learning requirements of its members working towards chartered status. Walsh, Frankland and Cross (2004) quote the B.P.S website learning criteria with regards to this outcome:

"They (Counselling Psychology trainees) will be actively and systematically engaged in *personal development* to enhance their understanding of therapy from the perspective of the client and to encourage safe practice and the development of creativity and artistry in the work" (p.320)

It appears that in much of the literature on the personal development of Counsellors and Counselling Psychologists that this term has become confused with the concept of personal growth, evidenced in the above quote in which artistry and creativity are posited as developmental goals.

At it's inception the discipline of Counselling Psychology emphasised humanistic philosophical underpinnings (Woolfe, 1990). Although the most recent definition of Counselling Psychology highlights social and contextual factors in psychological health (BPS, 2006), the humanistic philosophy remains pervasive, perhaps most evident in the ubiquity of Carl Rogers' (1957) core conditions in counselling practice (Gillon, 2007). Underlying this paradigm is a biological metaphor, which views

humans as having innate capacities to move toward what is positive and fulfilling through the process of self-actualisation. The biological metaphor is powerful by carrying the assumption that this process of growth is 'real', when in fact it is a theoretical construction emanating from a humanistic ontology.

Potential implications of viewing personal growth as a 'real' process include power inequalities between those who are perceived to have reached a higher state of personal growth and self-actualisation and those who have not. The emphasis in Counselling and Counselling Psychology training on the personal development dimension (e.g. Johns, 1996) encompassing the value-laden concept of personal growth is therefore implicated in strengthening class differences and power inequalities between the therapist who is perceived to have reached the higher states of growth and the clients who have not (Kearney, 1997). Furthermore, when viewed as a construct rather than a 'reality', practices in training that are espoused as encouraging personal growth that might cause discomfort, e.g. 'self' revelation, become highly questionable. Fairclough (1989) suggests that the construct of personal growth is complicit in the legitimisation of painful practices in Counselling practice.

From a Foucauldian perspective (e.g. Rose, 1990) concepts such as personal growth are regarded as technologies of government, ways in which population is controlled through the myth of the 'individual'. Social constructionist writers have identified the idea of 'individuals' with

personal growth needs as a distinctly Western phenomenon rooted in the enlightenment era (Gergen, 1994). The location of methods of control in the 'personal' aspirations of 'individuals' serves to distract communities from the radical politics of change through consent rather than coercion (Rose, 1996). The Foucauldian discourse analysis methodology attempts to elucidate the linguistic, historical and contextual location of taken for granted states of 'reality' and through the elucidation of subjugated discourses to have potentially emanicipatory effects for marginalised groups in society, by deconstructing the myth of the 'individual' and highlighting the power inequalities inherent in linguistic representations of concepts such as personal growth.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Context

Counselling Psychology as a discipline is relatively new, only having achieved divisional status in the UK in 1994 (Strawbridge and Woolfe, 2003), and as such there is still much debate among practitioners and researchers with regard to articulating a definition of the discipline in terms of purpose, philosophical values and future direction. There is a particular dichotomy between the humanistic and existential origins of the 'Counselling', and the experimental behaviourist origins of the 'Psychology' in Counselling Psychology, which is often expressed as the reflective-practitioner, scientist practitioner debate.

Writing almost two decades ago Woolfe (1990) identified the priorities of Counselling Psychology as, focus on the therapeutic relationship; questioning the medical model with a greater focus on a humanistic value base and facilitating well being rather than focusing on pathology. The current BPS definition of the discipline has a stronger focus on the significance of the wider social, cultural and political domains within which Counselling Psychology operates and the contexts and processes that are constructed both within and between people (BPS, 2006). However, the recently published book, 'Person-Centred Counselling Psychology' (Gillon, 2007) suggests that the pervasive influence of the humanistic tradition as an overarching philosophy in contemporary Counselling Psychology remains. In particular, the focus on the three

core conditions of empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard that were proposed by Rogers (1957) in his six necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic change, are emphasised as being central to Counselling Psychology practice irrespective of the therapeutic model adopted (Gillon, 2007).

The topic of this research is personal growth, which has been most closely associated with the existential and more particularly the humanist tradition. The development of these strands into the overarching philosophy of Counselling Psychology will now be considered further.

3.2 Philosophical underpinnings of Counselling Psychology

Prior to divisional status being awarded to Counselling Psychology, Emmy van Deurzen-Smith (1990) presented a paper at the first annual conference of the then special group in Counselling Psychology, in which she expressed fears that the 'uninvited spirit of experimental pschology' would eventually subsume the humanistic and existential roots of Counselling Psychology. For van Deurzen-Smith, Counselling Psychology was an opportunity to move away from the reductionist objectivity of Clinical Psychology toward a discipline that would look at the dimension of wisdom and the way in which people grapple with issues of life and death. In viewing Counselling Psychology as art rather than science, van Deurzen-Smith promoted the idea of drawing on the insights of philosophy (e.g. Foucault, Kierkegaard) rather than the rigid frameworks of experimental psychology to achieve this task.

More recently Kearney (1997) expressed concerns at the way in which the ideological framework of Counselling has become increasingly linked to the increasing professionalisation of its practice and members. This, Kearney suggests has reinforced a trend towards being politically neutral in order to enhance its status as a profession. The cost of which, is to limit the liberating role in opposing social forces that oppress clients.

In 2007, it is clear that experimental psychology whether it was invited or not, has become an equipotent, if not leading force in current conceptions of Counselling Psychology. Additionally the tradition has become increasingly professionalised, a recent example of which is the drive toward Counselling Psychology trainees being awarded doctoral status, potentially creating a wider gap in the class power differences between the profession and clients, to which Kearney (1997) was referring.

The humanistic approach to psychology arose in the early 1960's, often described as the 'third force', as an opposition to the dominance of behaviourism in academic psychology and psychoanalysis in psychotherapy (McLeod, 2003). A number of thinkers at the time including Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Rollo May and Virginia Satir felt that the psychodynamic and behaviourist paradigms could not adequately explain the nature of human experience (Friedman, 1994). Humanistic Psychology emphasised the self as an individual,

incorporated Eastern ideas of spirituality and emphasised optimal functioning rather than pathology.

In the 1960's at its inception this set of aims seemed to fit in with the zeitgeist. The humanistic focus on human potential and the inherent capacity and drive for growth towards achieving our personal goals and aspirations is now, fifty years later, embedded within Counselling practice. However, this way of understanding humans still remains relatively new and is clearly historically and contextually situated. Therefore, to deconstruct meanings and understanding of the idea of personal growth is an important area for investigation.

According to McLeod (2003) it was Carl Rogers who first coined the phrase 'Counselling', so it is perhaps not surprising that his view of the person with innate capacities towards growth has become a little questioned aspect of Counselling Psychology philosophy and practice. The Rogerian conception of personal growth has remained as a dominant discourse in Counselling Psychology practice, which might have served to marginalise other discourses around the idea of personal growth. Before looking more closely at Roger's thinking, the contribution of Abraham Maslow to the humanistic movement in Counselling Psychology will be considered.

3.3 The Humanistic approach in Psychology I: Abraham Maslow

Maslow (1954, republished 1970) was the first writer to describe the human potential movement as the 'third force' in Psychology and described a hierarchy of human needs. It was Maslow's contention that there was an impulse in all humans to move toward growth and fulfilment of potentials and that psychopathology was a result of the frustrating of the essential nature of the human organism. The seven needs proposed by Maslow (table 1) begin with basic physiological needs such as air and food, which are shared by humans and animals. The final three needs relate to the idea of personal growth: self-actualisation, desire to understand and finally aesthetic needs therefore distinguishing between physical needs and psychological needs. It was proposed that the achievement of one level of need would provide the intrinsic motivation for the achievement of the next level.

Box 3.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

1. Physiological Needs (shelter, food, air, water)
2. Safety Needs (Structure, order, predictability)
3. Belongingness and Love Needs (friends, supportive family, intimate relationship, group identity)
4. Esteem Needs (prestige, acceptance, status, competence, confidence)
5. Need for Self-Actualisation
6. Desire to know and understand (cognitive needs)
7. Aesthetic Needs (beauty, balance, structure)

Maslow based his hypothesis of a hierarchy of human needs and development on a study of 46 healthy, self-fulfilling, self-actualising individuals (Pervin, 1993), which put some doubt on validity. The sample size was very small, consisted of mainly white middle-class Americans and there were only five women among the sample.

However, more recent quantitative studies have provided support for the self-actualisation process (Vitterso, 2004) and the association of adult maturity and higher motives (Reiss and Havercamp, 2005). Although taking a larger sample size these studies still have a distinctly Western bias and therefore could not be extrapolated to be a universally applicable phenomenon. Wallach and Wallach (1983) point out that Maslow's self-actualised person through autonomy becomes asocial yet is supposed to be better equipped to deal with others.

3.4 The Humanistic approach in Psychology II: Carl Rogers and the Person-Centred Approach

The humanistic approach in psychological therapies is most associated with the work of Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy, Gendlin's (1967) philosophy of the implicit, and Carl Rogers' Person-Centred approach (McLeod, 2003). However, arguably it is the ideas and approach of Carl Rogers that had the most pervasive and lasting impact on the philosophy and practice of Counselling Psychology. Joseph (2004) notes that the Person-Centred focus on both promoting growth and alleviating distress equally, fits well with the non-pathologising aims of Counselling

Psychology. Similarly Gelso and Fretz (1992) suggest that Rogers' theory fits with Counselling Psychology because it emphasises people's strengths and assets. Pointing to the ubiquity of the teaching of the Rogerian core conditions in the preparation of trainee Counselling Psychologists for practice, Hill and Corbett (1993) describe the impact of Rogers' theory on the discipline as profound. Gillon (2007) demonstrates the relevance of Rogers' approach up to the present time and argues for the likely continued pervasiveness of his core values in future training and practice.

It is generally agreed among contemporary writers on the work of Carl Rogers that there were three stages to his theory (Gillon, 2007; Kensit, 2000; Hill and Corbett, 1993). The first stage has been described as his 'mirroring' phase, in which he advocated for the accurate reflection of feelings back to the client for positive therapeutic change (Rogers, 1942). The second theoretical phase saw Rogers focus in more detail on the inherent capacities and abilities of the individual, in particular focusing on the concept of self-actualisation, emanating from the organismic valuing process (Rogers, 1951). For the purposes of this research, this phase has most pertinence because it is from this theoretical presupposition of a self-actualising tendency that the concept of personal growth is most associated. In the final phase Rogers became interested in encounter groups (Rogers, 1970), education (Rogers, 1983) and global peace and conflict resolution (Rogers, 1978). It is from these later writings that contemporary Person-Centred writers have

interpreted a social contextual aspect to Rogers thinking (Mearns and Thorne, 2000; Wilkins, 2003).

Rogers (1961) acknowledges his influences as Martin Buber, in particular the I-Thou relationship, which emphasises the power of relationship to create change; Soren Kierkegaard and his phenomenological philosophy valuing the power and importance of the individual; Abraham Maslow; and Montagu (1950) who was a proponent of the idea of an organismic self and experiential sensing, claiming that language distorts true meaning. Taking a social constructionist perspective Lynch (1997) argues that Rogers' theory was constructed out of the language and concepts of liberal Protestantism, John Dewey's educational philosophy, Thorndike's quantitative approach to psychology and Otto Rank's therapeutic approach.

Carl Roger's theory shares with Maslow and other humanistic writers, the root metaphor of organicism (defined by Pepper, 1942), in which every world event is more or less a concealed organic process. This is in contrast with the contextualist worldview, within which social constructionism best fits, in which the root metaphor is the historical event. Rogers (1961), however, explicitly employs a biological metaphor, "the organismic valuing process", to describe the psychological concept of personal growth, claiming that his organismic sensing of a situation was more trustworthy than his intellect. Leaning as heavily as it does on the biological metaphor it would be easy to assume that the process

Roger's describes is 'real' and tangible, however in no point in his writing is there any explanation of where this process might be happening in actual biological terms.

Gendlin (1967) came closer to describing the possible location of an organismic valuing process in his description of 'felt experience' and 'experiential clarity'. He described the way in which humans often have a visceral sensation in reaction to outside experience, which he described as a 'felt-sense'. He suggested that attending to the felt-sense could lead to the accurate symbolisation of it, which then led to an inner-shift or resolution leaving space for further experience. Hawtin (2002) interprets Gendlin's work as suggesting that bodily felt-senses guide us through individual experiencing toward wisdom.

Although there is little doubt that as humans we do have bodily sensations, it is difficult to conceive how these sensations would necessarily lead toward increased congruence or toward what is positive and fulfilling as suggested by the concepts of an organismic valuing process and self-actualisation. An alternative explanation could be that the 'felt-senses' are responses to basic evolutionary mechanisms, e.g. hormonal and neurochemical systems to warn of impending danger.

Rogers (1961) further asserted that being a therapist is something that demands continuing personal growth and this although sometimes painful is in the longer term rewarding. Using the biological metaphor

implies that this will necessarily lead to an improved state of being, e.g. when a baby is going through the painful process of teething, the long term reward is the ability to chew solid foods and thus improve the chances of survival. The justification of the painful process Rogers describes becomes more difficult when there is no physical manifestation of the process described. Fairclough (1989) describes in detail the ways in which counselling can legitimise painful practices on the basis merely of theoretical constructs.

In his seminal paper, 'The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change' Rogers (1957) set out the six therapeutic conditions (table 2), which if present would allow therapeutic change. Rogers believed that parents, schooling and adult interactions placed upon people conditions of worth, e.g. 'I will only be loved if I don't get angry'. In the climate of the six therapeutic conditions, in which the therapist demonstrates the core conditions of empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard, these conditions of worth are dissolved allowing the person to get into touch with their organismic valuing process. Through the self-actualising tendency, emanating from the organismic valuing process, the person will then grow towards what is positive, fulfilling and life enhancing (Rogers, 1957). The existence of the self-actualising tendency is really the key feature of Rogers' theory, because it is on the assumption that people given the right conditions will move toward the positive, that the effectiveness of the core conditions hinges.

Box 3.2: Carl Rogers' Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change

1. Two persons are in psychological contact.

2. The first, whom we shall refer to as the client, is in a state of incongruence, being invulnerable or 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 experience to the client.

6. The communication to the client of the therapist`s empathic understanding and unconditional positive regard is to a minimal degree achieved. (Rogers, 1957)

Rogers postulated that people move from an external locus of evaluation toward an internal locus of evaluation, as the conditions of worth are shed and they are in touch with their organismic valuing process. In doing so they are moving toward what Roger's described as the fully functioning person. Rogers describes this an ideal state rather than an achievable end product of therapy. However, such a person would be more integrated, more effective, less neurotic, more realistic, more like the person he wants to be and would see themselves as more similar to others (Rogers, 1961).

3.5 Evidence for a process of Personal Growth

Being educated in positivist science Rogers was keen to back up his claims with empirical research. In support of his assertion of the growth potential of the core conditions Rogers cited the work of Baldwin, Kalhorn and Breese (1945) who demonstrated that 'acceptant-democratic' attitudes towards children was the most growth facilitating. However, there are a number of methodological problems with this study as well as the obvious leap in faith concerning the assumed similarity of the two theoretical constructs. Rogers also employed the Q-technique, self-descriptive statements from clients and the thematic appreciation test to demonstrate the qualitative change toward growth in clients (Rogers, 1961).

Contemporary Person-Centred researchers have employed more robust methods of testing the existence of an organismic valuing process and self-actualising tendency. Sheldon, Arndt, and Houser-Marko (2003) used the concept of subjective well being to investigate whether people do in fact move in an actualising fashion toward what is fulfilling, as humanistic psychology claims. The authors cite Diener and Suh (2000) as proposing that subjective well being is the most reasonable criteria for assessing personal health and thriving. Sheldon et al (2003) state that subjective well being relates to intrinsic goals (emotional intimacy, personal growth and societal contribution), whilst negative well being is associated with extrinsic goals (material possessions, physical attractiveness and social popularity) and hypothesised that an

organismic valuing process would be evident if people tended to shift towards intrinsic motives. Controlling for social desirability, the authors hypothesis was supported, concluding that people have a slight tendency to move towards goals that promote subjective well being in the short and long term due to an innate ability for humans to recognise what kinds of activities are most beneficial. The authors claim this provides evidence for an organismic valuing process, although accept that theirs was a high functioning sample and the study only looked at stated intention rather than actuality.

Sheldon and Kasser (2001) suggest that the tendency of older people to strive for more internalised reasons rather than for reasons of guilt or compulsion is in part due to the cumulative learning inspired by the organismic valuing process. Myers (2000) points to self-reports that people are fairly happy and satisfied, suggesting people make reasonably good choices, overall, about what to do and strive for in their lives. Masten (2001) states that people have important strengths and resiliencies, which are often ignored in favour of looking at human shortcomings. It could be argued that these studies have an over optimistic view of life, wilfully ignoring the experience of a vast majority of the world's population where war, disease and famine are a daily reality.

Assuming for a moment that the organismic valuing process does exist there are many powerful factors that could inhibit it, beyond the conditions of worth proposed by Rogers, which Sheldon et al (2003)

suggest need further research. These include: cultural or gender based norms and stereotypes (Deci and Ryan, 2000); the personality trait of preoccupation/rumination in combination with negative mood states (Kuhl and Baumann, 2000); failure to develop relevant self-regulatory skills (Sheldon and Kasser, 1998) and the mass media's bombardment of individuals with materialistic messages (Kasser, 2002).

Quinn (1993) considers the possibility that there are other motivational urges that are stronger than the actualising tendency, citing Freud's 'id' and the 'daimonic' drive described by Rollo May as possible contenders, adding that the self-actualising tendency and organismic valuing process are ultimately human dimensions that are impossible to prove.

3.6 Personal Growth: A culturally bound concept?

If, as Rogers claimed, the tendency towards growth were universal and biologically determined, it would be expected that there would be evidence of it throughout all cultures. Burr (2003) claims that personal growth is predominantly a western phenomenon, stating that in many cultures feelings and emotions are felt to exist between people rather than within them. At times in Rogers' writing there appears to be an incredibly dismissive attitude toward other cultures perhaps emanating from a dogmatic belief in the existence of a self. In his book, On Becoming a Person, he writes:

"Many an oriental has striven to eliminate all personal desires, to exercise the upmost control over himself" (Rogers, 1961. p.165)

This statement demonstrates a lack of understanding, and respect for the belief systems and values of other cultures. Japanese culture, for example, focuses on the collective aspects of society with individuals defining their identities according to the groups they belong to. In Japan, 'Naikan Therapy', helps people experiencing mental health difficulties to understand how they *are* a problem (not *have* a problem) and to reconnect to their work, social and familial connections (Krech, 2002).

Some contemporary Person-Centred writers have acknowledged the under exploration of cultural differences in Person-Centred theory (Wilkins, 2003; Holdstock, 1993). Others (e.g. Bozarth, 1998), refute the culture bound assertion staying true to Roger's view that Person-Centred theory is an organismic, natural and universal theory. Singh and Tudor (1993) attempted to bridge this gap by introducing 'cultural conditions' for therapy, in which therapists would be matched to clients in terms of ethnographic, demographic and status variables. However, this does not solve the fundamental differences in beliefs about the existence of a self in different cultures. If there is no self then the basic tenets of an organismic valuing process and self-actualising tendency become meaningless.

3.7 Developmental Interactional Approaches

Quinn (1993) suggests that Person-Centred theory is too individualistic and proposes a developmental interactional alternative, drawing on the theories of Erikson (1963), Kohlberg (1969) and Kegan (1982). These theories emphasise the complex interaction between the active growing individual and the influence of social context and the environment, representing a rationalist epistemology.

Kohlberg (1969) was influenced by maturational theories (Lorenz, 1965; Gesell, 1954), in which there is a presupposition of an innate process of growth which has an inner time schedule and pattern, which can be arrested or distorted by deficits of stimulation and by Learning theory (Watson, 1925; Skinner, 1938) in which development occurs through the result of patterning or association with events in the outside world. Kohlberg's (1969) theory of social development saw development as a product of the interaction between the organism and the environment resulting in changes in mental structure. Kohlberg proposed six stages of development on the basis of the capacity for moral judgement (Kohlberg, 1980). Wickland and Eckert (1992) illuminate the inherent difficulties with these ideas, as the higher stages are associated with liberalism, humanitarianism and autonomy suggesting that it is not possible to have a high moral autonomy and also be punitive and conservative.

Erikson's (1963) normative crisis model saw individual's resolution of crises (e.g. basic trust vs. mistrust; autonomy vs. shame and self-doubt)

through interaction with the social environment as the prerequisites for the progression through eight sequential stages of human development, ultimately leading to wisdom through the resolution of the final developmental crisis of ego-integrity vs. despair.

Relating the developmental interactional approach to therapy Quinn (1993) suggests that growth can be achieved, citing Kegan (1982), through the gentle nudging and confrontation whilst being supported, held and confirmed. In terms of the training programmes of Counselling Psychology trainees he recommends an approach that gives equal attention to the emotion based inner processes and the cognition based outer processes.

Mearns and Thorne (2000) question the self-actualising tendency and instead offer the self-actualising process as an alternative that includes the self-actualising tendency but with the restraints of social mediation. Some of these ideas also link to the attempts by contemporary person-centred writers to interpret Rogers' work through a social constructionist framework. Before considering some of these ideas it is necessary to review the development of the social constructionist perspective, in particular as it pertains to Counselling Psychology practice.

3.8 Historical analysis of Social Constructionism

The philosophy of humanism, to which Counselling Psychology is traditionally related, allays itself to the belief in the inner kernel of self and the capacity for self-actualisation, which might explain the emphasis on a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. Burr (1995) points out that humanism is essentialist in nature with a belief in an inner core. Psychology has traditionally ascribed to this view and it is on the basis of theories of personality (e.g. Eysenck, 1953) that our understanding of human behaviour has evolved. The development of the social constructionist movement in the last twenty years has provided a radical rethink of these previous assumptions, suggesting that personality does not actually exist and that there is no inner core of self. Instead of using the term 'personality' social constructionists tend to use the term 'identity' as this is an implicitly social concept, which implies a label given to something rather than an implicit part of it (Burr, 1995). To some extent these changes have been embraced by Counselling Psychology, reflected in the constructionist perspectives included in the most recent definition of the discipline (BPS, 2006).

In their seminal book, 'The Social Construction of Reality' Berger and Luckmann (1967) re-formulated the idea of the sociology of knowledge to be understood as the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it is arises. Many authors cite this as the beginning of the social constructionist movement (e.g. Parker, 1992). Berger and Luckmann's influences included Karl Marx (e.g. 1968),

Nietzsche (e.g. 1887), Mannheim (e.g. 1952) and the approach of Historicism. Historicism is associated with the work of Wihelm Pithey (cited in Berger and Luckmann, 1967) and emphasises the relativity of all perspectives on human events, the inevitable historicity of human thought and insists that no historical situation can be understood except in its own terms.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) were interested in Marx's proposition that man's consciousness is rooted in his social being: the idea that human thought is found in human activity and the social relations brought about by this activity, whilst thought that is alienated from the social being of the thinker is viewed as 'false consciousness'. Additionally they were influenced by Marx's view of ideology as being ideas serving as weapons for social interests, which is relevant to issues of power that are central to many of the social constructionist approaches.

The influence of Nietzsche (e.g. 1887) is apparent in Berger and Luckmann's focus on anti-idealism and the social significance of deception, self-deception and illusion as a necessary condition of life. Karl Mannheim (1952) proposed that the object of thought becomes clearer with the accumulation of different perspectives on it and that no human thought is immune to the ideologising influences of it's social context. Based on these influences Berger and Luckmann (1967) encapsulated many of the current aspects of social constructionism: that

knowledge depends on historical context, is ideologised by current political practices and that human thought is located in social context.

Social Constructionism has continued to grow as a movement in the human sciences with prolific authors in the movement including, Shotter (1975, 1984, 1993, 1997), Gergen (1985, 1991, 1999), Fairclough (1985, 1989) and Parker (1990, 1992, 2005) and with a plethora of approaches falling under the constructionist umbrella including: Feminist studies (e.g. Gatens, 1996), Ethogenics (e.g. Harre, 1983, 1986, 1992), Rhetoric (e.g. Billig, 1987, 1995), Conversation analysis (e.g. Atkinson and Heritage, 1984) and Discourse analysis (e.g. Potter and Wetherall, 1987).

Gergen (1999) describes constructionism as welcoming both the voices of tradition and critique into dialogue, whilst granting neither an ultimate privilege. Shotter (1997) does not support this relativist view of constructionism suggesting that all claims to knowledge are not necessarily as valid as one another due to implicit power differences. In an earlier work Gergen (1994) identified five basic assumptions of a constructionist approach which are presented in table 3:

Box 3.3: Gergen's (1994) Basic Assumptions of a Constructionist Approach

1. The terms by which we account for the world and ourselves are not dictated by the stipulated objects of such accounts
2. The terms and forms by which we achieve an understanding of the world and ourselves are social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges among people
3. The degree to which a given account of the world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of social process.
4. Language derives its significance in human affairs from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationship.
5. To appraise existing forms of discourse is to evaluate patterns of cultural life, and such evaluations give voice to other cultural enclaves. (Gergen, 1994, p.49-54)

In other words, 'objects' are not understood as 'real' entities that can be described by language, rather any given meaning attributed to an 'object' is highly historically and contextually dependent. Furthermore language is viewed as being constitutive rather than descriptive: people create their social realities through their talk and this is an ever-changing multi-faceted process.

Harre (1992) describes the turn to language in the human sciences as the second cognitive revolution with the view that cognitive abilities are

formed in what we say or do rather than existing in already formed internal schematic constructs.

The role of dominant ideologies, in particular the individualistic and representational nature of much of current psychological thinking, is understood by social constructionist authors (e.g. Burr, 1995) as contributing to the maintenance of current machinations of power in society, and deconstructing and elucidating these mechanisms becomes an important focus of study. The central focus on individualism in contemporary western society will be returned to later with particular reference to Rose (1989, 1990, 1996) whose work is influenced by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (e.g. 1972, 1981).

The importance of the constitutive element of human interaction is given primary emphasis in Shotter's (1997) dialogic relational paradigm for psychology. Drawing on the work on the work of Bakhtin (e.g. 1981), Wittgenstein (e.g. 1980) and Volosinov (1973), Shotter (1997) proposes that human activity is the product of joint activity between individuals; actual lived utterances are the formative units of situations and joint action; and that it is the actualisation of utterances within speech genres and other social organisations that frame joint action. When talking to another person the response is not emanating from an 'inner plan' but the action of the other is as much determined by our conduct as anything within their selves. Shotter (1987) describes the dialectical emphasis upon both the contingency and creativity of human interaction (we are

making and being made by our own social relations). Volosinov (1973) understood the subjective psyche to be located somewhere between the organism and the outside world and it therefore cannot be open to analysis but rather should be understood as a sign.

These ideas clearly have a huge impact on previously held realist accounts of the self, personhood and personality and therefore also on the idea of personal growth. However, before returning to the implications of a social constructionist account on the meanings of these fundamental ideas of the person it is necessary to look more generally at the ontological and epistemological implications of social constructionism, which should provide context for understanding the approach being taken in this research to explore the meanings of personal growth.

3.9 The construction of 'self'

Authors such as Gergen (1999) and Rose (1996) have elucidated the way in which individualism is a relatively recent and distinctly western phenomenon. In some contemporary cultures feelings and emotions are felt to exist between people rather than within them (Burr, 2003).

Wickland and Eckert (1992) suggest that self-knowledge and self-disclosure are too a distinctly western phenomenon. The social anthropologist and social theorist Mauss (1938) concluded from his observations that for indigenous Australian and North African societies there was no sense of a unified self existing.

For centuries people of Europe laboured under the autocratic rule of Princes and rulers in tandem with or at times in opposition with, the church. Rose (1990) suggests that the augmentation of power in these times, prior to the enlightenment period, was through the accumulation of wealth, the raising of armies and the promulgation of laws and decrees. Gergen (1999) cites the Judeo-Christian tradition as a pre-cursor to the rise of individualism in western society, through its endowment of individuals with 'souls'. The enlightenment thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries added an important element to this introducing the idea that the individual was capable of observing the world as it is and deliberating the best course of action, i.e. the individual was endowed with the ability to observe, think, evaluate and choose.

It is important to note that the writings of earlier Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato indicated that man's intelligence was somehow separate from the physical body. However as Rose (1989) points out, that although some 'personal' characteristics emerged in the ancient Greek and Roman times, these were usually cosseted in terms of bearers of responsibilities, whilst many classes of human were treated as non-human entities, e.g. slaves.

The often cited Descartes (1637) quote, "Cogito ergo sum" (I am thinking therefore I am), demonstrates the emergence in the enlightenment period of the current widely held belief that thinking presumes agency in

the individual. Locke (1690, new ed. 1998) defined knowledge as private and personal and proposed that observations of the world were recorded in the mind. Thomas Hobbes (1651) in his social contract theory proposed that there was no authority that could not be reduced to the minds of individuals. This small selection of emergent ideas from the enlightenment period reflecting changes in thinking at the time with regard to the presence of an individual mind demonstrates a move away from the coerced obedience of citizens through the powers of the church and crown to a period where self-knowledge and autonomy were to be praised. Before looking at the ways in which the machinations of power have been argued to operate through this new sense of autonomy and individualism it is necessary to consider some core conceptual problems inherent in the presumption of individual minds.

3.10 Problems with Dualism

To argue that the mind exists separately from the body is to assume dualist ontology, a theory of being probably most associated with the writings of Descartes. At first this appears to make intuitive sense: the properties of mental and physical events seem to be qualitatively different, i.e. mental events have a subjective quality to them whereas physical events do not. Gergen (1999) cites the issue of causality as an irreconcilable feature of the dualist argument. It is easy to understand causality in the physical world, e.g. burning your finger causes pain, and in the mental world, e.g. thoughts influence emotions. However finding causality between the two worlds is problematic, e.g. can a thought or

emotion cause cancer? Descartes believed this transfer to happen in the pineal gland, a theory that has long since been disproved (Gergen, 1999). Not only is there a problem with where the interaction would take place but also how the interaction takes place, a problem that scientists and philosophers have yet to explain. For example the intention of wanting to shake hands is a mental event and therefore does not have physical properties such as force. If it has no force how could it cause neurons to fire to cause the action to take place, or more generally how could something without physical properties have any physical effects at all (Hart, 1996)?

Alternatives to dualism are the two forms of monism. The first form, philosophical idealism, suggests that the only world is that of the mind but this is generally discredited because few can accept that persons exist in totally private worlds. The second, materialism, argues that there is only the physical world and that the mind is an expression of brain processes. However, this argument contradicts itself when it is considered that we only think the world is material because we infer or think it: once again the mind is involved (Rorty, 1980).

The second problem with the idea of an individual mind is an epistemological one. Gergen (1999) describes the epistemological challenge as the attempt to understand how individual consciousness comes to have knowledge of the external world. The empiricist view of this is perhaps most famously summed up by John Locke (1690) and the

idea of 'tabula rasa' (the mind being a blank slate), was that the mind acts as a mirror reflecting the reality of the world. However, assuming that we can all view the world as it is does not demand any form of categorisation. Gergen (1999) uses the example of the differences in view if a botanist, architect or landscaper were to look at his garden. The empiricist view also fails to explain how abstract ideas are built up from raw sensations; for example how do we derive concepts such as 'justice' or 'democracy'? Finally, it is impossible for the empiricist to stand outside of his experience to know whether there is actually a world out there.

A competing form of epistemology, attempting to answer some of the above difficulties, is rationalism, which derives from the writings of Plato (e.g. 2003) and Kant (cited in Gardener, 1998) and is also the evident epistemology of contemporary Cognitive Psychology. The idea here is that humans have certain 'wired in' innate concepts that allow us to understand the world around us. In Cognitive Psychology the concept of schematic constructs are relevant, helping us to organise the world in various ways. This way of understanding knowledge is also problematic in terms of how we originally acquire the concepts. If the answer is that they are learnt this brings us back to empiricism. If, as Kant argues in 'The Critique of Pure Reason' (Gardener, 1998), such concepts are innate, this cannot explain how new concepts such as 'black holes' or 'postmodernism' can arise (Gergen, 1999). Furthermore, to argue that concepts are innate leads back to the problem of dualism: how can the chromosomal composition (body) produce abstract concepts (mind).

Richard Rorty (1980) suggests that the insoluble problem of knowledge is only insoluble because of the dualist metaphor used to define the problem and that if dualism was abandoned then the problem could be revised in a more meaningful way. However, he also notes that whilst the works of writers such as Austin (1962) and Wittgenstein (e.g. 1980) have successfully argued against the dualist metaphor, a new and clearer picture has not replaced it. Perhaps here is where the proposal of Shotter (1997), from Volosinov (1973), of a third space for study that does not belong to either to object or subject but in the space in between, i.e. the study dialogic interaction or in Harre's (1992) terms, "a turn to language", can provide some answers.

A final problem for the dualist concept of individualism is that of self-knowledge. The unanswerable questions are manifold: How do we know what we think feel or want; how can we know that my felt 'fear' is not your felt 'anger'; how can we distinguish thought and intention, e.g. what colour is thought, what shape is intention? The concept of meta-cognition also falls into this trap, as it is impossible to know which part of the mind is doing the thinking and which is doing the observing. Gergen (1999) states that these are some of the reasons that we can never know our real thoughts, feelings or desires and that we could never know if we were appraising such states correctly.

The idea of an individual self as an autonomous free thinking and feeling entity has been criticised by authors from diverse fields of study. Taylor (1989, cited in Wickland and Eckert, 1992) presents a philosophical history of different 'selves' that have been apparent through time, arguing that the facets of 'self' have more to do with the societal and cultural norms than something intrinsic to the person. Gatens (1991) feminist philosophy of self elucidates the way in which the subject as a 'self' is based on a symbolic representation constructed through metaphors, symbols and ready-made images of sexual difference. Waterhouse (1993), in her feminist critique of Carl Roger's theory, argues that in turning responsibility to the 'self' attention is directed away from social change and collective responsibility, thus maintaining oppressive practices.

This links with the idea that certain 'selves' and ways of conducting ourselves are considered normal providing the norm for thinking and judging the abnormal in terms of gender, sexuality, vice, illegality or insanity (Rose, 1996). Lacan (1977) in his critique of psychoanalysis proposes that the existence of 'I' and 'other' demonstrates the self as split and therefore theoretically untenable as a 'real' state of affairs. Instead he argues that there is a structural affinity between psychoanalysis and language, and that answers are to be found in the latter.

3.11 Dualism and Personal Growth

Gergen (1999) describes the belief that concepts such as thinking, feeling and wanting are somehow concrete, e.g. 'the thought in my head' leads to a fallacy of misplaced concreteness. The concept of personal growth could also be understood in this way; we understand the idea of 'growth' as in the multiplication of cells, however adding the dimension of 'personal' to the concept implies an expanding of something that belongs to the category of mind not object. This falls neatly into the dualist trap: how can something 'personal' or related to mind exert any influence on the physical, creating 'growth' and conversely if the physical 'growth' is exerting some change in the 'mind' then how could this happen? As discussed in the earlier section of the introduction, the idea of personal growth has predominantly been researched with the assumption of the metaphor of dualism underlying the individualist approaches, looking to find the answer 'within the person'. It is proposed that by opening up the space between object and subject as the area for investigation that novel insights into the meanings of personal growth may emerge.

Given the range of critique, historical evidence and philosophical flaws in our modern conception of the individual 'self', the conception of a person as a unique and discreet entity begins to appear distinctly problematic. Having a conception of an individual also carries with it the idea of individual rights, freedoms, choices, responsibilities, aspirations etc., which brings the discussion to issues of control and the role of individualism in the maintenance of power.

3.12 Power and 'government'

The implication that the 'individual' is a distinctly western phenomenon, historically and socially situated, having only developed as a concept since the enlightenment period begs the question that if individualism does not actually reflect a 'real' state of affairs then what purpose does it serve in society. Rose (1989, 1990, 1996) influenced by the work of Foucault (1972, 1981) argues that the decline of religion and principalities as a way of ruling the masses necessitated a novel way for 'government' to control the population, and the rise of a sense of individualism provided the opportunity to do this: instead of controlling through coercion, control would happen through consent. The term 'government' here does not refer to Government in the commonly understood sense, but to any assemblage of institutions or technologies that seek to tacitly or otherwise control the population in some way. Rose (1996) described Foucault's term, government as follows:

"...a way of, conceptualising all those more or less rationalised programs strategies, and tactics for the 'conduct of conduct', for acting upon the actions of others to achieve certain ends" (Rose, 1996, p.12).

Rose (1996) refers to technologies as structures that take modes of being human and experiencing ourselves as having freedoms, liberty, personal power and abilities of self-realisation as the platform or space for control. Such authorities can mean, among many others, schools,

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prisons, asylums or pastoral relations. The latter authority is particularly pertinent to the therapist/client relationship. These terms typify the Foucauldian (e.g. 1979) view of the role of individualism: that it enframes humans as certain kinds of beings with choice, autonomy etc. allowing their existence to be controlled through the technologies of government.

The work and ideas of Michel Foucault (1926-1984) have developed into a form of discourse analysis known as Foucauldian analysis. Academics and researchers including Nikolas Rose (e.g. 1989), Norman Fairclough (e.g. 1985) and Ian Parker (e.g. 1992) favour this particular methodology and the modern critical psychology field owes much to Foucault's deconstruction of previously assumed versions of 'reality'. The school of Critical Psychology has also been closely allayed to Community Psychology approaches (e.g. Burton and Kagan, 1996).

Considering the impact of Foucauldian ideas on the form of analysis employed for this research it is necessary to look more closely at some of his ideas particularly around ideas of power, his critical approach to the role of social institutions and the role of psychology and psychiatry within that. The role of personal growth when understood from this perspective can be construed as a technology of government, more specifically the 'psychologicalisation' of the 'individual', which serves to detract communities from radical politics of change.

3.13 Michel Foucault

Foucault (1972) claimed that the territory of the social, e.g. social security, social welfare, social workers and social services, was an historical achievement that only began to consolidate in Western societies in the nineteenth century. This links with the idea of individualism that developed as a way of understanding and governing people with the collapse of autocratic rule, discussed earlier. Psychology as a discipline played a part in the formation of the social territory providing the problems, methods, approaches and objects that allowed the human soul to become the object of positive science and in doing so human subjectivity and intersubjectivity became a possible target of government (Rose, 2000).

Foucault (1979) further elaborated the role of government in terms of political rationality and social technology, the former referring to the objects to which rule should be addressed, the scope of political authority and the legitimate methods that it could use, whilst the latter refers to the operationalisation of the former and the devising of techniques and devices that would act upon the lives and conduct of subjects to shape them in desired ways. An example of this was the development of personality inventories and classification of people into diagnostic categories, which continues to be widespread today in both Psychology and Psychiatry.

Rose (2000) further describes the way in which Psychology as a discipline contributed to the development of the territory of 'social' in providing the language to describe human subjectivity in terms of government, schools, hospitals, the economy etc. and constituted individual subjectivity as an object for rational management using the language of intelligence, mental health, development etc.

Through the development of the social, objectives such as contentment, growth and intellectual ability became objectives for the 'individual'. Therefore as a technology of government Psychology provided a language, a set of norms, a body of values and an assortment of techniques to be communicated by a plethora of experts that could translate the objectives of the departments of state and expert committees into the calculations and actions of health visitors, parents, citizens etc. The claim to truth in the expertise of Psychology allows an indirect relationship between the ambitions of government and the hopes, wishes and anxieties of individuals and families.

Foucault (1979) describes the way in which technologies such as psychology mediate the relationship between government and individuals as 'technologies of the self' or self-steering mechanisms. This term describes the way in which psychology demands that individuals become self-regulating through the language of self-interpretation and through a set of criteria for self-evaluation, whilst believing they are doing do through a matter of choice, autonomy and personal freedom.

Rose (1996) understands this as individuals conducting their lives as a kind of enterprise of themselves equipped with a psychology that aspires to self-fulfilment. Rose (1990) describes this relationship, with specific reference to self-actualisation, which certainly in Rogerian terms is understood as a key aspect of personal growth.

> *"Convinced that we should construe our lives in psychological terms of adjustment, fulfilment, good relationships, self-actualisation and so forth, we have tied ourselves 'voluntarily' to the knowledge that experts have of these matters and to their promises to assist us in the personal quests for happiness that we freely undertake"* (Rose, 1990, pp. 113-114)

Rose (1990) argues that the way in which liberal democracies achieve political regulation is through the production of normality: 'individuals' seek to achieve a normality that is in fact a political and social construction. Even those seeking alternative lifestyles are still doing so within the realm of acceptable and governable practices. This regulation operates not through coercion but through the tensions between how things are and how much better things could be. Viewed from this perspective the Rogerian conception of personal growth and the movement from 'real self' to 'ideal self' begins to feel somewhat suspect as a metaphor for 'self' improvement.

From a social constructionist perspective, then, the idea of an 'individual' mind is untenable due to the philosophical objections to dualism and the

alternative forms of monism from which the reductionist argument also originates. The works of Foucault and others further proposes that the rise of 'individualism' is historically and socially located and provides a space for the power of government over the lives of citizens through the non-coercive techniques of self-improvement, self-growth, self-actualisation etc. Therefore, a study of personal growth, as well as focusing on the third space that belongs to neither individual nor object as described by Shotter (1997), should also pay attention to the possible machinations of power that are implicit in its conception as a technology of government.

Fairclough (1989) suggests that discourse is the favoured vehicle of ideology and it is through discourse that the societal control takes place. It therefore follows that the best way to elucidate these mechanisms is through the study of discourse, which again relates to Shotter's (1997) concept of a 'third space', or Harre's (1992) turn to language. Fairclough (1989) further postulates that the forms of self-government technologies are often not benign. He describes 'therapeutic technologies' as potentially harmful, arguing that Counselling promotes the idea that being able to search inside oneself and deal with the emotional crises is helpful towards achieving the goal of personal growth. From a social constructionist standpoint the idea of personal growth happening internally is meaningless and therefore to use this construct to legitimise counselling intervention is to needlessly legitimise a painful practice.

Fairclough (1989) links the stress of work, which is legitimised through the concept of personal growth through employment counselling, to the Marxist idea of increased productivity. The logic of late-capitalism dictates that the more productive that we are, the more we can consume in order to facilitate our own self-improvement. Products from foods to clothing to transport to holidays are all presented to us not in terms of functionality but as lifestyle choices, which tell ourselves and those around us who we are and what we are aspiring to be. Therefore our personal growth is inextricably bound to consumerism and productivity, which demonstrates Foucault's (1979) link between the economic goals of government to the personal aspirations of the populace.

A google search on the Internet for 'personal growth' returns 148,000,000, whilst 'self-improvement' returns 4,870,000. Available to consume are a myriad of courses, self-help books, websites, therapeutic interventions, retreats and so on all promising some form of true happiness and self-actualisation. Even if the position that individualism is a socially constructed phenomenon is rejected there can be little doubt that the need for personal growth is big business: providing an incentive to be productive in order to have the currency needed to consume the tools for self-improvement.

Many thinkers have criticised Foucault including Chomsky (2006) and Derrida (1980). Although the criticisms are diverse, a common theme appears to be that while Foucault rejected the philosophy of

individualism associated with the Enlightenment period he at the same time relies on it in order to make his arguments. Additionally, his philosophy is derided as being profoundly nihilistic, providing a depressing and meaningless account of what it means to be human (Derrida, 1980). However, Foucault himself claimed that his philosophy was in fact optimistic, believing in human freedom and the potential to change systems of control.

Even within modern approaches falling under the umbrella of the critical approaches there have been criticisms of social constructionist approaches, e.g. Augustinous and Walker (1995), Dunne (1995) and Cooper and Rowen (1999). The latter authors propose a form of critical psychology that embraces contemporary critical thinking without losing the human being in the process. Crossley (2003) suggests narrative psychology as an acceptable alternative in which the linguistic and discursive structuring of the 'self' is appreciated without losing the real phenomenological experience of the individual. Although this approach perhaps feels more comfortable, as it does not radically depart from the generally accepted current Western view of individuality, it seems odd to focus on the methodological sequelae of a social constructionist approach whilst rejecting the underlying philosophy that presupposes it.

3.14 Carl Rogers and Postmodernism: A bridge too far?

Certain Person-Centred writers have suggested that aspects of Rogers' work are consistent with a postmodern approach (Wilkins, 2003;

Holdstock, 1993). Tudor (1997) emphasises the personal nature of the political, whilst Hannon (2001) attempts an integration of critical theory and the person-centred approach. Kearney (1997) suggests that the political aspect of Rogers' work is often underemphasised because Counselling training courses ignores these areas. Similarly Cameron (1997) suggests that the political radicalism of Rogers' theory is largely overlooked or even denied. There are numerous examples in Rogers' work of a sense of ever changing flow rather than of static, 'real' entities, in which humans are seen to be socially constructive:

" ...a person is a fluid process, not a fixed or static entity; a flowing river of change, not a block of solid material; a continually changing constellation of potentialities, not a fixed quantity of traits" (Rogers, 1961, p.122).

Todd and Bohart (1999) suggest that Rogers was in fact a constructivist, paraphrasing Rogers (1980), in which he asserted that there were many personal realities and no one was in a position to judge someone else's reality as being less correct, more distorted or less adequate than someone else's reality. O'Hara (1995) points to the fact that Rogers challenged logical positivism and describes him as a postmodern pioneer.

Lynch (1997) suggests that Rogers approach could be consistent with some of the ideas of less radical theorists associated with the

postmodern movement, such as Wittgenstein's (1980) concept of 'the ethical' and Rom Harre's (1992) concept of 'our essential being'. These theorists share a belief that all knowledge about us as persons is socially constructed but there is a universal aspect of being human that transcends language and culture. Similarly Glynn (2002) argues that although subjects are culturally and linguistically formed, there is a possibility that an emergent structure or holistic whole can emerge, that is indeed capable of self-actualisation and growth. This hypothesis is supported by quantum mechanics in which the self is seen as constantly fluctuating, with shifting and changing internal and external boundaries but with enough substance to make it a real thing (Zohar, 1990).

Acknowledging a post-structuralist perspective, Proctor (2002) attempts to integrate issues of power within person-centred counselling. Proctor suggests that although power cannot be avoided in relationships that its negative effect can be to some extent controlled for by remaining aware of the structures of power, not obscuring inequalities in the relationship with respect to states of (in)congruence and personal histories, aiming to understand the socially-positioned individual and finally to look at our own positions as therapists with regard to power and our potential for oppression.

Some of Rogers writings and the work of more recent person-centred theorists certainly appear to be consistent with more recent postmodern ideas but as Wilkins (2003) points out, that with such a huge body of

work it is easy to find something within that either supports or refutes any particular assertion. Despite the allusions to changing realities, Rogers was consistent in his belief in the biological and innate universality of the organismic valuing process and the self-actualising tendency throughout his writings. The self of which he was talking was clearly located in a visceral reality and not through a socially constructed emergent structure. Additionally he was committed to the idea of phenomenological experiencing individual selves whom could make meaning through their own agency, which is also at odds with the philosophical presuppositions of postmodern theory.

3.15 Traditional views on the creation of personal growth in counselling trainees

The purpose of this research is to elucidate the way in which personal growth is constructed in discourse rather than assuming it exists in 'reality' and therefore to explore how it is achieved would be incongruent with the presuppositions of the methodology employed. However, it is necessary to look at the ways in which the traditional literature on personal growth and development suggests that this might happen because it is possible that the representation of personal growth within discourse would draw on some of these ideas.

Johns (1996) describes personal development as a fundamental adherence to person-centred values and believes that this can be achieved through a cycle of personal exploration involving personal

reflection, structured activities, group exploration and written assignments. Johns (1996) cites the learning objectives in personal development of Connor (1994), which fall under the three domains; intrapersonal development, interpersonal development and attitudes and values, which implies interchangeable use of the terms personal development and personal growth with attitudes and values belonging to the personal growth component.

Mackey and Mackey (1994) regard personal awareness as the key to the personal development of therapists, whilst Donati and Watts (1999) point to the requirement of 'enhanced self-knowledge' in their review of the literature. Later work by Donati and Watts (2005) looks at the problematic confusion of the terms, personal growth, self-awareness and self-knowledge under the umbrella term of personal development.

It appears that in much of the literature on the personal development of Counsellors and Counselling Psychologists that this term has become confused with the concept of personal growth. This confusion suggests a micro representation of the ongoing tension between the positivist scientist practitioner aspect of Counselling Psychology with its emphasis on a researchable reality and the reflective practitioner with its emphasis on the phenomenological humanistic worldview. It feels as though the organic and difficult to define process of personal growth has been shoehorned into the wider definition of personal development because the latter is presented as measurable scientific phenomena. Irving and

Williams (1999) further explicate the differences between personal development and personal growth, with the former being described as a process with measurable outcomes that can be planned, achieved and evaluated whilst the latter is described as a value-based generic process to do with the totality of the individual.

Despite the inherent difficulties in quantifying personal growth there appears to be some agreement in the literature on how this might be encouraged and developed in Counselling courses. Having reviewed the relevant literature it was useful to group the ways in which the facilitation of personal growth is achieved into four broad categories: personal therapy, experiential learning, clinical practice and critical reflection.

Mearns (1997) suggests that the purpose of personal development in counsellor training is to achieve congruent functioning, which requires fearlessness in relation to any issues a client may bring to therapy. On the basis of this he suggests that counselling training courses should provide learning contexts that move the students through three stages of; awareness of fears, understanding of fears and finally to experiment with fearless relating. These relate to Dryden, Horton and Mearns (1995) 25 areas of personal development organised into the four clusters of; self-structure, self in relation, self as counsellor and self as learner, which they feel should be the focus of trainee counsellors' training programmes. Mearns (1997) suggests that these can be achieved through workshops and exercises, expansion of life experience, personal

therapy, training therapy, personal development groups, large group working and training group therapy.

As discussed in the earlier section on the construction of 'self', the idea of the 'self' has been elucidated as a historically and socially situated construct by authors such as Gergen (1999). Therefore the strong emphasis on changes to the 'self' in Mearns (1997) personal development programme become problematic. The exceptions could be the group working scenarios and expansion of life experience, which from a social constructionist perspective could provide opportunities to be constructed within novel discourses, although of course from Mearns perspective these experiences would have to relate back to changes in 'self'.

According to Foucault (1979), the use of certain discourses, which are constructed as situated within the 'individual' creates power imbalances giving rights to some groups to act in ways over others. This power dynamic is evident in Mearns (1997) suggestion that certain individuals should be rejected at the admission stage if their stage of personal development is not deemed to be adequate. These people are described as those whose locus of evaluation is too externalised or those who have an excessive need to hold onto their self-concept as it is. Firstly, we can recognise that, 'self-concept' and 'locus of evaluation' are in fact theoretical constructs and secondly to assess whether an 'individual' has

'enough' would be a highly subjective enterprise involving value judgements.

Kearney (1997) points out the financial cost of embarking on counselling training, suggesting a figure of around £15000, which of course has risen significantly since 1997. This, Kearney suggests skews the recruitment of trainees in favour of the employed middle class, which leads to a failure to recognise class as a major cause of social disadvantage. The predominance of middle class trainers and trainees can lead to the promulgation of certain beliefs and norms being accepted in training as 'normal' and therefore not open for discussion. Mearns (1997) criteria for the recruitment of trainees appears to fall into the trap of creating idealistic constructions of 'self' that would be out of reach for many sections of society, resulting in exclusion of already oppressed groups and maintaining a power differential.

Mearns (1997) also warns that the personal development of counselling trainees can have a deleterious effect on outside relationships as the trainee moves nearer a state of 'congruence' leaving close others behind in a state of 'incongruence'. There appears to be a power dynamic at play here in which the superior discourse of congruence and enhanced personal development is viewed as justified even at the expense of the potential destruction of existing personal relationships.

Critical reflection in trainees in relation to their personal development and growth is considered essential by many authors including Cross and Watts (2002), Bartlett (2003) and Strawbridge (1997). Schon (1983, 1987) has written extensively about the importance of self-reflective practice in many professions including psychotherapy. The unifying thread here is the acquisition of self-knowledge and improved practice through the reflection on one's own practice and processes.

Regarding personal therapy Grimmer and Tribe (2001) suggest that this encourages reflexivity through understanding from the perspective of a client and also to distinguish client's issues from one's own. Mearns (1997) casts doubt on the effectiveness of personal therapy in the development of trainees suggesting that the work is unlikely to be focused enough on the training course requirements. Mackey and Mackey (1994) in their review of the literature suggest that personal therapy can have a negative impact on some practitioners and that it is practicably impossible to assess its effectiveness for personal development.

High value is placed on the role of experiential learning in personal development by many authors including Fear and Woolfe (1999) and Peel (2005). Mearns (1997) advocates the use of a personal needs file whilst Johns (1996) specifies structured activities and ways of facilitating individual exploration. Kolb (1984) wrote extensively from a

developmental perspective on the subject of experiential learning and can be seen to have influenced the later authors discussed above.

Underlying Kolb's (1984) experiential learning approach is the belief that learning sets us apart from animals, a strong focus on individualism and an emphasis on experience through dialogue. As with Carl Rogers, Kolb was influenced by John Dewey's (1938) ideas on education, which encouraged a move away from the imposition of external discipline toward free experiential activity, which focused on the individual and their direct encounter with the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, in Counselling Psychology this involves looking at the self, personal experiences, thoughts, feelings etc. Kolb also (1984) credits Lewin (1951), Piaget (1971), Erikson (1959), Rogers (1957) and Maslow (1970) as other significant influences in his own thinking. Common to all of these writers is an emphasis on the development in humans towards purpose and lifelong progress.

Kolb's (1984) multilinear model of growth combines learning modes, developmental dimensions and stages. Growth on each dimension is described as move from embeddedness, defensiveness, dependence and reaction toward self-actualisation, independence, proaction and self-direction. Kolb's (1984) view was that humans seek to grow and develop and that it was necessary to do so to survive in the world as individuals and as part of the world community. The impetus for this growth is less well described than the process of how it happens, instead there is

reference to the ever theoretically and materially elusive idea of the inner core.

Whether personal growth can be achieved through experiential learning is questionable, particularly in the context of developmental theories. There appears to be a tendency to assume that experiential learning guides the individual through processes and stages that will lead him/her to become a person with greater self-knowledge. These assumptions are based upon the essentialist presuppositions of the theories that influenced Kolb: developmental interactional (Piaget, 1971; Kohlberg, 1980) and organismic (Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1961). As discussed earlier, these theories suppose a real self and contain the assumption that these selves move towards the positive. Both of these presuppositions are refuted by critical theory and therefore the idea of experiential learning as a reality should be considered with caution.

3.16 This research

Having identified a general lack of conclusive evidence relating to the idea of personal growth and how it is experienced or achieved by Counselling Psychology trainees it is proposed to attempt a fresh approach to this question using a Foucauldian discourse analysis methodology based on the principles of social constructionism. Unlike quantitative research and some of the more essentialist qualitative methodologies, discourse analysis does not aim to formulate and test

hypotheses (Willig, 2003). In keeping with the methodological approach the research aims of this study are:

1. To explore how personal growth is constructed in discourse.
2. To generate text from semi-structured interviews at three points over a period of a year with final year Counselling Psychology trainees as they move into practice.
3. To elucidate both dominant and marginalised discourses that represent personal growth in the texts.
4. To provide an exposition of the power dynamics within the texts, including how certain groups and institutions stand to gain from the promulgation of dominant discourses relating to personal growth.
5. To consider the implications on Counselling Psychology training and practice, that the elucidation of discourses relating to personal growth presents.
6. To examine how the understanding and representation of personal growth changes over a year as participants become more, 'state sponsored' in their government of individuals.

4. Methodology

4.1 Participants

As this exploratory research was looking specifically at the understandings of the meaning of personal growth for Counselling Psychologists as they moved from their final year of study into their practice it was necessary to obtain participants from the profession. That is, in order to be eligible participants needed to be in their final year of study on an accredited BPS Counselling Psychology training course leading to chartered status as a Counselling Psychologist. Three participants took part in the research. All three participants were women, two of whom had previous training in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy before embarking on the Counselling Psychology training. The third participant had a background in the field of Social Care.

The research methodology of discourse analysis, emanating from a social constructionist philosophy does not subscribe to the view of a fixed 'reality'. Instead discourse itself creates new opportunities for discourse through the continual process of co-construction. Bearing this in mind the researcher was aware of the impossibility of the traditional idea of being an objective observer and that he also should also be considered a participant, through the co-construction with participants of discourses relating to personal growth. The researcher's background was in Social Care with an interest in working with socially excluded groups and in particular with people who are homeless in London. The

influence of both the researcher's and participants' backgrounds in their understanding of the concept of personal growth will be considered throughout the analysis. The personal reflexive analysis section will look in detail at ways in which the researcher's background and Social Constructionist theoretical orientation could have influenced the research process.

4.2 Recruitment

The researcher received permission via the Psychology department at London Metropolitan University to email the third year cohort of Counselling Psychology students. An email was sent to all of the students, inviting them to participate. The email included the consent form (Appendix 1) and an information sheet, which detailed the nature of the research, ethical considerations and the commitment required to take part (Appendix 2). A total of three students agreed to participate. It was agreed with the researcher's supervisor that three was a sufficient number of participants for the methodology employed. Participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time and their texts would not be used in any part of the research. No participants chose to withdraw and all consented to have their texts used in the final write up. The researcher was aware that as students at the same university there was likely to be shared experiences and understandings between the researcher and the participants. However, as the research did not aim to find an objective 'reality', instead focusing on the co-construction of

discourse this was not considered to be a difficulty; rather a further opportunity for reflexivity.

4.3 Ethical considerations

The research proposal was submitted to the London Metropolitan University, Department of Psychology, Ethics Panel. No major concerns were identified, however it was requested that the briefing and consent form was submitted to the researcher's supervisor. This was done to the satisfaction of the supervisor and ethical clearance was granted. The ethics panel form can be found at appendix 3. There were three many areas for ethical consideration: consent, confidentiality and potential harm to participants.

Following the British Psychological Society standard guidelines for conducting research (BPS, 2000), participants were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be preserved at all times and that their full name or identifying information would never be disclosed or referenced in any verbal or written context. The risks for participants were assessed to be a 'minimal risk'. It was felt possible that the discourses that arose from the research process might cause participants to question previously held beliefs about the meaning, function or existence of personal growth. Although the researcher felt it was unlikely that this would cause any undue distress, participants were encouraged to telephone or email the researcher if this was the case.

4.4 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with one volunteer, a second year Counselling Psychology trainee known to the researcher. The purpose of the pilot study was to ascertain whether the proposed interview questions successfully elicited discourses around personal growth and on a practical level to see whether all the questions could be answered fully within an hour. It was felt that if interviews lasted longer than an hour, then a participant fatigue effect might become apparent. The interview took approximately 45 minutes and following transcription and an initial analysis it was clear that the interview questions related to the research questions and therefore it was decided to proceed with the research using the questions that were decided on at the proposal stage of the research.

4.5 Procedure

4.5.1 Design

A longitudinal design was employed in which each of the three participants were interviewed three times between July 2006 and March 2007 at four month intervals. The first set of interviews all took place between 13th and 16th July 2006. The second set of interviews took place between 12th November and 2nd December 2006. The third interviews took place between 10th March and 31st March 2007.

A longitudinal design was chosen because, flowing from the ideas of social constructionism, it was felt by the researcher that this would allow

more opportunities for competing discourses to emerge as participants moved from the context of trainee to the context of a chartered practitioner. Emanating from post-structuralist ideas all discourse is historically and culturally located (Foucault, 1980). Therefore discourses that appeared to participants to have a 'reality' at time A, might not hold the same resonance at time B or C.

Additionally, providing the opportunity for participants to comment on the analytic readings of the researcher on two occasions engendered a co-constructive process, in which the power of the researcher to label discourses without feedback from participants was limited.

4.5.2 Data Collection

The semi-structured interview questions used for interview one with the three participants can be found in appendix four, although participant's directed the flow of conversation and went off on tangents as they wished. The interview questions were designed to be as open-ended as possible but it is acknowledged that they are unavoidably tied up within the dominant essentialist discourse of Psychology. This is likely to have been compounded by the fact that the researcher is also a trainee Counselling Psychologist embedded within the ideologies associated with the profession.

Burr (2003) highlights the difficulty with the social constructionist view in that language is a self-referent system: we can only describe language

through more language. There is no access to the 'real truth' outside of the available discourses; this becomes an issue of relativism with each discourse being only more or less true in relation to the other available discourses. Additionally the researcher was aware of the power implications implicit in the fact that by selecting certain questions the available discourses within the research process might have been limited.

For the second set of interviews, participants were asked to provide their reflections on the transcript and asked if their views about personal growth had changed since the last interview (see Appendix 4), four months prior. This was followed by a shared reflection on the material, with both the participant and the researcher discussing the discourses that were beginning to emerge. The researcher completed an initial analysis of the texts and presented the discourses he had had identified as points of discussion for the interviews. It is acknowledged that this process put the researcher in a more powerful position as his reading of the texts are likely to have taken precedence.

Two months prior to the final interview participants were provided with the transcripts from the second interviews and a list of discourses that had arisen from the analysis of the first and second interviews. In the third interview participants were invited to comment on the discourses that the researcher had identified and encouraged to suggest any changes or air points of disagreement.

To the researcher's knowledge this is a unique approach and methodology, using the ideas of Foucault and Parker and applying them to a longitudinal design. The researcher hypothesised that synthesising a longitudinal design with a discourse analytic approach could be more illuminating in terms of the breadth of discourses that could emerge. This fits with Foucault's (1972) approach in which he recommends that, in opposition to thematic analysis, research should look for irregularities and differences in text. Having three points of interviews over a one-year period allowed this to manifest more clearly than the differences and contradictions that appear at one time point, as it is easier for individuals to construct themselves within, or remain concordant to a particular 'truth' or 'reality' without the distance of time. This methodology allowed participants to revisit previously identified discourses and realise that at a later point in time constructions had changed. This helped elucidate the cultural and historical location of 'truth', providing further opportunity for oppressed or non-dominant discourses to emerge.

Additionally this novel methodology facilitated an extra element of transparency to the co-construction process, as participants were party to the analysis at each stage and took the opportunity to dispute and challenge the researcher's findings.

4.6 Analytical Approach

A discourse analysis approach was employed, which is a loosely structured analytical approach, rooted in postmodern/post-structural thinking with a social constructionist focus, drawing from twentieth century philosophy, e.g. Foucault (1979), and linguistics, e.g. Austin, (1962). Although there are a number of methods that fall underneath the discourse analysis umbrella, all have a unifying assumption of anti-realism, which is resolutely against idea that accounts are true or false descriptions of 'reality' (Silverman, 2001).

Other qualitative approaches (e.g. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Smith, 2003; Grounded Theory, Charmaz, 2001), represent a move away from traditional quantitative methods but still operate under the assumption that progressive funnelling of themes will reveal an underlying 'truth' about the meanings of a phenomenon as understood by the participants. The social constructionist approach adopted in this research is not consistent with an underlying phenomenology to be discovered; rather it is concerned with how personal growth has come to be constructed and how participants operate within the available constructions.

The two versions of discourse analysis most commonly employed in psychological and sociological research are 'discursive psychology' and 'Foucauldian discourse analysis' (Willig, 2003). Discursive psychology emerged from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis and is

concerned with discourse practices, prioritising action orientation and stake; asking what participants are 'doing' with their language. In contrast Foucauldian discourse analysis, inspired by Foucault and post-structuralism, is concerned with discursive resources, the exploration of the role of discourse in the constitution of subjectivity and selfhood and the relationship between discourse and power, whilst linking discourse with institutions and social practices. Foucauldian discourse analysis asks, 'How does discourse construct subjects and objects?' (Willig, 2003).

A Foucauldian discourse analysis approach was utilised for this research because the idea of personal growth is inherently tied up with ideas of the 'self' and is linked closely with institutional practices in terms of the promotion of personal growth in Counselling Psychology training institutions and the understanding, explicit and implicit, within the overarching philosophy of humanism within Counselling Psychology, that therapy will be/should be growth enhancing for clients.

Furthermore an aim of the research is to elucidate the way in which power operates within dominant discourses of personal growth to construct subjects and objects in a certain way and how the co-constructive process of research allows the relative power of different discourses to fluctuate and whether it provides the opportunity for marginalised discourses to emerge.

Foucault's position is difficult to translate into a coherent theoretical framework through which to understand concepts; rather his writings provide a set of potential methodologies (Kendal and Wickham, 1999). Foucault took the position that discourse has no inside (in thought, ideas, opinions) and no outside (in things that words refer to) and they have no truth-value. Instead discourses are inscribed historically and intangibly on the surface of an inter-connected web of techniques and practices (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). It is clear that although he did not provide a distinct methodology to be followed, he certainly aimed that his work could be used to investigate concepts in the world as evidenced by the quote below.

"I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool they can use, however they wish in their own area... I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers." (Foucault, 1974, pp.523-524, cited in Kendall and Wickham, 1999)

Relevant to this research are three of Foucault's analytic positions. The first approach set out in 'Madness and Civilisation' (Foucault, 1961), relates to institutions and discursive practices, i.e. the speech acts of experts (Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1982). In terms of personal growth this could be interpreted as the way in which the concept has become embedded in psychological discourses as 'real' and biological.

Foucault's structuralist approach, as set out in 'The Archaeology of Knowledge' (Foucault, 1972) is concerned with a 'distanciation of truth and meaning' (Dreyfus and Rainbow, 1982, p.13). Archaeological research is non-interpretative in the sense of looking for deeper meaning. Interpretation is never ending because there is nothing primary to interpret. Instead archaeology looks to describe regularities, differences and changes in relation to area of research (Foucault, 1972).

Foucault's later genealogical approach found in 'Discipline and Punish' (Foucault, 1977) attempts to lay out ever increasing layers of depth in order to reveal the pervasive superficiality. More specifically this approach is concerned with the enactment of power, and looks to discover how a certain practice or set of beliefs came into being or developed. In contrast to other qualitative approaches, which look for underlying themes, this approach seeks to elucidate contingencies rather than accepting the received wisdom in the form of causal explanations that serve in the interests of those who hold power (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). In terms of this research it would be asking in who's interest is it that the humanistic discourse remains as the received 'truth' for conceptions of personal growth, and how are the rules that maintain this position enacted.

Looking at this piece of research from a meta-level, it could be conceived that as participants in a psychological study object statuses are immediately assigned, which limit and delineate the kind of

responses that are allowable within the discourses of research. The participants on one level have a subject position of 'experts' being trained psychologists, which allows for certain responses and puts them in a particular position of power. Equally they have the subject position as 'participant', which also has certain limitations in terms of what should or should not be said within the discourse of the qualitative research interview.

It is important to note that Foucault did not consider that power was an entity held by particular groups to use on other groups; rather it is strategic and anonymous, not acting on others in a direct and immediate way but through the unstable and flexible arena of micropolitics (Foucault, 1982). For Foucault (1977) power is productive in producing the relationship between what can be said and the visible. Importantly Foucault emphasised the point that there is the continual possibility of resistance and that power and resistance work together in a symbiotic fashion (Foucault, 1980). In terms of analysis Parker (1992) suggests looking at coercive patterns of power and how resistance refuses the dominant meanings and the way in which discourses that challenge power are often themselves tangled in oppressive discourses. An ultimate aim would be to empower those who are oppressed through the dominant discourses.

Usefully Parker (1992) has developed the ideas of Foucault, as discussed above, into a coherent form of discourse analysis designed for the social sciences, broadly following twenty steps. These steps involve

analysing object and subject positions and how they are represented in the texts; elucidating the picture of the world that particular discourses paint, identifying the ideological effects of the discourses and how these are linked to institutions and machinations of power. A detailed description of these steps can be found in Appendix five. Parker (1992) does not suggest that the analysis takes the exact order or necessarily includes every aspect; rather he recommends this form of analysis as a framework to allow researchers to understand text based on Foucauldian ideas.

5. Analysis

The approach used to analyse the data was outlined in the methodology chapter, following Foucault's methods and using Parker's (1992) twenty steps of discourse analysis as guidance. Stage one was not required because the interview transcripts were already in the form of text. The second set of interviews allowed the researcher and participants to complete the second step of exploring connotations through the use of free association. This was an important stage because the participants in the second interview disputed some of the initial ideas that the researcher had generated from analysis of the first interview scripts.

As the researcher is active in the co-construction of the discourses, the role of the researcher in relation to the data was examined throughout. A separate chapter on reflexivity in the discussion section will attend to these issues in more detail.

The following sections will present eight of the discourses found in the texts. The first four discourses to be presented could be considered as emanating from traditional theories in Psychology of personal growth: the Rogerian discourse, Psychodynamic discourse, Cognitive-Developmental discourse and finally a discourse that represents personal growth as happening through the processes of self-awareness and self-reflection. Using excerpts from the texts as a basis for analysis, each discourse will be critically analysed with the role of raising objections to the picture of the world that the discourse presents and highlighting the changes and differences in representations, in order to deconstruct the claims to 'truth' that the discourse presents.

Following this the postmodern discourse will be considered, which provides an alternative marginalised view of personal growth, viewing it as historically and culturally situated. Finally discourses relating to discipline, institutions and entitlement will be considered. Following from the postmodern discourses, these discourses demonstrate how the traditional discourses of personal growth are far from benign; elucidating how certain groups and institutions stand to gain from the proliferation of traditional discourses and how these discourses can work to marginalise oppressed groups. The entitlement discourse demonstrates the way in which individuals can become part of the technologies of government, and the rights to act on others that this confers upon them.

As discussed in the literature review section the humanistic philosophy of humankind is most associated with traditional ideas of personal growth. In particular it is the ideas of Carl Rogers that are arguably the most influential in influencing the underpinning philosophy and practice of Counselling Psychology, therefore the Rogerian discourse of personal growth will be considered first.

5.1 Rogerian Discourse

Interestingly there were relatively few explicit references to Rogerian concepts and ideas compared to psychodynamic and postmodern discourses of personal growth. This is perhaps surprising considering that the idea of personal growth in Counselling Psychology can be traced to the humanistic underpinnings of the discipline and in particular the work of Carl Rogers. Both Krissy and Gill, felt that Carl Rogers had influenced their understanding of personal growth. Although in the second interview Gill was keen to point out that she had been referring to client work and the core conditions, rather than indicating a belief in the theoretical basis of Rogerian theory.

5.1.1 Influenced understanding of meaning of Personal Growth

This first excerpt demonstrates the way in which Rogerian theory had directly influenced participants' understanding of the concept of personal growth.

K: Yes, yes, but I've and I've, I mean, and my background is a

psychodynamic training and then a person-centred training and I draw, I mean yes, from both of those. (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 293-295)

In the free association stage of the analysis, the researcher initially associated 'training' with being taught, taking on ideas and values, and learning techniques. The latter had resonance with Rose's (1989) technologies of government, in which psychotherapeutic techniques using the myth of the 'individual' to control population. In the free association stage of analysis (Parker, 1992) the word 'draw', led to the words borrowed, taken and copied. From a social constructionist perspective this could also be understood as, 'use the language of'.

The objects described are psychodynamic and person-centred referring to personal growth. Here, there is an implicit assumption by the participant that there is a shared understanding of the meaning of the objects referred to. The subject positions of this excerpt are complex as the participant describes herself as both (with) in and (with) outside the discourses. The sentence begins with, 'I've', which indicates something belonging to or being integral to the 'person', but is then revised to 'my background is', which instead refers to an historical context, which could refer to a past 'I'. This suggests that the participant is distinguishing between becoming the discourse itself and being an active agent choosing to employ the discourse. This use of language gives the subject power over the discourse, which is re-emphasised when the

participant describes that she, 'draws' from both, again indicating agency.

The map of the world this discourse presents is one in which, 'individuals', choose theories in order to understand personal growth. However, there is an implicit objection to this discourse, in the reference to, 'my background', which implies there is a competing contextual discourse, in which choices were limited to the discourses available in the, 'training'. This is also evident in the following excerpt from Gill's text.

G: Could be, I don't know so much about Rogerian ideas, you know I was interested in Rogers but of course over time we forget…

R: Yeah.

G: …but sort of, I was very impressed with Rogers, you know…

R: mmm

G: …my, quite, impressed, impressed yes…

R: Yeah.

G: …I was very much influenced by him. (Gill, Interview 1, Lines 185-192)

In describing the influence of Rogers in her understanding of personal growth Gill begins with the position that she doesn't remember much about him, to a position of interest and finally to believing that he had a large influence on her thinking. In interview two the researcher asked for clarification about whether this indicated that Rogers' theoretical

propositions had influenced Gill and the response was quite different, particularly in relation to the idea of self-actualisation.

5.1.2 Self-Actualisation

As Wilkins (2003) describes, the self-actualising process is the foundation stone of Rogerian theory, as this is understood to be the motivational force that creates change and moves individuals towards what is positive and fulfilling. The discourse across the texts provided differing views of this concept. This discourse emerged briefly during the first portion of Krissy's initial interview, but was not returned to. Gill dismissed the concept, whilst it appeared meaningful for Jane. The following excerpts demonstrate how it is possible to look across the entire text and find contrasting ways of speaking about the discourse as recommended in stage nine of Parker's (1992) analysis.

G: No, it doesn't resonate, I don't, I was very much against, this kind of (laughing) self-actualisation, that was, I don't really, but the attitude towards client I think it stays with me and probably very much. (Gill, Interview 2, lines 454-457)

J: Yeah, I mean it's different, it's difficult not to kind of put terms of judgement on it but I guess sort of being, what, what you feel is a better person or… (Jane, Interview 1, lines 183-185)

The subject positions are also quite different with Gill's position being fairly resolute, 'it doesn't resonate', 'I'm very much against', and with Jane's position being more tentative, 'I guess', 'sort of', and then tailing off at the end. The inferred object, 'self-actualised people' is attributed two object statuses by the two participants, 'better' by Jane and 'to be laughed at' by Gill.

The description of the self-actualised person as being, 'better', by Jane would beg the question, better than whom? The word, 'judgement' also appears suggesting an object (self-actualisation) is located in a more powerful position than the other object that isn't explicitly spoken of (non-self-actualised). This question is dealt with in more detail under the 'entitlement' discourse to be explored later in the analysis. At this point it is sufficient to point out that persons who have engaged in activities assumed to cause self-actualisation, e.g. Psychologists, Counsellors, would benefit from the employment of this discourse, whilst those who have not would be disempowered by this discourse, e.g. clients.

There is an implication that the discourse of self-actualisation could be mobilised in order to make people believe that by engaging in certain activities, e.g. therapy, that they too could become 'better' people. As evidenced in the literature review section, the humanistic view is central to the principles and aims of Counselling Psychology, suggesting that the discourse that Jane constructed herself within has a dominant status.

Gill's discourse, which questions and even mocks the 'reality' of a self-actualising tendency, is perhaps the more marginalised.

5.1.3 Biological basis for growth

The root metaphor of Carl Rogers' theory is organicism and he used the biological metaphor of the organismic valuing process as a tool to describe where the self-actualising tendency emanated from (Rogers, 1961). The discourse relating to the biological metaphor is closely related to and could be described as a necessary preceding discourse in order to successfully mobilise the self-actualisation object as a 'reality'. Consistent with the resistant discourse on self-actualisation described above, there was no reference to a biological basis for growth in Gill's discourse, throughout the text. Krissy referred to this discourse at three points in the first interview, but following this the biological metaphor was not returned to. Jane referred to this metaphor throughout all three interviews, suggesting that the Rogerian discourse was a powerful construction in her understanding of personal growth.

K: I mean it's making me think Rogerian really because it's sort of, if, If you provide the environment, a nurturing environment, environmental conditions then the natural growth potential is there…

(Krissy, Interview 1, lines 250-252)

J: …you know just sort of, being aware, in which, and it goes back to the kind of, it, the idea of it being more spontaneous and

natural and more kind of organic. (Jane, Interview 2, lines 379-381)

J: Yeah, it's felt, kind of, at some level like, kind of, natural process then, it's quite hard to then, kind of… (Jane, Interview 3, lines 481-482)

In the initial free association stage it was difficult to move beyond what appeared to be textbook repetitions of Rogerian theory. The biological references are plentiful; natural, growth and organic are repeated through the text. The objects in the text referring to personal growth are the environment, spontaneity, potential and biological processes. Krissy takes an interesting subject position, stating that, 'its making me think Rogerian', this indicates that there is a particularly powerful discourse at play, 'making' her think in a certain way. The use of the object, 'think', operates to bestow a 'misplaced concreteness' (Gergen, 1999) to the discourse. Stating the discourse as belonging to Rogers also has the effect of Krissy's disengagement with her self-subject, negating her own sense of agency. This subject position is then confirmed in the proceeding description, which is almost verbatim Rogers' own words relating to his paper on the necessary and sufficient conditions for therapeutic change (Rogers, 1957).

The picture of the world this discourse presents is one in which personal growth happens through a biological process. However, although the objects in the text at first appear to be describing the same thing, there is

a contrasting way of presenting the discourse, with Krissy describing the necessity of a 'nurturing environment' and Jane referring to a 'spontaneous' process. There is conceptual confusion here, with 'spontaneous' conjuring up ideas of unpredictability, whilst 'nurturing' suggests a predictable process. Despite being used to describe the Rogerian version of personal growth, the use of the object, 'spontaneous', hints at a competing discourse in which there are not predictable patterns of growth.

It is immediately clear that these discourses emerged from the humanistic tradition, historically located in the fifties and sixties. In the last quote there is evidence that the biological discourse of growth is one that it is difficult to resist. Jane's text suggests that once an object is constructed within a biological discourse that alternative discourses have difficulty competing. This is evidenced in a struggle to make affirmative statements, 'its felt, kind of, at some level', which suggest that there is possibly space for alternative versions of reality opposed to the biological discourse. In particular, 'at some level' implies that there are other levels that alternative discourses could inhabit. 'Its kind of hard' appears to refer to the power of the biological discourse to inhibit other ways of talking about personal growth.

As described in the literature review section, although Rogers stuck to the biological metaphor for growth, there was never any explanation of where this might be happening in the body. Even though this is the case

it appears that the biological metaphor is so embedded within the Rogerian discourse, that the absence of an 'actual' biological basis is ignored or subjugated within the discourse, to the extent that any objections or alternatives are difficult to mobilise because it feels perhaps like arguing against nature. This fits with Harre's (1979) distinction between the practical and expressive spheres. The practical sphere would refer to what we know about growth in terms of cell division etc. and the expressive sphere would relate to Rogerian ideas of growth. It appears in the text that the 'realities' contained in the practical sphere are mistakenly translated to the expressive sphere, making it difficult to recognise the object as discourse and therefore even more difficult to raise objections or mobilise alternative discourses.

5.1.4 Objections

Despite the difficulty in attempting to mobilise competing discourses to the biological metaphor, Gill makes direct reference to the historically situated emergence of the discourse.

G: Yeah, maybe the language is too idealistic, too sixties, too kind of (laughs), you know… (Gill, Interview 2, lines 478-479)

The connotations of this text immediately conjured up images of music festivals, sunshine, 'free love' and an era of hope for the future and new beginnings. The objects in the text are language, idealism and a particular time in history (the sixties). The subjects in the text are the

imagined people who lived in the sixties and also the silent voice of objectors to the 'sixties' discourse. The statement, 'you know', invites the researcher to become one of these objectors as Gill makes the explicit assumption of a shared understanding of meaning. The contrasting ways of speaking therefore, are the proponents of the idea of a growth potential, moving towards what is positive and fulfilling (the sixties voice), and the alternative, which actually laughs at this position (Gill and the researcher). As evidenced in an earlier excerpt the use of laughter explicitly removes power from the 'sixties' subject position and provides a picture of the world in which Rogerian ideas are historically located and are viewed with amusement. Finally, Gill makes explicit the fact that the ideas are held in 'language', which again removes power from the discourse by denying it a 'reality'.

With reference to the institutions that are implicated within the text, there is one explicit reference in the first excerpt from Krissy, when she refers to her training, *"a person-centred training" (Krissy, Interview 1, Line 294)* . It is probably safe to assume that the training to which Krissy is referring occurred within an institutional setting, and that money was paid to the institution and would certainly benefit from the promulgation of this particular discourse. The discourse suggests that given the right environmental conditions that personal growth can be achieved, which would suggest that any institution offering to provide these conditions could be said to benefit. As explored in the literature review section there are tens of thousands of organisations that offer to do this, from

counselling organisations (e.g. BACP) to self-help groups. Institutions that are likely to be attacked or subverted when this discourse appears could be those that are understood not to provide environmental conditions where a person's natural potential can flourish, e.g. prisons or 'oppressive regimes'.

The excerpts above and the proceeding analysis demonstrates the interplay of regularities, e.g. biological terminology and irregularities within the text, e.g. Jane's use of a competing discourse, 'spontaneous', within a discourse, which is suggested by Foucault (1972). This is directly related to the evidence of power and resistance in that text does not present a clear-cut distinction between the two, but there are ripples of resistance within the text as evidenced by Jane's use of a competing discourse.

However, it is clear that the Rogerian discourse is a powerful one; it appears through the use of the biological metaphor. The final excerpt from Jane implies the difficulty in finding discourse that can resist the biological metaphor. Following from the work of Rose (1996) it could be argued that the desire to become a *"better person" (Jane, interview 1, line 184)* is exactly the platform where 'government' seeks to control population; as the 'individual' is devoting energies to 'self-actualisation', those in power can act on society as they choose.

5.2 Psychodynamic discourse

A psychodynamic discourse of personal growth was most apparent in texts from Gill and Krissy's interviews. Both these participants had prior psychodynamic training before commencing the Counselling Psychology course suggesting that they were more likely to have been constructed within a psychodynamic discourse. Three discourses were identified as having their historical location in psychodynamic theories of the world: unconscious drive, loss of defences and containment. The first two of these relate to Freudian theory, whilst the latter has resonance with later psychodynamic theory associated with British Independent School (e.g. Klein, 1952).

Freudian theory is essentially a motivational drive theory that attempted to resolve both psychological and philosophical problems within a biological and positivist framework (Burton and Davey, 2003). Freud's topographical model distinguished between the unconscious, preconscious and conscious, with the latter representing a small spotlight or 'reality principle'. His later structural model distinguished between the superego, ego and id; the id being synonymous with the unconscious. For Freud it was the id that rooted persons in their biological selves and was the location for forbidden wishes and impulses. Defence mechanisms represent ways of distorting these desires and excluding feelings from awareness in order to avoid anxiety (Bateman and Holmes, 1995).

Klein's (e.g. 1952) view of the human as being essentially relational in nature represented a significant departure from the classical Freudian viewpoint. Whilst Freud believed behaviour to be instinctual in nature derived from the primitive drives of the id, Klein believed that behaviour was driven by the need to form relationships. Bion (1962) elaborated the Kleinian idea of projective identification with the concept of the container/contained in which the infant is believed to project into the mother his unbearable feelings who then contains these feelings and presents them back in a way that is manageable to the infant. It is proposed by Bion (1962) that the same process that occurs within the therapeutic relationship. Erickson (1959) proposed a psychodynamic model of growth from childhood through adulthood.

Social constructionist readings of psychodynamic theory challenge the centrality of the unitary 'self', viewing it as a delusional construct of consciousness and as part of the technological social myths of the late twentieth century (Parker, 1997).

The first excerpts to be considered from the texts relate to the Freudian notion of an unconscious drive. Following this is an analysis of excerpts representing personal growth as the lowering of defences. The final section of the psychodynamic discourse looks at the idea of containment as representing personal growth.

5.2.1 Unconscious drive

K: ...so and that that, and this is where, it's my belief I suppose is that I would say that I, I unconsciously knew that's what I needed to do. That I needed to do, that I needed that so, mmm. Which is my belief in my own growth potential. (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 278-281)

The object, 'I', appears frequently in this excerpt but relates to at least two subject positions: a conscious active, 'I', and an unconscious 'I' that directs the action of the former, knowing what it 'needs'. A potential third subject position is located in, 'me', which is represented as the repository of, 'belief'. Despite the object of 'belief', being given self-subject status in the text, the location of the belief is represented as an external object, evident in, 'its (my belief)'. Therefore there appears to be three 'selves' presented: one unconscious directing self, a directed self without agency and a repository for external objects that is represented as 'self'. As discussed in the literature review section, the existence of multiple selves is untenable (Gergen, 1999) suggesting that what is being described is a number of external objects, relating to a psychodynamic discourse rather than inner 'reality'.

Contrasting the objects, 'unconscious' and 'growth potential' in the text, demonstrates the way in which opposing discourses are attempting to explain the same object, but in fact constitute different objects. 'Unconscious' relates to a Freudian view whilst 'growth potential' resonates with a Rogerian picture of the world. From the researcher's

understanding of Freudian theory, the unconscious or id relates to primal and destructive urges, whilst the growth potential moves towards what is positive or life fulfilling for the individual.

Therefore, the confusing picture of the world that these intertwined discourses present, is one in which a self-destructive force moves a non-agentic self towards self-fulfilment. This conceptual confusion provides evidence for the view that what is presented here is in fact just discourse, a number of competing ways in which it is possible to understand the world, but arranged in a way to describe an object, in this case personal growth.

J: …but I think there was another, kind of, maybe uh, sub-conscious kind of drive that was saying, well actually I do want to express this … (Jane, Interview 2, Lines 454-455)

This piece of text presents a similar picture of the world, except the object here is, 'sub-conscious', rather than, 'unconscious', suggesting perhaps the Freudian idea of the pre-conscious. However, as an explanation for personal growth this piece of text falls down in the same way as the preceding piece, in the philosophical impossibility of a pre-conscious self, directing a conscious self into action.

K: I feel that I have to make choices and that I have agency so it's not a case that I believe in my unconscious and I just sort of bob along and see what happens. (Krissy, Interview 1, Lines 307-309)

This piece of text represents a competing discourse to the unconscious discourse of personal growth. Here the unconscious remains as an object in the text, but it is stripped of the power held in the preceding texts, in that agency is removed from it. Agency instead is attributed to the self-subject, evidenced in, 'I have agency'. However, there is indication of an outside object that bears influence on the 'choices' made by the agentic self. This is evident in, 'I have to (make choices)', although it is not clear where this imperative comes from it represents said choices not emanating from the volition of the 'self'. The representation in the text of a powerful outside object in discourse of personal growth will be returned to later in the analysis section.

5.2.2 Loss of defences

K: …I think in some ways, is what happens is that, is about becoming less defensive, about less defence, being, part of it, it is a loss, because it's letting go of previous defensiveness…

R: Right.

K: …and, and that actually, maybe, a sort of confidence maybe that comes, is about being, needing to be less defended. Does that make sense? (Krissy, Interview 2, Lines 33-39)

Here the object of personal growth is linked to a lessening of defences, which is represented as leading to confidence. Initial free-association with the object of 'defensiveness' led the researcher to conjure up psychodynamic defences such as repression and denial, but also so called, 'mature defences', such as humour and sublimation. Additionally, in other contexts defence can be viewed as a positive object such as defending honour or defending from attack. However, in the context of this text, it is likely that defence is represented as the more primitive psychodynamic defences of repression and denial.

The current subject position in the text is represented as 'less defensive' and more 'confident', which leads to the assumption that prior to the personal growth object that enabled this, that the past subject position would be represented as 'more defensive' and 'less confident'. If the researcher is correct in his assumed shared understanding of the meaning of defensiveness in the text, it is difficult to construe how the acceptance of unacceptable wishes and painful emotions into 'consciousness' could lead to more confidence. This represents a difficulty highlighted by Parker (1997) in working with psychodynamic discourse, in that it appears to spiral into ever more complexity, making it troublesome to pull apart the strands.

The appearance of the objects, 'a loss' and 'letting go' add to the complexity in this piece of text. The first object, in particular, has resonance with discourses of grief and bereavement. The second object

represents a subject position in which an object is being held seemingly involuntarily, and 'letting go' positions the object being let go of as being freed, leaving the holding object in a state of loss. It appears then that the psychodynamic discourse in this text is representing 'loss of defensiveness' as an indication of personal growth through raised confidence, but conversely there is a discourse that suggests a painful loss.

From a social constructionist perspective, defences are part of discourse and language and don't exist within people. Perhaps then the appearance of a loss discourse could relate to the loss of a particular way of being constructed in language, i.e. the subject was constructed as an individual with 'unconscious' painful and unmanageable emotions, but through changes in context this became an untenable discourse to construct oneself within. The increasing dominance of the competing discourse of postmodernism in relation to personal growth throughout Krissy's texts might have led to the subjugation (or 'loss') of the psychodynamic discourse. This is of course a tentative position emanating from the researcher's reading of the text, and it can only claim 'equal' status to alternative positions.

K: …I think they, it comes about, um, I think it comes about, I suppose I do think it comes about by, um, a lowering of defensiveness…

R: mmm.

K: …by, um, being more open to what the experience is. (Krissy, Interview 2, Lines 394-397)

Again, personal growth is represented within a psychodynamic discourse as being the outcome of the 'lowering of defensiveness'. A dualist metaphor is employed, representing a 'self' that contains the experience, and a second self that can 'open' to said experience.

Although not explicit in the text there is a resonance between the letting go of defences discourse and the Rogerian discourses, in which incongruent functioning, or defensive attitudes are shed to allow congruent functioning emanating from the 'real' self (Rogers, 1961).

5.2.3 Containment

G: …so that's what the big change is about, uh, learning to recognise the feelings in me and then to accept it and deal with the feelings and of the client, you know…

R: So, tolerate, a change in your ability to tolerate…

G: to tolerate…

R: …difficult feelings…

G: …and to accept that they are yes, that I have them yes. (Gill, interview 2, Lines 737-743)

In this piece of text personal growth is represented as a, 'big change', whilst the object, 'feeling' is attributed with subject status at various

points through the text. The objects, 'recognise' and 'learning' resonate with cognitive and behavioural discourses. In particular the object, '(re)cognise', suggests a subsequent cognitive processing of an already known object, or to see an object with a renewed view. There is a dualism inherent in the object, 'feelings in me', because it appears that the 'feelings' existed in an unknown (unconscious) capacity in the past subject, but are positioned in the current subject as 'recognised'. The problem with this is it is impossible to prove or disprove whether the 'feeling' object did exist prior to being 'recognised'. It appears that this particular psychodynamic discourse paints a picture of the world in which 'feeling' objects are attributed to self-subject status as objects that were already there to be known.

The objects, 'accept it', and 'accept that (I have them)' suggest the power of this particular discourse to enforce the picture of the world described above, working to subjugate a resistance discourse that might suggest the 'feelings' objects didn't exist before they were 'recognised'. This positioning also suggests that the past subject didn't accept their existence. Finally the appearance of the object, 'tolerate', in the text indicates dealing with something unpleasant, which should also be, 'accepted'.

J: Yeah, uhuh, the sort of ego and the sort of, yeah sort of bearing the kind of, don't know, bearing sort of, anxiety of kind of, the other forces

and just being able to kind of be yourself. (Jane, Interview 2, Lines 204-206)

This excerpt also uses a psychodynamic discourse to represent personal growth, with the ability to bear, 'anxiety' and 'other forces', positioned as the preferred state, in which 'growth' has occurred. The past subject position that this piece of text presents is one in which, 'anxiety' was not able to be tolerated, perhaps implicitly the text is representing the anxiety as having existed in an 'unconscious' realm, or otherwise it paints a picture of a subject in a continual state of unbearable anxiety. This links with the previous texts in which personal growth was represented as the lessening of defences.

Common to all of the texts relating to a psychodynamic discourse of personal growth, is the existence of an unknown, 'unconscious' part of 'self' that harbours unbearable feelings, with the allowance of these feelings into the 'conscious' part of self being represented as personal growth. It is equally possible however, that this is just a particular way of constructing the world and that the hidden objects did not in fact exist until they were known in language. The way in which institutions can benefit from this discourse is clear because the potential for assisting people to 'contain' and 'deal with' the difficult and painful objects that are currently unknown to them could carry on ad infinitum, as there is never a way for disproving their existence within this construct. One way of emancipating resistance discourses to commonly accepted 'realities' of

the world is to locate the historical and cultural location of the emergence of the dominant discourse (Foucault, 1979).

K: Freud is the granddaddy isn't he?

R: mmm.

K: ...and it's all sort of kind of from there, you know, what, what other language can we use? (Krissy, Interview 2, Lines 219-223)

This excerpt locates the construct of the 'unconscious' to a particular time and person, and appears as an acknowledgement that the psychodynamic discourse is not representing 'reality', rather it is, 'from there' and exists in language. However, as is represented in the text it is difficult to begin to construct the world in alternative ways, when the language we have access to constructs our experience and the world in very specific ways.

In summary, a Psychodynamic discourse of personal growth is problematic in a number of ways, due in part to the question of agency. The presence of a directing unconscious assumes a lack of agency, yet participants represented themselves as having agency and being directed by an unconscious. The representation of personal growth as the development of an ability to contain also presupposed the existence of emotions that were hitherto outside of awareness. The interchangeable use of the conceptually contradictory Rogerian and Psychodynamic discourses of growth also suggest that these are merely

ways of talking about personal growth rather than being based in a 'reality'. Finally the historical and situational location of the Psychodynamic discourse was represented in the acknowledgement that this way of viewing the world emanated from the thoughts and ideas of one particular man; Freud, who in turn was constructed by his own historical context (e.g. Parker, 1997).

In contrast to the preceding two discourses the Cognitive-Developmental discourse was represented in the text as what personal growth was not, rather than as a plausible explanation for the concept.

5.3 Cognitive-Developmental discourse

There was relatively little representation of cognitive-developmental discourses of growth within the texts. It appeared that unlike the developmental-interactional theories of Kohlberg (1973) and Erikson (1956) that growth and development were represented as quite different objects in the text, with growth being represented as an 'organic' process and development relating more to acquisition of skills. This way of constructing the differences between growth and development has resonance with the assertions of Irving and Williams (1999).

5.3.1 Stage-developmental

K: Development, um, I suppose now, sort of if I think about development then I'm um, influenced by what I know about developmental theories and sort of stages of development, um, and I suppose, I can't really

explain it actually, but my preference, I, I suppose in some way it's more for me to say, use personal growth rather than personal development. (Krissy, Interview 1, Lines 229-234)

The objects being referred to in this piece of text are development and personal growth. In terms of development the objects, 'influenced' and 'what I know', indicate that this is one of a number of ways in which to understand the world and that knowledge is localised, the implication being that if other forms of knowledge were known that the object could be represented by an alternative 'reality'. How this particular discourse emerged, 'developmental theories' is represented in the text, followed by a picture of the world that this particular discourse presents; one in which people move through, 'stages of development'.

Similar to the object, 'influenced', 'preference' also suggests that there are a number of realities or ways of understanding the world available. Interestingly, relating to personal growth, the object, '(for me) to say' appears before being replaced with, 'use'. 'To say' directly implies ways of understanding are contained in language, whilst 'use' indicates agency it still represents a subject being represented within a particular discourse. Therefore this piece of text represents growth and development as being different, and rather than two distinct 'realities', as two potential viable ways in which to construct experience.

J: Well, I guess development sort of implies a sort of more sort of stage

kind of, uh, things that you do, kind of bring on, the kind of uh, process whereas, uh, growth to me could be more sort of spontaneous ... (Jane, Interview 1, Lines 159-165)

This piece of text similarly represents development and growth as two different objects. A cognitive-developmental discourse is clear in relation to development; an accommodation/assimilation 'process' where external activities, 'things that you do', activate, 'bring on', internal processes. Growth however is positioned as being 'spontaneous', representing this as an unplanned for, perhaps sudden event. These excerpts provide a portion of the evidence that participants from the beginning of the research represented development as being an entirely different object to growth.

The final traditional discourse of personal growth to be explored differs somewhat from the preceding three in that there are less claims to a concreteness or use of biological metaphors that are apparent in Rogerian, Psychodynamic and Cognitive-Developmental discourses. However, there are links in particular to the Psychodynamic discourse in terms of multiple 'selves' and the dualist problem of which 'self' is doing and which is observing.

5.4 Self-awareness/ self-reflection discourse

The traditional literature on personal growth in counselling trainees argues that self-reflection and a growing self-awareness is an important

feature of training and recommends a number of ways in which this can be achieved (e.g. Mearns, 1997), including the keeping of self-reflective diaries. 'The Reflective Practitioner' by Donald Schon describes in detail the process of self-reflection in psychotherapy practitioners (Schon, 1983). This can be traced to the existential influences on the discipline of Counselling Psychology, particularly the work of Kierkegaard (van Deurzen Smith, 1997).

From a social constructionist perspective the above concepts are problematic for the reasons discussed in the literature review section. These problems include the evidence that suggests individualism is historically and culturally located and therefore not applicable universally (e.g. Wickland and Eckert, 1992) and the problems inherent in dualist accounts of an individual mind, which make it impossible to know what part of the mind is doing the thinking and what part is doing the observing (Gergen, 1999). Contemporary person-centred researchers have suggested that although subjects are linguistically and culturally formed that there is the possibility for an emergent whole (Glynn, 2002), although this still does not solve the riddle of dualism.

The concepts were represented in the text broadly as self-reflection as the 'process' of personal growth and self-awareness as an outcome of personal growth. However, as Schon (1983) describes this was understood in a cyclical 'process'. There were also links to the

Postmodern, Psychodynamic, Rogerian and Cognitive discourses.

Finally a constructionist view of self-awareness was apparent.

5.4.1 Self-reflection

J: …I find it impossible not to become, through stages, it kind of, I felt like it kept, came like in waves but times when it was so intensely introspective that if you didn't sort of, develop or grow from that…

R: mmm

J: …then it would be sort of, uh, uh, a bit of a travesty really, to have that time… (Jane, Interview 1, lines 253-258)

Here the objects, 'develop' and 'grow' are linked to the object, 'introspective'. Introspective traditionally relates to looking into one's self, which as argued above is philosophically untenable. This aside, the representation of self-reflection in this piece of text does not to refer to two internal objects in the process of observation of one another. Rather, the objects represented are external evidenced in the object 'it kept'. There is also a sense that the external object or objects are endowed with a power and force, 'in waves' and 'intensely'. This also resonates with earlier discussed discourses in which the self-subject is represented as being carried along by an external force, in which the choice is to, 'sink or swim', an imperative to represent the 'self' within the discourse.

The appearance of the object, 'travesty', completes a picture of the world that this representation of a self-awareness discourse paints; that to

resist the discourse would be to ridicule or distort something serious. What this discourse says to an external potentially resistance voice is that objections to its 'truth' are to be ridiculed. This is a clear example of the power of language to use inbuilt supporting mechanisms to maintain the integrity of the picture of the world it wishes to paint. The power of the self-reflection discourse is perhaps not surprising considering that much of traditional science is based on the dualist metaphor and the number of institutions that benefit from its promulgation from psychotherapy institutions to retailers.

J: …'Ooh, what's this thing about me, and how do I relate to that and what

can I learn about myself', so again that sort of, that, any kind of, sort of opportunities for personal growth that I was kind of looking at and thinking, well what can I learn from this personally, what can I take from this… (Jane, Interview 2, Lines 487-492)

Again, this piece of text represents self-awareness as the 'taking on' of external objects, evident in the objects, 'I take', 'from this' and 'this thing', rather than the traditional view of 'self' viewing 'self'. Personal growth is therefore represented as something external being understood as part of the 'self'. From a social constructionist perspective this could be better understood as the representation of the 'self' within a particular discourse.

G: Because I think I'm quite self-reflective person generally.

R: mmm

G: So I'm doing that automatically. (Gill, Interview 1, Lines 831-833)

This piece of text demonstrates a neat conceptual elision to the traditional view of self-reflection, in that it is suggested that one part of the 'self' viewing another part of the 'self', 'self-reflection', can occur without any 'selves' being aware, 'automatically'. It would be possible to find myriad examples of such elisions in the text, due to the dominance of dualism in our current (western) understanding of the world. However, the aim is not to show many examples of what is already known. Instead, it would be more productive to use the available text to understand how 'self-reflection' and 'self-awareness' discourses operate and empower certain groups to act upon another groups, how the discourse is practiced within technologies of government and which institutions stand to gain.

5.4.2 Self-awareness

J: Like, yeah, but I had to, kind of, develop a lot of self-awareness, that insight, very, very quickly and kind of, be able to yeah to learn a lot and to, you know. (Jane, Interview 2, Lines 112-114)

Following a pattern across the texts there appears an object that represents an external compulsion for the subject to carry out certain acts, evident in, 'had to'. The appearance of the object 'very, very

quickly' also indicates an external powerful force that is urging the subject in the text to 'learn a lot' and develop a lot'. These objects in the text appear to relate to a cognitive discourse of personal growth, and are used to indicate the 'process' of the 'acquisition' of self-awareness and insight. As with the self-reflection discourse, the use of a cognitive discourse and the presence of external objects do not paint a picture of the world in which part of the self is viewing another part of the self.

It is possible that rather than the philosophically untenable dualism inherent in ideas of self-reflection, that the text is indicating the way in which it is possible to become 'aware' of the various discourses within which we are constructed. It would follow from this that 'self-reflection' is in fact a discourse that describes representations of self within other discourses. The presence in the discourse of powerful objects, leads to questions of which institutions stand to gain from a discourse that describes 'self' within other discourses. Again, this links with Rose's (1996) ideas of the rise of 'individualism' as a covert way of controlling population, in that it suits government for individuals to understand self-reflection as inner looking concept rather than as a discourse that describes discourses of 'self'. Whilst the focus is on 'inner looking', the emphasis for change is on the 'self', focus on discourse in contrast would emphasise changing external practices, upsetting the status quo and commonly held ways of understanding the world. Consequently individuals might begin to question the economic sense of engaging in

practices that profess to 'improve' your 'inner self' and 'inner understanding'.

K: Um, the conce, I guess the concept, um, where it's personal growth would be, um, the sort of, the dual activities of being, increasing self-awareness…

R: mmm.

K: …coupled with increasing knowledge and experience. (Krissy, Interview 2, Lines 50-51)

Here, the object being referred to, 'personal growth', is represented by the object 'being', which suggests a state of existence in the world rather than an internal state. The object, 'experience', also suggests interaction with the outside world, whilst 'knowledge' indicates the presence of power. Therefore this piece of text supports the preceding argument, in that; 'self-awareness' as representation of personal growth comes about through 'knowledge' of experience. Experience being the construction of one's 'self' within particular discourses, and this construction being a discourse itself; a discourse that describes representations of 'self' within other discourses.

K: Well, I, I mean my first thought is the openness and it fits with the, the lessening of defences…

R: mmm.

K: …and, I suppose that fits in with the, the um, and I then immediately think of the, sort of, the need for the self-awareness. (Krissy, Interview 2, Lines 418-422)

This excerpt demonstrates the way in which the psychodynamic and Rogerian discourses also fold into a discourse of self-awareness. The psychodynamic element is evident in the 'lessening of defences', whilst the Rogerian discourse is evident in 'openness'. The latter resonating with the Rogerian idea that growth happens through an increased openness to experience (Rogers, 1961). This provides further evidence to suggest that 'self-awareness' is in fact a discourse about the representation of 'self' within other discourses. The following excerpt provides evidence for growth existing entirely outside 'self' experience.

G: I believe it does happen without being aware.

R: And, how does that like happen?

G: I think with change, without being consciously aware of it…

R: mmm, OK.

G: …because I'd say that even without concentrating on myself, I would still change…

R: mmm.

G: …'cos uh, maybe that's why I've changed as well, but only sometimes I would sit back and notice the change (Gill, Interview 2, Lines 282-300)

The object being referred to in this text, 'personal growth', is represented as occurring without, 'consciousness', 'awareness' or 'concentrating on self'. 'Change', therefore is represented as possible without any involvement of 'self' but still relating to 'self'. Therefore this piece of text provides a resistance discourse to that of introspection or self-awareness. The picture of the world that this represents is one in which change relating to 'self' occurs but in the external realm.

This fits well with a social constructionist view of self, in that it is represented within discourse, which exists in a third realm (Shotter, 1997). As discourse is continually changing and fluctuating, representations of 'self' within discourse are also concomitantly changing. The final piece of the excerpt in which the self-subject, 'sit(s) back and notice(s) the change', indicates the presence of the previously mentioned discourse that describes the representation of 'self' within other discourses. The important difference in Gill's text is that this discourse is represented as just that, rather than being attributed to continually present 'internal processes'.

To summarise, the conceptual differences in the text demonstrate the impossibility of proving that there are such things as levels of awareness or ways in which to reflect on the self because of the problem of dualism. The final excerpt, which represented these objects as being outside the self links well with the next discourse, which is a move away from the

traditional discourses, instead viewing growth as situational and relational rather than existing within the individual.

5.5 Postmodern discourse

This discourse could have equally been described as, 'context dependent' or even 'social construction'. The researcher chose this particular umbrella term because postmodernism felt broad in the potential discourses that could pertain to it in comparison to social construction. This was also a term that the participants could identify with, in which there was a relatively shared understanding of the meaning. The broadest definition of postmodernism would be an intellectual movement reacting against the ideas of modernism and particularly relevant to this research, a reaction against the supposed 'reality' presented by scientific rationalism. However, this term can mean (and be) many different things to different people and these interpretations are particular to the construction process of this piece of research.

Gill's texts contained few explicit references to postmodernism, but there was a dominant discourse throughout the texts arguing for a contextual explanation for personal growth. The postmodern discourse was most prominent in the texts from Krissy's interview transcripts, which she reported was a reflection ideas that she had worked with during her own research project and also as a result of the co-construction process throughout the data collection period of this research. Jane also

emphasised the role of co-construction in the development of the increasing dominance of the postmodern discourse in her interview transcripts. An example of this from Krissy's second interview is given below.

K: Uh, dear, uh, I suppose because of having done the first interview, um, which challenged any thoughts or opinions that I had, had on it from before. I have given it a bit more thought. Um, but, um, but I, I think that I feel less clear about it. (Krissy, Interview 2, Lines 13-17)

This was an important point of reflection for the researcher as he questioned whether the social constructionist methodology and therefore his own bias had influenced the participants to begin to construct personal growth through this discourse. An alternative view could be that the researcher had identified the presence of a postmodern discourse in the texts from the first interviews and then brought this to awareness in the subsequent interviews, allowing participants to explore themselves within the discourse further. In some senses this does not matter as reflection and co-construction are also discourse (Parker, 1994). From a Foucauldian perspective, the distinction between researcher and participants is immaterial, with the emphasis on discovering the myriad of competing discourses and creating opportunities for the emergence of subjugated discourses (Foucault, 1972).

The first heading relating to a postmodern discourse explores an interactional understanding of personal growth.

5.5.1 Interactional space between self and others

A discourse was identified throughout the texts in which the creation of personal growth happened through interaction with others. Related to this was the way in which participants used the noticed differences in their relationships with others as a measuring tool to indicate that personal growth had happened. Jane actively attempted to engage friends and family in talk that she felt would be growth inducing. However, for a change to occur in the interactional space, it appeared that both parties need to commit to a change in language practice, which for Jane was not forthcoming. This discourse of personal growth was quite different to the individualistic Rogerian and Psychodynamic discourses in that it appeared to refer to the 'third space' described by Shotter (1997). It appeared that personal growth rather than existing within the person, could only be understood through interaction with others: this is where 'growth' happened and this is where it was noticed.

A further point of interest was that the changes in relating, which were attributed to personal growth by the participants, were not necessarily positive. The identification of this pattern in the texts was in direct contrast to the humanistic philosophy in which people are believed to move towards what is positive and life fulfilling. In particular Rogers' (1961) assertion that personal growth led toward seeing oneself as more

similar to others and more congruent in relation to others was not indicated in the text. Quite in contrast, Krissy described her own personal growth as alienating her from close relatives, whilst Jane expressed a need to behave in a way that was incongruent to her personal growth in order to maintain relationships. The emergence of these discourses will now be further elaborated through analysis of the texts.

J: …is, uh, trying to understand yourself in the process of trying to understand other people. (Jane, Interview 1, lines 281-282)

In this excerpt the objects are understanding, the self, other people, process and trying. The subject positions are the self that is trying to understand the others and its own self, and the others that are the object of the potential understanding. 'Process' and 'trying' appear to be the active objects that could initiate the change; the preceding text indicated that this was happening through talk with friends. Therefore it appears that trying to understand others happens through an active process with the others, likely involving talk, suggesting that the 'understand' object becomes apparent in the interaction between self and other.

G: mmhm, yeah, I find more talking, talking is much more helpful for me.

R: mmm, interacting with others…

G: Interacting with others, you know, I think, it's talking. (Gill, Interview 1, lines 858-861)

Here Gill explicitly links the object of discussion, personal growth, to the use of language. The objects are talk, interactions, self-objects and other objects. 'More helpful' sets up a position in which there is an unspoken 'less helpful' object or objects, which could be assumed to be alternatives discourses of personal growth, e.g. the Rogerian discourse. The discourse of talk as the space in which personal growth is located is clear. Again, talk is a joint activity between people, suggesting that personal growth belongs not to individuals but within an interactional space.

G: I think I've stayed more or less the same. I think very much, I think more like in relation to, to life events and to other people. (Gill, Interview 2, lines 22-23)

This excerpt from the beginning of interview two demonstrates that Gill had retained her earlier position that the concept of personal growth was relationally situated.

G: Yes, for example in relationship, you don't think sometimes much about your personal growth but you see more of the person, you know what's happened but after sometimes you

notice you've changed, you're different… (Gill, Interview 2, lines 305-308)

In this excerpt the objects of interest are represented as relationship, self, other, change and difference. The subject position of the self is seen as knowing in the practical sphere that something has happened, but with the implication that this does not carry significant meaning. The change and difference are positioned as carrying meaning within the relationship. This implies that personal growth can only be meaningfully understood in the interactional space between self and other.

These excerpts provide convincing evidence for the dialogic relational paradigm proposed by Shotter (1997), in that it appears that personal growth is not happening within the individual, but its existence is the result of talk between people. It is the talk that constitutes the idea, and it can only be recognised in relation to others. The following excerpts from Jane also suggest a relational discourse for personal growth as the text emphasises the need for interaction with others for personal growth to happen.

J: …sort of bearing your soul to, to them, bearing their soul to me about what they don't like about me, uh, uh I don't imagine that would uh, but I kind of feel like, oh no, I've got to grow from it, I need to develop…

(Jane, Interview 1, lines 847-849)

This piece of text is a further example of how it appears that the catalyst for personal growth is in interaction with others. A religious discourse is used here and there is a strong sense of the confessional, in which 'souls are bared'. There is a strong link here with Rose's (1990) concept of the governance of souls, in which the psychologicalisation of society became an alternative to earlier methods of governance in which the religious confessional was used to control population. There are two subject positions in this piece of text, the first, which indicates a resistance to the, 'baring of souls', indicated in, 'I don't imagine that would', and the dominant position, which is, 'I've got to', and 'I need to'. The first statement indicates an outside power willing the baring of souls to happen, whilst the second 'internalises' the object, suggesting that it is an 'internal' need to personally grow. This is evidence in action of the conversion of the goals of government into supposed 'individual' goals.

Considering the lack of evidence relating to any 'real' internal sense of personal growth, there is a powerful and potentially oppressive sense to this text. The possibility of oppression is evident in the portions, 'what they don't like about me' and 'feel like, oh no'. It appears that the talk being actively elicited will not be pleasant as evidenced in this subjugated subject position, but it assumed by the dominant voice in the text that the imagined outcome would outweigh the painful process. This appears as evidence for the legitimisation of painful processes in counselling and psychotherapy as described by Fairclough (1989). The location of this powerful discourse that is demanding personal growth at

any cost, is not immediately clear from this piece of text. It could be surmised that the discourse derives from the humanistic view of man, as moving towards what is positive and fulfilling, and further promulgated by the institutions that benefit, i.e. counselling organisations, university courses, the BPS and ultimately policies of government that seek to control population through the platform of the 'individual'.

J: Exactly. Uh, yeah and I remember saying that there was some contexts when, and like people on the course were going through similar discoveries and they were… it would be appropriate and it would be, sort of, there was, it could be welcomed and, and, you, you go into that, sort of, level of conversation that most people outside of that context, you somehow had to realise that even though you might, you know, those friendships you might consider as closer and I had them for longer, just because of the nature of the context of the, it wasn't appropriate. (Jane, Interview 2, lines 874-883)

Continuing with the theme of needing interaction with others in order to elicit personal growth, an extra element of the importance of context arises in this text, as evidenced in the above excerpt. There is a suggestion here of an exclusivity of the personal growth discourse, in which it can only be fruitfully elicited in talk with certain others, in this case other trainee psychologists. The subject positions in the text are those that can (and want) to use this discourse and those who don't

want to (or can't) use the discourse. There appears to be a similarity in the way the medical discourse in medicine keeps the power differential between professional and patient and the way in which the personal growth discourse in Counselling Psychology maintains a power differential between psychologist and client.

Linked to the idea that the concept of personal growth is perhaps not as idealistic as the Rogerian discourse would suggest, is further evidenced in the text relating to the interactional discourse of personal growth. The following texts relate to the outcomes of personal growth found within the interactional discourse.

K: …and truly and that I've got no strength of feeling about it at all any more and in fact I feel very open to him and to his current partner, um, in a way that I didn't before. So even that has changed for me. (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 545-547)

K: …and I am, it's something I do feel strongly about and I am making other people, at least interact with me differently… (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 868-869)

Once again personal growth is recognised through changed interaction with others. In the first excerpt Krissy is referring to her relationship with her ex-husband, with whom her previous interactions had been acrimonious. The change attributed by Krissy to personal growth is

understood within relationship to her ex-husband and his partner, rather than internally.

The second excerpt, similarly relating to the supposed outcomes of personal growth, relate to interactions with others. Once again, personal growth is activated in the interactional relational sphere. Although the object, 'making', suggests one subject acting upon another, the change that is identified is the 'interact', which requires the action of both subjects, but truly belongs to neither.

These appear to be fairly positive ways in which personal growth has been recognised within interaction, however there was also evidence in the text of the interactional discourse of less favourable outcomes.

J: Yeah, and I. Yeah. And there is that kind of (laughs)… you know I thought that because I had it everyone wanted it and everyone sort of wanted to be in this place of having this incredible insight, and yet it was, and it did take learning but that wasn't always what was good for the relationship or friendship or any other relationship in that there was, I kind of faced that and the fact that, you know, I realise now it was a very personal thing…

R: mmm.

J: …and it's just not kind of, universal kind of discovery that you can just make and share. It's just kind of something that…

R: Perhaps it's not appropriate to all contexts.

J: Yeah, exactly.

Here the object of personal growth is represented in the text as, 'incredible insight'. This object is presented as something that can belong to a subject, 'I had it' and as an object of desire, 'everyone wanted it'. However, the subject positions of the others in the text represent a resistance to the discourse. It is through interaction that this resistance is revealed.

It appears that Jane does not wish to identify with the resistance and instead describes personal growth as, 'very personal', which is concordant with the Rogerian discourse of personal growth that appears to be being represented, but also as, 'not universal', which is discordant with the discourse. This is the kind of contradiction, where opposing discourses are used to describe the same object that Parker (1992) suggests elucidating in Foucauldian analysis. This aside, this excerpt demonstrates the existence of personal growth as an object between people, and as a transitional space in which power and resistance can be played out.

K: ..um, but its, its, but I am now thinking and behaving in a different way and that actually what its done is created its own problems, that sort of where I was more synchronised with the way she thought and acted, that now I've got a different opinion

and a different view and that that actually brings with it its own problems and so its, there's no nirvana… (Krissy, Interview 3, lines 110-115)

Here, Krissy has also noticed the outcome of personal growth in her interaction with others, specifically in the relationship with her sister. Careful not to fall into the trap of misplaced concreteness (Gergen, 1999), the objects, 'thinking', 'behaving', 'opinion', 'view', are represented as having particular properties in a prior place and time (understood to be before the outcome of personal growth). These objects are represented, as a result of personal growth, to have different properties that no longer, 'synchronise' with the other. It is in the interactional space that the difference can be noticed; Krissy would not be able to have represented personal growth in this way without the existence of the other (sister). This excerpt also suggests that the outcome of personal growth is counter to the Rogerian discourse, instead represented as, 'no nirvana' and 'different'.

5.5.2 Context dependent

Closely related to the interactional discourse, there was evidence throughout the text, of the understanding of personal growth being linked to context. This fits with an overarching postmodern discourse in that objects (personal growth in this case) are defined by their current contextual situation, rather than through defining characteristics that belong to the object itself giving it an external reality.

J: …I think, yeah there's a kind of base kind of um person but um, you're always going to be having to fulfil different roles and at times…

R: Yeah.

J: …that's pulling out a different identity, like when I um, with my parents I will always slightly change…

R: mmm.

J: …in being their daughter. (Jane, Interview 1, lines 910-917)

As with much of the text from Jane's interview transcripts there are two competing discourses evident in this excerpt. An essentialist discourse, within which the humanistic discourse is located, in which there is a, 'base' person is juxtaposed with a postmodern discourse in which, 'different identities' emerge dependent upon time and context. Free association with the word, 'roles', in the initial analysis conjured up other words such as 'actor' and 'pretend'. It appears that the picture of the world that this particular piece of text presents, is one in which there is a 'real' self, underlying and directing a number of acted out selves or identities that can be called upon depending on the context. The problem with this is how to identify which is the 'real' self and which are the identities, i.e. this picture of the world falls neatly into the dualist trap. Gergen (1999) describes this as the problem in dualism of causality, how can we ever know which part of the mind is acting on the other, and therefore which part represents the real self?

An interactional basis for identity is also presented in this text, in which the self, 'I', changes as a result of the interaction with the others, 'parents'. Therefore perhaps a more convincing argument than an internal agentic self, choosing between identities, is the possibility that the emergent identity is created within and only exists in the interactional space, meaningful only within these parameters. The following text also represents personal growth as being relational.

G: Yeah, I think it changes, it changes due, depends on the circumstances…

R: mmm.

G: …I think everything relies, when you look at the past, depends on how you feel in the present I think…

R: Yeah.

G: …you know, regarding how you feel and you know tracking your past (unclear) depend on your present as well.

R: Absolutely, so you choose to…

G: And you can change the, the, the way you see it, very much. (Gill, Interview 2, 232-241)

In this excerpt Gill's talk was focused on how in the first interview she had felt that the outcome of personal growth was a, 'happy ending', in being accepted onto a Counselling Psychology course, but having completed the course by the time of the second interview and remaining unemployed this discourse was now redundant.

The context referred to is time and 'past' and 'present' are represented in this text not as fixed entities with concrete realities but instead as ever changing and flowing. The essentialist and contextual discourses are evident in this text, with the object, personal growth, presented as being dependent on, 'circumstances' (contextual), but there is also a sense of agency indicated in the statement, 'you can change the way you see it' (essentialist). However, in both cases the object is not seen as fixed and importantly not as necessarily moving towards what is fulfilling or through a hierarchy. The picture of the world this text presents is one in which the object (personal growth) is multi-directional.

5.5.3 Emergence of Postmodern discourse

Looking at patterns across the texts from the three interviews, there were some clear differences in the dominance of the postmodern discourse of personal growth among the three participants. As the preceding excerpts have demonstrated, the postmodern discourse was dominant throughout the text of all three of Gill's interviews. There were far more explicit references to the postmodern discourse throughout the texts from Krissy's interviews, than for the other two participants. However, unlike Gill, there was a strong resisting discourse to counteract the postmodern discourse, in Krissy's text. The reductionist and essentialist discourses were most apparent in Jane's texts, and it appeared that the emergence of a postmodern discourse was largely through the process of co-construction with the researcher. These

patterns will be looked at in more detail in order to demonstrate the ebb and flow of the dominance of discourses in the text over the three interview times and also to identify resistance within the postmodern discourse of personal growth.

K: So, and in some ways, and this is a about, kind of feeling, and this is a, sort of, uh, postmodernist stuff and in a nihilistic sense, that actually it doesn't really matter… (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 826-828)

The initial free association with this piece of text resulted in the word, 'nihilistic' being associated with void and meaninglessness and, 'matter' being associated with the idea of the physical particles that physicists tell us that make up the world. Referring to personal growth then, the text is suggesting it doesn't exist; 'doesn't (isn't) matter' and that something without matter cannot have meaning.

K: …about this personal growth, uh, and in a way, if I suppose, what I think about that is that, in one way I'm questioning now is it a myth anyway…

R: mmm.

K: …you know, it doesn't exist, so it's, it's a myth.

R: Or a construction rather than a reality…

K: …than something that actually happens, um, but that if, if you haven't got that then there's no meaning to it…

R: mmm.

K: ...and if there's no meaning to it how does that, we have no, no sense of there being any meaning to it, that doesn't strike me as a helpful state of mind. (Krissy, Interview 2, lines 83-92)

Continuing with the discourse from interview one, Krissy's text again represents the object of personal growth, as having no reality, 'a myth'. The world that this discourse is representing is one in which if things do not have a concrete reality, that they then become meaningless. There are two opposing subject positions in the text, the one that regards personal growth as meaningless and a second resistant position in which the former is seen, '(not) as a helpful state of mind'. This position suggests an alternative helpful state of mind, which would be to reject the first position. This is a textual representation of criticisms of postmodernism in the literature, where it is seen as presenting a nihilistic view of the world (e.g. Derrida, 1980).

The text from the researcher in this excerpt provides a third subject position, in which a world without concrete realities is not necessarily meaningless. The word, 'construction', as a counterpoise to, 'myth', appears to be suggesting that stripping personal growth of a physical reality does not necessarily result in meaninglessness. Construction resonates with structure and building and an existence at some level that myth does not. It is the researchers contention that this existence is contained in language.

K: mmm. Yeah, I think in a way, uh, uh, uh, to say that, well I, I suppose that's a sort of, truism isn't it, sort of somehow there's two aspects to everything and that, um, what postmodernism at it's best does is creates possibilities… (Krissy, Interview 3, lines 221-224)

This perhaps demonstrates an aspect of co-construction within the totality of the texts. Here the object of postmodernism is represented as presenting, 'possibilities', which is the object that was being assigned to it by the researcher in the previous excerpt by representing it as 'construction' rather than 'myth'. It is not to suggest that any of these representations belong to the researcher or participant, rather that they are constructions that are available and may or may not be represented in text. However, it could be an indication of the co-construction process that the dominance of the nihilistic discourse of postmodernism in the earlier interviews was counterpoised with an alternative possibilities discourse in the final interview. Co-construction also appeared to have an impact on the representation of the postmodern discourse in the texts from Jane's interviews.

J: …kind of like, I took comfort in the fact that there's a definite yes or a definite no and a definite way of thinking about something and um, and I think I did have the other side as well, but I never kind of, yeah I was always a bit scared to kind of go down that route more… (Jane, Interview 2, lines 422-426)

In this excerpt Jane is referring to her previous reductionist view of the world emanating from her undergraduate days. Interestingly there appeared to be a parallel process in which Jane described personal growth as a move from a reductionist view toward a postmodern view, which was reflected in the changing dominance of the two discourses throughout the texts, with the postmodern discourse becoming more apparent as a resistant discourse to the dominant reductionist discourse as the research progressed.

J: …uh, but I don't think I'm, I'm definitely not at the kind of, feeling that it's chemical, bringing it down to kind of um, neurons fired, so…

R: mmm.

J: …stage, but um, I'm not, I am still, yeah, I'm not yet fully convinced about these things.

R: Sure, so you're not radically postmodern either.

J: No, exactly, um and I guess at different times I might waiver a bit in the middle, but I'm, no. (Jane, Interview 3, lines 118-126)

Here the text is still referring to the object, personal growth, and it is positioned as not being located in, 'chemicals' and 'neurons firing', therefore it is not represented in the reductionist discourse. There are two subject positions in relation to this, 'I don't think I'm' and 'I'm definitely not'; the former provides power for the reductionist argument

by opening up the space for uncertainty, whilst the second closes this off. The part of the text, 'I'm not yet fully convinced', could suggest that there is an unspoken object that is trying to convince. It is possible that this could be the talk of the researcher, as the postmodern discourse was introduced throughout the process of research.

This piece of text also demonstrates the way in which discourses can fold into themselves. At the surface level Jane is questioning whether her view of personal growth is better allied to a reductionist or postmodern view. However, the text, 'waiver a bit in the middle' and 'differing times', paints a picture of the world in which 'realities' can change with time and that it is possible to waiver between these 'realities' not fully subscribing to either. This reference to a space existing between 'realities' resonates with the social constructionist view of Shotter (1997). Therefore the discourse that is questioning the postmodern discourse of personal growth is postmodern itself.

The preceding excerpts and discussion provide an exposition of the postmodern discourse of personal growth. This was evidenced both in explicit talk of postmodernism and implicit examples of the postmodern discourse within the texts. The text reveals a strong argument for the existence of personal growth, not within individuals, but in the interactional space between people, i.e. in talk. Furthermore it appears that the concept does not follow a particular pattern or hierarchy, rather it

changes and mutates depending on the context in terms of place, people and time.

5.6 Discipline discourse

The researcher 'borrowed' the title for this discourse from Foucault's (1977) work, 'Discipline and Punish'. Foucault (1977) describes the "panoptican", a prison design by Bentham in the 19th Century. The panoptican is composed of a central observation tower from which the wings extend, allowing constant observation of prisoners in the cells by the supervisor. This maintains a power relation, as the prisoners are aware that their behaviour can be observed and indiscretions will be punished. This negates the need for overt forms of power such as chains, as prisoners regulate their own behaviour. Foucault (1977) argued that panopticism related to wider mechanisms of power in modern life. Rose (1989, 1996) has developed these ideas further in his exposition of 'individualism' as a platform for the control of population through consent rather than coercion. These ideas were explored in detail in the literature review section.

There was a pattern throughout the texts for all three participants of an external power that appeared to be willing them through the 'process' of personal growth. These underlying machinations of power resonated with Foucault's (1979) definition of government, which is described as an assemblage of procedures, reflections and tactics that form a complex form of power. The personal growth discourse in its humanistic guise

certainly sells the idea of the possibility of self-realisation to the 'individual'. The discipline discourse identified in the texts locates personal growth as a possible technology of government, which imposes power through the aspirations of the 'individual'.

The identification of machinations of power being realised through the concept of personal growth will initially be explored by the exposition of representations in the text of personal growth as compulsory and the representation of personal growth as a painful process. Following this will be indications of how this is linked to institutions and finally how the object of personal therapy was represented in the texts, as it is understood as an institutional requirement for Counselling Psychology courses.

5.6.1 Compulsory Personal Growth

In direct opposition to the Rogerian model in which persons grow toward self-actualisation and self-fulfilment, through the non-directive attitudes of the therapist of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1957), there were representations in the text of personal growth as a forced and compulsory aspect of Counselling Psychology training.

J: Yeah, absolutely but I don't think its, its ever felt like a choice. I've felt like I've had to do it at certain times. (Jane, Interview 1, lines 943-944)

In this excerpt the object being referred to, personal growth, is represented in, 'do it' (personally grow). 'It's (n)ever felt like a choice' and 'I've had to do it' refer to an external object that is exerting power upon the subject in the text. This object remains unidentified and has resonance with Foucault's (1977) panoptican; it is forcing the subject to behave in certain ways, i.e. grow personally, without obvious coercion. There is evidence in the text of possible resistance to this power in the two ways the subject is positioned in relation to the power, 'ever felt' and 'certain times'. The former object suggests a total submission to the powerful object, whilst the second opens up the possibility of a space in which the control is not total.

J: Yeah, I mean, I, yeah. I think it's also, oh I don't know, my level of, my level of awareness as well, 'cos I think, I, I mean I was, kind of, reluctant and I was wanting to avoid and things but at the same time I did sign up for this course and I could've gone down a different career and I could've…

R: mmm.

J: …but I think there was another, kind of, maybe uh, sub-conscious kind of drive that was saying, well actually I do want to express this and finally when I was, kind of, thrown in it, it was given this opportunity and I had to do it, but that was the only option really… (Jane, Interview 2, lines 448-458)

The object being referred to in this text is, 'self-awareness'; the traditional literature on personal growth suggests that an increase in self-awareness or self-knowledge is an important aspect of personal growth (e.g. Donati and Watts, 1999). The reference in the text to, 'level of' in relation to awareness suggests a hierarchy or moving toward a higher state, which immediately adds a value label to the object. It is assumed that higher levels of awareness are to be sought after. Therefore the power of the external object is exerted in the imagined space where the subject can move up levels of awareness. From a Foucauldian perspective there are no hidden depths or hierarchies to be discovered (Foucault, 1977). The object of self-awareness when viewed as being located in the discursive sphere becomes non-hierarchical, rather as different ways of speaking. Therefore, to legitimise a 'process' on the basis of increased self-awareness at best becomes meaningless and at worst oppressive.

There is a subject position of potential resistance in the text represented as 'reluctant', and 'wanting to avoid', however this remains subjugated in two ways. Firstly the object, 'sign up', resonates with ideas of contracts and the giving away of rights, whilst, 'for this course' links the giving away of rights to an institution. These objects are represented in such a way that resistance is stripped of the possibility of action. This is further emphasised in the representation of, 'I could've', linked to, 'another career', indicating the only opportunity for resistance would be

for the subject to be removed in entirety from the institution, resistance within is not a possibility.

The second way in which the resistance to 'self-awareness' is subjugated in the text is in the appearance of a psychodynamic discourse. The subject position is tentative, 'kind of', 'maybe uh', in raising the object, 'unconscious drive'. This appears in the text, as a justification of the subject doing things that want to be avoided, but is a silent and assumed subject position outside 'awareness'. This resonates with the work of Rose (1996), in which individuals behave in certain ways as a result of covert forms of power, but attribute the decision to their own 'internal processes'. The existence of an 'unconscious drive' is a construct that is widely criticised within the field of psychology and even questioned within psychodynamic quarters (e.g. Casement, 1985), but in this piece of text is given an external 'reality' in order to justify engagement in an unwanted 'process'.

A further indication of a powerful force in the text is represented by, 'thrown in it'. This begs the question, thrown into what and by whom? It could be surmised from the preceding text that it is the process of self-awareness that the object is being thrown into, and perhaps the whom represents the institution that was signed up to. The powerlessness of the subject position is further represented in the text as, 'I had to do it', and 'the only option', and the potential sense of agency represented in the earlier resistant objects is lost.

K: …but it wasn't uh, um, it's a tough environment, you know, you, you sink or you swim there.

R: Yeah. So, in a way, it's not something, it, it's interesting isn't it 'cos on one side you're saying if you put the plant in the ground it will grow anyway…

K: mmm.

R: …if you add the water but in the other way you're saying it's a kind of a difficult process…

K: mmm.

R: …which is…

K: It's…

R: …it's involved, after you…

K: …there's something forcing…

R: …an active agent…

K: mmm. (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 259-273)

Free association with 'tough environment' immediately brought to mind the Rogerian idea of the 'nurturing environment'. Here the object of personal growth is represented as occurring in unfavourable and uncomfortable climes in direct contrast to the Rogerian discourse of growth. The representations of power in the text are evident in, 'you sink', 'you swim' and 'something forcing'. Once again the subject position is powerless, sinking suggesting in the final analysis, death, and swimming suggesting going along with tide, keeping afloat. 'Something

forcing' directly refers to a powerful force, but again the object creating the force remains unnamed and covert.

This excerpt is also an example of co-construction demonstrated in the way in which the researcher brings attention to the way in which two opposing discourses are being used to describe the same object, in this case the Rogerian and the discipline discourses. Rather than attempting to lead the participant, the goal was to highlight the discordance in order that the participant and researcher could explore the discourses further.

Following from the representation of personal growth as something that is imposed by a powerful other object, was the representation in the text of personal growth as painful.

5.6.2 Pain and Personal Growth

J: Because it felt like such a personal journey, because it did feel like a struggle at times and it did feel like blood, sweat and tears went into it and I think that, that must add to that, kind of, sense of desiring achievement… (Jane, Interview 2, lines 580-583)

The 'it' in this excerpt is the personal growth object and the objects referring to it are, 'personal', and 'journey', suggesting an 'individual' self-object that is moving through space and time to a particular end. The 'journey' metaphor resonates with the humanistic discourse, rather than a random ordering this picture of the world suggests that personal

growth is moving towards something. Initial free-association with the words, 'blood', 'sweat', and 'tears', led the researcher to think of bodily fluids, pain, injury, damage, physical exertion and emotional hurt. Of course, 'blood, sweat and tears' is a fairly common saying in the English language, with potential shared meanings of something that was difficult or hard work.

This piece of text also resonates strongly with other outside texts, in particular films and books that present the power of human endeavour to overcome pain and adversity for ultimate achievement. This implicit reference to outside texts is inviting the reader to understand the experience of personal growth in a particular way. Personal growth is presented as a painful process, but is justified by the rewards.

K: I would say that my metaphor for my self, personal growth, personal development has been like being a piece of steak that is hit with a steak hammer and is sort of punctured and bloodied but is tenderised…

(Krissy, Interview 2, lines 127-129)

In this excerpt the use of metaphor allows the discourse to reflect on its own way of speaking, with the 'I' and 'my self' presented as two subject positions, one commenting upon the other. The reference to pain in this excerpt could not be any more explicit; personal growth is represented as a 'process', in which a powerful physical force, 'steak hammer', exerts itself on the self-object, 'being a piece of steak', in a way that causes

damage, 'punctured and bloodied'. Similarly to the preceding excerpt, however, the self-object as, 'tenderised' provides representation as the end being worth the means. However, the object, 'tenderised', could also be understood as being more malleable and open to influence, which could be conceived of as a more suitable platform for the enactment of power as described by Rose (1996).

G: …but you know, it, it's such a big change for me, I, I thought it was just abnormal to be worried and stressed on the course, but, it sounds really funny, but for me it was a big, big change to accept that I think its alright to be stressed with something like, normal, yeah. (Gill, Interview 2, lines 766-770)

G: …but thinking, but yeah, it's just very stressful, it wouldn't cross my mind that I'd get that stressed that I'd have heart palpitations… (Gill, Interview 2, lines 795-797)

In common to the previous excerpts, these pieces of text represent personal growth and more generally the Counselling Psychology course being related to the objects, 'worried', 'stressed', 'very stressful' and 'heart palpitations'. There are two self-subject positions in the text, one located in the past that represents the levels of stress as, 'abnormal' and 'wouldn't have crossed my mind', and a current subject position in which this is represented as, 'normal' and 'alright'. There is also a third subject position, which represents how an outside observer might respond to the

picture of the world presented in the text, evident in, 'sounds really funny'. Funny can be associated with either amusing or odd and in this case appears as a resistant discourse to the second self-subject position, an acknowledgement that the, 'stress' and 'worried' objects are not perhaps justified.

The, 'change', and 'big change' appear to represent a move from the first self-subject position to the second. It could be argued that the enactment of power through some means has enabled this, with the word, 'accept' indicating submission to the position that the painful objects are, 'normal' and 'alright'.

These excerpts suggest that in addition to personal growth being compulsory it is also a painful process. There is a pervading sense through the texts of a, "no pain, no gain" discourse in which the pain represented is justified by the perceived end. There is a sense then, of a humanistic discourse undercurrent, which promises self-fulfilment.

Also evident throughout these texts is discourse relating to power, which is enacted through the willing participation in practices that are understood to be painful. As Foucault (1977) describes the source of power is not easily identifiable because it is made up of various assemblages and techniques, rather than being located with a specific person, organisation or government. In an attempt to locate the source

or sources of power, a good place to begin is the institutions that stand to gain from the employment of a particular discourse (Parker, 1992).

5.7 Institutions discourse

There were multiple references throughout the text to the 'course' and to 'the university', in relation to the obligation of personal growth. As a student at the university to which the participants are referring, the researcher is not aware of any course requirements to engage in activities that are as painful as the preceding excerpts suggest; the underlying machinations of power are likely to be more covert and enacted through multiple means. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the growth of the therapist is explicit and implicit in the humanistic framework of Counselling Psychology, giving the discourse a power beyond the stretch of individual institutions.

J: Yeah. I, I think I would still stand by that and I know what I was saying and it was important to me to feel that the, the institution was able to grant me permission to get that identity, to take that kind of, um, label…

R: Yeah.

J: …as I had, it was important to me personally to feel that they were of good enough quality to kind of set me up as a Counselling Psychologist I think. It had to be, yeah I suppose it's, sort of thinking, but they had to be powerful enough to kind, I had acknowledged them as, kind of, expert enough or powerful

enough to be able to, to, to grant me a degree of that kind. (Jane, Interview 2, lines 625-635)

Here the link between institution, in this case the university, and power is made explicit. Similar to the earlier excerpt under the context dependent heading, there is evidence of a essentialist agentic self, 'I know what I was saying', 'important for me', and also of a constructed self, evidenced in the objects, 'identity' and 'label'. The power linkage between the institution and the construction of identity is represented in, 'grant me', 'permission' and 'set me up'. There is also a link between power and perceived expertise, as the institution is viewed as 'expert enough', suggesting that the power assigned to the university emanates from expert knowledge.

According to Foucault what we call, 'knowledge', is a particular construction or version of a phenomenon that has received the stamp of 'truth' in our society and that this is intimately bound up with power. Furthermore what it is possible for one person to do to another, under what rights and obligations, is given by the version of events currently taken as knowledge. Therefore for Foucault knowledge is power over others, specifically the power to define others (Burr, 1995). This is enacted in the preceding piece of text, as the university is represented as being, 'expert enough', i.e. it confirms and promulgates versions of knowledge that fit with current cultural conceptions of 'truth', to define Jane as a Counselling Psychologist. The, 'label' or 'identity', Counselling

Psychologist confers a right to act on others in certain ways, e.g. in the therapy room, but also carries obligations, e.g. adhering to certain standards and guidelines. Allying a personal identity to an institution is to also ally the identity to knowledge, therefore bestowing the identity with power to act upon and define others.

J: …as perhaps the, kind of, bigger, the next step up, kind of…

R: Sure.

J: …from the course and the fact that you know, it was kind of filtered down from them and they'd said the course was OK, and because I've done the course that the BPS has said was of a good standard…

R: Yeah.

J: …then it was OK. So, yeah, um, it didn't have to be the university but I think I would have needed it from the BPS if the university wasn't there really, would have sought it from somewhere. (Jane, Interview 2, lines 650-660)

A second institution is identified in this text: the BPS. The objects, 'bigger', and 'next step up', assign the BPS with a higher status than the university in terms of a hierarchy of power. The BPS represents a governing body that explicitly tells its members their rights and obligations. The subject position of Jane in the text is in submission to the institution, from which permission is sought, 'needed it', to carry a particular identity, that of a Counselling Psychologist. The allegiance of

identity to the institution again carries with it the right to exercise power, within the practices that are linked to the particular kind of knowledge that the BPS represents. In the case of the Counselling Psychology division the overarching humanistic philosophy presents 'self-actualisation' as a particular 'common sense' view of the world. The promulgation of this particular type of knowledge or 'truth' about the world carries with it practices, such as therapies. This links back into the idea that painful processes can be justified because they are intimately linked to the institutions for whom maintaining this knowledge and particular view of the world can benefit.

K: …so, if you choose to stay there in fact you are buying into what's, the goods that are on offer. Because the goods that are on offer is you get, you do your part in the bargain, you get the work, um, coursework in that you're meant to do. Then they will confer on you the award that you want… (Krissy, Interview 2, lines 746-749)

This final excerpt links power, institutions and economics. 'Buying' appears to be a purely economic discourse, whilst 'buying into' links economics to a value system. The first economic discourse simply suggests a contract, in which the subject in the text fulfils criteria, 'the work', 'coursework', in order to receive, 'the goods', 'the reward'. The power differential is clear; the subject is required to meet the criteria, whilst the institution has the power to 'confer' the reward. The second discourse apparently relates to 'buying into' a belief or value system that

suggests a more complex form of bargain than simply completing tasks in return for desired goods.

It appears that, similar to the texts from Jane's interview explored above, there is an explicit link to identity and the institution and therefore the institutional guidelines and codes of practice that must be adhered to. The word 'into' suggests, becoming an integral part of, or being subsumed by a powerful larger other. Along with guidelines etc. the institution promulgates certain kinds of knowledge and 'sells' them as truth and in doing so becomes a vehicle for ideology.

In the case of Counselling Psychology, and particularly relevant to this research is the particular form of knowledge that sells self-actualisation and personal growth as truths. The Marxist view of ideology is that it is a weapon that can be used for social interests, and that versions of truth are always linked to economic interests. Marx suggested that psychology was a way in which the powerful kept workers in their position by numbing them to an alternative 'reality', which would inevitably lead to their overthrowing the state (Furedi, 2004). This links to the Foucauldian view in which the psychologicalisation of society has distracted communities from taking positive social action and challenging governmental practices, through the myth of the 'individual' where he or she is too busy with self-improvement etc. to notice the pervasive disempowerment (Rose, 1996). From a Marxist perspective this distraction is fuelled by consumerism, where 'individuals' are presented

with an array of 'choices', products and services that will help them toward ultimate goal of personal happiness (Rose, 1996).

The appearance of a discipline discourse throughout the texts has provided an alternative view of personal growth to those represented by traditional psychological discourses, such as the humanistic discourse. There is evidence in the text that the concept of personal growth is represented in discourse as forced and compulsory. In addition there is also evidence that this is a painful 'process'. Rogers (1961) did assert that the road to self-actualisation was not necessary a pain free journey, but one in which the rewards of congruence to self and relating legitimised the difficulties. The discourse of, 'no pain, no gain', was evident in the texts as justification for what was viewed as a sometimes painful process. Additionally the psychodynamic discourse appeared as a tool for the justification of engaging in unwanted processes, under the guise of the 'unconscious'.

The powerful force that was evident in carrying out practices that were unwanted or painful was then linked to institutions. The maintenance of power by these institutions was linked to the promulgation of certain types of knowledge about the world, from which the institutions benefit. It was argued that the concept of personal growth, linked to the humanistic discourse, encouraged certain practices that maintained institutional power, also linked to economic production. Relating to this there was evidence in the text of the outcome of personal growth being

represented as changes in identity. Linking to Foucault's (1977) claims that certain discourses conferred rights to act on others in certain ways, whilst allowing others to be acted upon, there was evidence in the text of the newly constructed identities, represented as a result of personal growth, providing an entitlement to behave in certain ways.

5.8 Entitlement discourse

Having identified the way in which participant's identities were to some extent linked to institutional practices and the particular forms of knowledge that served to promote said institutions, the researcher questioned whether this synthesis conferred rights on the participants in terms of ways of acting upon others. In Foucauldian terms this could be understood as the synthesis of a particular discourse into identity, translating into particular ways of acting and behaving, which serve to make the participants become agents of the institution in terms of the promulgation of certain technologies and ways of understanding the world. Understanding this using Rogerian terminology would translate to having achieved the personal growth element of the course, did this confer power over those who have not, e.g. clients?

5.8.1 Acknowledgement

J: The same outcome, yeah. So there's the, when I'm acknowledging the, the kind of professional status or the kind of, yeah, sort of carrying the professional title and having that and feeling that, well yeah, I actually do deserve that because of

everything I've gone through.

R: Yeah.

J: And that, then I guess slowly sort of becoming, it's sort of assimilated into my view of myself, as my, sort of identity… (Jane, Interview 3, Lines 231-238)

The first objects of interest in this excerpt are, 'professional', 'status' and 'title'. The object, 'professional' links identity with a profession and to profess is understood as a subject promulgating certain types of knowledge that are linked to the profession, which can also be understood in Foucauldian terms to be an institution. Therefore it becomes integral to the subject identity to engage in the particular types of discourse that promote the interests of said institution or institutions. The word, 'title', in practical terms links the identity with the profession, in order that outside observers to the text would recognise the individual as carrying a particular identity. It also links with the word, 'status', which carries added value-based meanings relating to hierarchies and position in society. The implicit message is that certain subject statuses carry more power than others and therefore the discourses that are represented within this subject status wield more power to be understood as 'truths'.

The justification for carrying this elevated subject status and the power that this confers is represented in the text as, 'because of everything I've gone through'. This could be referring to the practical sphere of

completing the necessary tasks in terms of coursework. However, looking at patterns across the entirety of the texts, it appears to be referring to the 'personal' effort that was involved, represented as the personal growth element.

> *I don't doubt that I could have done it better, but I don't think I could have done it more personally… (Jane, Interview 2, lines 598-599)*

Therefore disciplining the 'self' to 'self-understand' in certain ways through the linking of forms of knowledge into identity is represented as conferring on the subject an entitlement to an elevated status. This identity, so intertwined with the dominant discourses that needed to be, 'carried', in order to achieve the status, becomes part of the institution thus limiting opportunity for the emergence of subjugated resistant discourses that do not serve the interests of the institution. The immersion of the subject identity into the dominant discourse is evident in the comparison of self-objects relating to past, 'becoming', 'carrying', and those relating to the current, 'assimilated', 'view of myself'.

5.8.2 Position in relation to others

There was evidence in the text that as participants became emerged in discourses relating to personal growth, that this conferred upon them the right or entitlement to engage in particular types of talk with significant others. This links with Wickland and Eckert's (1992) assertion that the supposed outcomes of 'self-awareness', 'self-actualisation' or having

moved toward the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, could lead to negative characteristics including detachment from others and a sense of an elevated psychological status through the supposed acquisition of constructs such as wisdom, autonomy and humility. Resistant discourses to the entitlement discourse were evident, in particular within Krissy's texts. Evidence for an entitlement discourse relating to others and the concomitant resistant discourses will now be explored further.

J: …kind of understanding me and sort of trying to understand them more and, and um, so they're suddenly being asked, you know, so my ninety-year-old grandmother suddenly being asked about, you know, her time as a teenager and its…

R: Right (laughs).

J: (laughs) …she finds it quite curious, but uh, but they kind of get on with it and they're quite willing and I think um, so that's my sort of, relationships with them of. I, I think I've (meaning they've?) probably benefited from, from my sort of personal growth um … (Jane, Interview 1, lines 765-774)

The objects in this text of, 'understanding me, 'understanding them' and 'relationships with them', resonate with the earlier discussed discourse of personal growth occurring through interaction with others. The 'understanding' object is positioned between, 'me', and 'them', but belonging to neither, i.e. it exists in the language in the interactional space. The subjects being referred to in the text are, 'ninety year old

grandmother', 'the I subject', and the researcher, evident in 'you know'. The object, 'suddenly', suggests a shock or unexpected event, whilst, 'being asked', represents a request or demand on the 'grandmother' subject in the text. In the initial free association with this piece of text the researcher considered that a, 'respect your elders', discourse could be an unspoken opposing discourse that would not include shocking requests to a ninety year old grandmother. In this way it seems that the discourse of personal growth excludes such discourses, instead entitling persons to speak in 'personal' ways to the older generation. This is not to suggest that one discourse should be the preferred discourse in such situations.

The objects attributed to the Grandmother subject in the text are 'quite curious', 'get on with it' and 'quite willing'. 'Curious' can be understood in a number of ways, including as something interesting or something strange. The understanding of the researcher, based on his own cultural bias and experience of talk of this generation, would suggest the latter. The second two objects are not represented as wholly affirmative to the request, instead bestowing on the 'Grandmother' object certain acquiescence. It appears that the power of the personal growth discourse is evident in the entitlement it brings the first subject to insist that the second subject acquiesce to its demands.

A final interesting point in this text is the final sentence, in which 'they' assumed to be 'Grandmother' and other family members are positioned

as having, 'benefited', from the personal growth discourse. However the objects relating to the benefit are all attributed to the self-subject, 'I', 'I think', 'my', rather than indications that benefit objects emanated from the subjects themselves. It appears that representation of the discourse has revealed itself through it s own constructive properties beyond the 'intention' of the speaker.

The following two excerpts explore the entitlement discourse in relation to client work.

G: More freedom, you know.

R: Yeah.

G: Able to, not to be nice really… (Gill, Interview 1, 763-765)

G: I cannot make them happy, you know, I'm not able to do it and I don't feel bad about this… (Gill, Interview 1, 781-782)

'More freedom' in this excerpt is represented as an outcome of personal growth. This object links with a humanistic discourse in which higher stages of actualisation relate to personal dimensions, one of which is autonomy. As explored in the literature review section Wallach and Wallach (1983) criticise the self-actualisation models for the dichotomy apparent in the assertion that through this process individuals become 'asocial' through autonomy, yet are proposed to relate better. This dichotomy is evident in this text: having reached a level of autonomy or

freedom is translated into a representation of the entitlement discourse in which it is no longer necessary to, 'be nice' to clients.

The representation of the entitlement discourse in the text from Gill's transcripts are represented in an unabashed style, 'I don't feel bad about this', however this was not the case in the text from the other two participants. For the researcher this was a difficult discourse to bring back to the table in the second and third interviews. Despite assurances that the discourse was already in existence and was contained in language rather than the individual, there was a sense that participants felt somewhat criticised, whilst the researcher felt critical. It is perhaps not surprising given that the dominant discourses, in the shared understanding of the world by participants and researcher, represent individuals as having agency and therefore objects such as, 'feeling' and 'criticism' are attributed to self.

5.8.3 Objections and resistance

This first excerpt demonstrates Jane's 'reaction' to the exposition of an entitlement discourse in the earlier text.

R: Are the difficulties talked of earlier, the treading of water, the sink or swim part of the justification of a sense of entitlement to a more powerful position?

J: Yeah, yes, I suppose it does, I suppose it does because, it's horrible reading that, it horrible reading the fact that I was sitting

there going, 'I deserve this', and kind of, 'I've done the work and I, I'... (Jane, Interview 2, lines 552-559)

Here, the researcher refers back to the objects that appeared earlier in the text that were related to the 'personal growth as painful' discourse and makes a tentative link to a possible entitlement discourse in which the subject is represented as having the power to act in certain ways over others. Jane acknowledges this link between the discourses. The entitlement discourse is then linked to the object, 'horrible', in the text and also to the past self-subject.

Although this caused some discomfort for Jane, this is a good example of the way in which discourse analysis can emancipate subjugated discourses. Although the link between the entitlement discourse and a humanistic discourse is clear in the texts, it is likely to be subjugated because it does not present a picture of the world that is congruent with the dominant 'message' that the humanistic discourse would want to present. The institutions that stand to benefit from the dominant humanistic discourse, would not benefit from a discourse that contained representations of power difference and the rights of some to act on others.

As Foucault (1979) asserted, the emancipation of subjugated discourses enable the possibility for societal change as 'common sense' understandings of the world begin to be questioned. The opportunity for

action was made possible by Jane's ability to recognise the subjugated discourse in the text, for Krissy this was resisted. The following excerpt provides a context for the later resistance towards an entitlement discourse in the text from Krissy's transcripts.

> *K: I suppose personal growth, sort of, developing and evolving um, having more, um, knowledge, more expertise, um, uh, actually the word wisdom comes into my mind, I don't if it's OK, not that I'm asking your permission, but I'm not sure if it's OK, if wisdom, I think it's the right word. (Krissy, Interview 1, lines 73-77)*

Here the object of personal growth is represented within developmental and evolutionary discourses, both of which imply an upward hierarchical movement towards more competent or better adapted functioning. This representation of the objects is demonstrated in the text in the appearance of the objects, 'more… knowledge', and 'more expertise'. As explored earlier the Foucauldian views knowledge as inextricably bound to power (Foucault, 1977), whilst to be an expert confers rights to convey particular forms of knowledge. Rose (1996) suggests that the authority of authority depends on a claim to wisdom and virtue. The object of 'wisdom' tentatively appears in the text in relation to the 'more… knowledge' and 'more expertise' objects, and as an 'outcome' of personal growth. It was in this relation between objects that the researcher linked 'wisdom', as it was represented in the text, to the notion of power and rights to act upon others.

R: …wisdom itself can be described as, um, again if I, as a psychologist we're saying we have wisdom and the client by default doesn't have wisdom. It, it's furnishing us with a certain power over the…

K: Yes, and I wouldn't want to say that…

R: Yeah.

K: …I think because that's not what I believe.

R: Absolutely. (Krissy, Interview 2, lines 360-366)

In this excerpt the researcher was attempting to link the object of wisdom to notions of power. This is rejected as Krissy regards the objects as self-objects, specifically as her beliefs. Reflecting on this piece of text it appears there is a clash between the critical psychology approach being employed by the researcher and the traditional view indicated in Krissy's talk. Viewing the question from a traditional view could be construed as being quite challenging, in that the researcher would be suggesting that Krissy, with agency is exerting power over others. However, from a Foucauldian discourse analytic approach power does not 'belong' to 'individuals' but exists in language, people are constructed within discourses. It could be that the researcher did not adequately describe this, meaning that further co-construction of this particular discourse was halted. Equally it is possible that the unavoidably biased and political reading of the texts by the researcher, created a discourse of entitlement that was not there. As social constructionism also needs to regard itself

as a particular version of 'reality', it cannot claim any special dispensations for claims to 'truth'.

Despite this, there does appear in the text a convincing argument for a discourse relating to entitlement. This was evident in the construction of personal growth as bestowing upon the subject statuses relating to expertise and knowledge and particularly 'self-knowledge', which were represented as entitling the subject to act upon others in certain ways, which included the introduction of new forms of discourse to family members, friends and clients.

The analysis section of this research has attempted to deconstruct the premises of some of the traditional discourses of personal growth, whilst giving attention to subjugated discourses of personal growth that link the concept to technologies of government, the role of institutions and the entitlement that constructing the 'self' within discourses of enhanced personal growth confer upon the bearer. Relating to Counselling Psychology these discourses are concordant with the recent definition of the discipline that emphasises a relational and contextual aspect to practice. The discourses also demonstrate that the Rogerian and Psychodynamic discourses remain as dominant ways of understanding personal growth, which in turn has implications for the 'personal development' aspects of training courses. A summary of the discourses will explored in this section will be provided in the following discussion section.

6. Discussion

With regard to the research aims the text generated from the semi-structured interviews revealed how personal growth was constructed in discourse for the three participants interviewed. Personal growth was represented within traditional Rogerian and Psychodynamic discourses, but was represented as being a different concept to personal development in the Cognitive-Developmental discourse. Personal growth was also represented as happening through the processes of self-reflection and self-awareness, also representing a traditional approach to the topic. Additionally, discourses of Postmodernism, Discipline, Institutions and Entitlement were elucidated which provided an exposition of the power dynamics within the texts.

It is important to explore the researcher's own experiences as they relate to this piece of research, and how this might have influenced the co-construction of the discourses that were derived from the texts used in this research. The researcher has decided to selectively write in the first person for this final piece of the work in order to reflect the 'personal' nature of this section. However, it is understood that the way in which the researcher understands this in terms of experiences, relationships and theories is simply an expression of his shared socially constructed language, and the agency implicit in, 'personal' is understood as the transformation of language into action. Using the first person is accepted in qualitative research, as one of a number of ways to reject the

essentialist paradigm implicit in quantitative research (e.g. Forshaw, 2007).

This section will present a review and summary of the discussions provided in the preceding analysis section, covering each of the discourses identified within the context of the research aims along with theoretical reflections. This will be followed with an evaluation of the present research presented as methodological and personal reflections, implications of the research for Counselling Psychology including usability from an action research perspective. Finally suggestions will be made for further research in this area.

6.1 Summary of discourses

The humanistic underpinnings of Counselling Psychology and the widely accepted notion within the discipline that Rogers' core conditions (Rogers, 1957) are a prerequisite for all therapeutic approaches (McLeod, 2003), might suggest that a Rogerian discourse of personal growth would have featured strongly in the texts. This assumption emanates from the humanistic focus on human potential and the emphasis in Carl Rogers' theory on the organismic valuing process and the human tendency to self-actualise, moving towards what is positive and fulfilling (Rogers, 1961).

A discourse was identified in the texts that represented a Rogerian conception of personal growth, however it was only ascribed a 'reality' in the texts from Jane's interview transcripts. For Krissy, the Rogerian

discourse was acknowledged as an influence, which presents it as one of a number of possible ways to view the world. In Gill's text, the theory and particularly the concept of self-actualisation was represented as being historically and culturally located in the sixties. Self-actualisation was also represented in the text as a value-laden concept, with implications of power inherent in the way in which subjects represented as having reached a 'higher' state of self-actualisation have rights to act and behave on others in certain ways. Similar to the way in which the medical discourse gives power over patients, it appears that the Rogerian discourse, through the concept of self-actualisation, gives power to Counselling Psychologists in relation to clients. However, this discourse does not operate on the basis of expertise as with the medical discourse, but on the basis of 'enhanced' personal qualities that are linked to the 'higher' states of self-actualisation.

The power of the Rogerian discourse of personal growth was linked to the use of the biological metaphor, in which concepts such as the organismic valuing process and self-actualising tendency are assumed to be 'real' as the metaphorical nature of the biological discourse in relation to these concepts is forgotten. Although Carl Rogers did lean heavily on the assumption that these processes were concealed organic processes, his later writings emphasised multiple truths and realities and ways in which his theory could be applied to groups, in particular conflict resolution (Gillon, 2007), suggesting a more contextualist leaning. However, the point here is not to provide a critique of Rogers' theory, but

instead to highlight, that despite the efforts of contemporary person-centred researchers to update the theory to de-emphasise the individualistic and emphasise the contextual (Mearns and Thorne, 2000; Wilkins, 2003), the power of this discourse to promulgate certain types of knowledge as 'truth' appears in part to be due to the continued dominance of the biological metaphor. This appears as evidence for the way in which language constitutes its objects in discourse in a way that is in some ways independent of the theories from where the discourses originated. This discourse also carries with it the assumption of individualism, as the process of change is constructed as biological and within the individual, neglecting the relational, contextual basis of identity.

The analysis of the text relating to an unconscious drive demonstrated the way in which competing discourses can be used to support a particular construct or idea. In particular the way in which the unconscious, which is understood in theory to represent destructive and primal urges was represented as the motivational force for the Rogerian concept of personal growth, which is supposed to move towards what is positive and life fulfilling. At different points in the text participants represented themselves as having agency but also being subject to an unconscious drive. This was a neat demonstration of the way in which the Foucauldian methodology can deconstruct previously held 'truths' by revealing contradictory statements that are positioned as describing the same object. The process of co-construction in the research in which

these contradictions were elucidated led to the abandonment of this particular discourse as a credible explanation of personal growth.

Psychodynamic conceptions of personal growth were also evident in the concepts of defences and containment. Personal growth as the lessening of psychological defences featured only in Krissy's text, in which it was represented as the allowing of hidden painful emotions into awareness. It was not clear where these painful emotions came from or how being aware of them would be beneficial in terms of growth. It appeared that the discourse paints a picture of the world in which this is the case, and therefore it goes unquestioned. Analysis revealed a strong link here to the discipline discourse in which painful processes are legitimised under the guide of self-improvement or growth, as described by Fairclough (1989). What the discourse achieves is to create a double bind, as it is never possible to prove or disprove that these painful feelings once existed in the unconscious before they appeared in awareness to create the growth. This links with Parker's (1997) deconstruction of psychoanalytic discourse, in which he describes the complexity of the ever-spiralling self-referent language of psychodynamic theory.

An increased ability to contain the painful feelings of the 'self and 'others' was also represented in the text as an indicator of personal growth. Once again it appeared that there was a sense that painful objects were now recognised and 'contained', whereas before the growth they were

not recognised, carrying with it the assumption that they existed somewhere before. The locating of the 'pain' in the individual has the effect of ignoring the social and political causes of human difficulties, which is a criticism of counselling practice by Kearney (1997). It appears from the analysis of this research that the psychodynamic discourse does operate to control population through the representation of problems within the individual as described by Rose (1996). Whilst difficulties are represented as to be held within the individual it is unlikely that individuals are going to look beyond this to move toward political and social change, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of the ideas of unconscious and containment as technologies of government as described by Foucault (1979).

Throughout the texts personal growth and personal development were represented as being different concepts, with the former relating to a process of accommodation and assimilation as exemplified by developmental interactionist theories (e.g. Kolb, 1984) and the latter as a less clear concept, represented through a number of different discourses. The problematic confusion between personal growth and personal development has been described by a number of authors (e.g. Donati and Watts, 1999; Irving and Williams, 1999). The texts relating to the training of counsellors and psychologists in terms of personal development (Johns, 1996; Connor, 1994; Mearns, 1997), all interchangeably use concepts relating to both the development and growth discourses, suggesting that growth related concepts such as

wisdom and autonomy can be learnt through a structured development programme. It appears the danger here is that 'personal' dimensions can become the objects of measurement and scrutiny, relating to Foucault's ideas of technologies of government (Foucault, 1979), in which population is measured and influenced towards certain modes of behaviour.

The synthesis of non-measurable dimensions into a discourse within which measurement makes sense, serves to convince that dimensions such as congruence or wisdom are measurable. The measurement of the non-measurable, therefore, must involve a value judgement on the part of the persons doing the measurement, i.e. trainers. Returning to Kearney's (1997) observations that the majority of counsellors and trainers in the UK come from a middle-class background suggests that these value judgements are likely to be skewed in favour of the dominant ideologies of this group. Therefore the measurement of the suitability of trainees on the basis of 'level of congruence' as suggested by Mearns (1997) becomes highly problematic and implicated in the oppression of already marginalised groups in society.

Self-reflection leading to increased self-awareness is posited as a fundamental aspect of personal growth in Counselling Psychology trainees in the literature (e.g. Cross and Watts, 2002; Strawbridge, 1997), the process of which is described by Schon (1983). This was reflected in the texts with discourses relating to both self-reflection and

self-awareness appearing. Gergen (1999) in his exposition of the problems of individualism as they relate to a dualist metaphor, elucidates the problem of self-reflection in that it is impossible to know which part of the mind is the doing part and which is reflecting on the doing. Instead he suggests that there is a misplaced concreteness to concepts such as self-reflection and instead it also merely a construct that happens to be attributed to conceptions of 'self'.

The conceptual elisions inherent in the unavoidable dualist metaphor used to describe self-reflection and self-awareness were manifold throughout the texts. Analysis illuminated the way in which, aside from the double bind of the dualist metaphor, objects relating to self-awareness and self-reflection appeared to have external status, i.e. the taking on of objects, suggesting that rather than being an internal process that the concepts could be better understood as participants constructing their 'selves' within particular discourses.

This was further evidenced in the way in which it seemed impossible to describe self-reflection and self-awareness without reference to other discourses, including the Cognitive, Rogerian and Psychodynamic discourses. This appears to demonstrate Parker's (1992) assertion that discourses are intertwined and self-referring to the ends of painting a particular view of 'reality' that becomes difficult to resist. It was only through the teasing apart of the constitutant aspects of the discourse and placing a question mark over the 'truth' claims of each, that a

number of interlinked and also at times competing discourses, could be understood as merely individual versions of 'reality' that somehow come together to present a cohesive view of personal growth that is then understood as 'truth'.

There was also representation in the text, fitting with a constructionist view, of self-awareness existing outside the self, suggesting that it is possible to find one's 'self' constructed within a new discourse, and that this discovery comes about through interaction and in particular through language. Perhaps, then a more accurate term for this discourse could be 'discourse awareness', in which individuals gain an understanding of the way in which they are constructed in language. This could lead to an understanding of the historical and cultural location of said discourses, which itself could lead toward the development of emanicipatory discourses, which from a Foucauldian perspective would be the goal of analysis.

As discussed in the literature review section, the rise of individualism in the post-enlightenment era is viewed by constructionist writers (Rose, 1996; Parker, 1997) as a technology of government to control population. This relates well to the self-awareness and self-reflection discourse; whilst reflection is understood as relating to self the impetus for change is also with the self, exemplified in its implication in the process of personal growth, however understanding the concept in

relation to language and discourse would suggest creating change in this arena, which likely would not suit the goals of government.

Personal growth was also constructed within a postmodern discourse throughout the texts. I am aware that the increased prevalence of this discourse as the interviews progressed was in part due to co-construction process through which participants became aware of some of the contradictions manifest in traditional discourses of personal growth. However, as discourse analysis views the researcher as co-participant and participants as co-researchers this is not viewed as problematic with the process of research constituting itself within discourse and reconstituting discourse through language.

There were ample examples throughout the texts derived from all three of the participant's interviews in which personal growth was represented as existing in the interactional space between people rather than within the individual. It was in this third space that personal growth was represented as happening and where changes attributed to personal growth were noticed. These representations fit well with Shotter's (1997) dialogic relational paradigm emanating from the earlier ideas of Volosinov (1973) and Harre's (1983) assertion that the most fruitful investigations of humanity are to be found in language.

Understanding personal growth within the interactional discourse also appeared to open up possibilities for resistance to the traditional

Rogerian discourse in which growth is represented as moving toward what is positive and life fulfilling for the individual. There were examples throughout the texts of the language and discourse of personal growth having a negative impact on relationships. Rather than creating an increased sense of congruence as suggested by Rogers (1961) it appeared that this discourse had the effect of alienation in relationships as the associates of participants resisted against constructing themselves within the representations of personal growth, with the concomitant requirement for 'self' revelation and introspection. This resistance appeared to have the effect of participants then acting in a way that was incongruous to the way that they were now representing themselves in order to maintain previously held relationships.

The representation of personal growth within an interactional discourse also elucidated some of the power dynamics implicit in the traditional discourses of personal growth. The humanistic discourse implicitly and explicitly represents the process of personal growth as leading to higher states of awareness and being, giving power to those who have reached these echelons of growth to act upon those who have not. There was representation in the texts of the language of personal growth being excluding toward those who do not represent their experience in this way. Therefore the representation of one's 'self' in a discourse of personal growth and self-actualisation appeared to confer on the bearer certain exclusivity and a higher level of status.

Of course, if personal growth is represented interactionally in language, the Rogerian conception of growth merely becomes a different way of representing experiencing rather than a higher or preferred way. The power conferred on the individuals who construct their experience in these particular ways, then, is held in the language itself through the acceptance of the myth of self-actualisation and growth, linked to the manifold institutions that stand to benefit. A discourse that represents certain individuals as having reached a higher state of awareness, wisdom etc. suits the institutions that would act upon the population under the pretence that they too can reach the echelons of self-awareness and self-knowledge by paying for therapy, life-coaching etc. Additionally, as individuals are focusing their efforts on their 'selves' they remain under the control of government.

Further evidence of a postmodern discourse of personal growth was the representation of growth as being contextual and situation dependent. Following from the preceding discussion it appeared that in opposition to an essentialist paradigm that the outcomes of personal growth, for example greater congruence, were not manifest in all situations rather it depended on with whom, when and where interactions were taking place. The biological metaphor of Rogers would suggest that changes should be enduring and universal.

Additionally participants were represented in the text as having multiple identities to fit the context and interaction that was happening at the

time. Once again, this provides evidence for a constructionist worldview in which the identities are created within the interaction rather than belonging in the person. This also fits with the writings of recent person-centred researchers who have attempted to marry Rogerian and postmodern ideas. Lynch (1997) and Glynn (2002) both argue for linguistically created identities but with an inner core of being that transcends language and culture. This emanates from the dualist argument, which means it is impossible to ascertain which is the 'real' person and which are the constructed identities conjured up to suit the occasion.

In the researcher's view an ontology that views the person as a real self conducting a number of false selves to fit situations is a rather depressing view of human nature. The constructionist view, supported by the representation of interactional and context dependent discourses in the text, provides a less damning picture of human nature in which people are consistently 'true' to their situation, because the 'truth' of their identity is to be found purely within the language and context within which they find themselves, i.e. within the interactional space.

There was also representation of resistance to the postmodern discourse in the texts. The discourse was represented as being nihilistic, reducing experience to meaninglessness, which fits with some of the criticisms of Foucault and social constructionism generally (e.g. Derrida, 1980). This appears to be strongly linked to the myth of the individual

(Rose, 1996), in that it appears that this discourse is painting a picture of the world in which that unless experience can be linked to the 'self' then it becomes meaningless.

It is easy to understand the existence of this discourse because in the Western world we are so entrenched within the powerful discourse of the individual, within which the traditional Rogerian discourse of personal growth is complicit, in which we are moving toward personal aspirations, goals, self fulfilment and so on, that to remove this illusion would be to remove huge strata of meanings that have been constructed through the continued promulgation and reinforcement of this particular world view through language and practice over the last few centuries. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any less meaning could be derived from constructing experience within the interactional space, as is the case in many non-western cultures in the world some of which were explored in the literature review section (e.g. Burr, 1995). Rather than being nihilistic, the opportunity for change becomes full of potential when meaning and experience is located within interaction rather than the individual, in that radical political change becomes possible affecting whole communities.

The postmodern discourse, following a social constructionist argument is of course just a discourse itself, containing resistance and counter-resistance. This was elucidated in particular in Krissy's text in which the postmodern discourse was represented as a plausible explanation of

personal growth, as meaningless and as creating multiple possibilities for change. This is one example of the relativity of 'truth'; as of course all of these representations cannot be 'true' at the same time as they are contradictory. I believe that the longitudinal methodology employed in this research enabled the exposition of this relativity, as representations changed over time along with the shifting contexts of the individuals being interviewed.

Understanding alternative discourses as having equal status to claims of 'truth', with none having precedence over another as ways of understanding the world becomes problematic when the effects of particular discourses are considered. As the preceding discussion demonstrates a postmodern and specifically an interactional discourse, appears to open up opportunities for resistance and change. However, the appearance of a discipline discourse in the texts provided evidence that traditional discourses of personal growth were not benign in their effects. It appeared that the promises of self-actualisation and growth implicit in the humanistic discourse of growth had the effect of enabling technologies of government (Foucault, 1977) to act upon participants in ways, which were perceived as unpleasant.

In direct contradiction to the Rogerian (1961) view of personal growth, it was represented throughout the texts of all participants as a 'process' that was forced upon them as part of the course requirements.

Furthermore the process was represented as causing personal pain and difficulty.

The enactment of power through the discourse of personal growth situated in the platform of the 'individual' appeared to justify the pain and discomfort in terms of the ends achieved. As discussed earlier, these ends did not deliver a state of nirvana; rather, being represented within this discourse appeared to lead to a sense of alienation from others.

There was representation throughout the texts of particular institutions being the arbiters of the particular kinds of knowledge and discipline described above. Those mentioned explicitly in the text were the university at which the participants were enrolled on, the Counselling Psychology course and the British Psychological Society. There were explicit links in the text between knowledge and power, in terms of the perceived expertise of the institutions and their ability to confer upon the individual titles and status. Implicit in these assumptions was the justification of the painful practices evidenced in the discipline discourse. Foucault (1979) claimed that it is knowledge that enables power, and gives certain individuals rights to act in certain ways over others.

Linking to Marxist ideas there was also an economic discourse evident in the texts that linked knowledge, power and financial cost. The knowledge offered by the institutions through which individuals were empowered with status and the ability to act upon others through activities such as counselling practice, came at a financial cost. It can

then be seen how it serves in the interests of those who have made considerable financial outlays in order to be accredited with this particular form of knowledge to continue its promulgation in order that they might also financially benefit from this particular type of knowledge. This is not to suggest that institutions or individuals are callously reaping the financial benefits of promulgating a particular form of knowledge and knowingly imposing painful and unnecessary practices on others, rather that they are unwitting agents of the continued dominance of a particular discourse that serves in the interests of those which construct themselves within it. The discourse becomes self-serving linking economic structures and institutional practices to the personal aspirations of the 'individual'.

This links with Kearney's (1997) concerns that counselling practice ignores issues of class difference. It appears that the discourse of personal growth is only available to those who can afford exploratory therapy or to enrol on an expensive course. Therefore the exulted dimensions of self-actualisation, wisdom etc. that are concomitant with higher levels of growth according to the humanistic model become linked to social class, serving to further oppress those already oppressed. Viewed in this way personal growth appears not to be a universal phenomenon, rather an elitist discourse that serves to exclude certain groups in society through the representation of certain groups as having particular highly regarded dimensions of 'self', which are unavailable to those for whom this is economically out of reach.

To deconstruct the 'truths' of personal growth and self-actualisation could have a radical impact on the way that Counselling Psychology as a discipline constructs itself in terms of its philosophical underpinnings and on society as a whole. Many activities that individuals engage in, in society would become pointless, for example courses, therapies etc. that offer ways toward personal fulfilment. The BPS insists that trainees take part in personal therapy largely based on the assumptions that are concomitant with a humanistic philosophy and exemplified by Mearns (1997) assertion that trainees should have reached a certain level of self-awareness and congruence before entering training.

The representations in the text of experiences of compulsory personal therapy fitted with research that has shown it has little effect or purpose in terms of personal growth or later ability as a professional (e.g. Bergin and Garfield, 1994). As the aims of this research were not specifically to look at representations of personal therapy and also due to the limitations of space, the discourses relating to this area were not explored in the analysis section. However, it is noted that area would be a useful area of study in its own right following the methodology used for this research. Viewed as an institutional practice, which is justified partly in terms of the underlying humanistic philosophy of Counselling Psychology, this raises questions as to whom the practice benefits if not those engaged in the practice. Once again, there appears to be links to economics, power and knowledge. The particular form of knowledge that

tells us personal therapy is beneficial helps to fund the very institutions that promulgate this form of knowledge.

As already discussed the discourse of personal growth bestows upon the bearer the objects of increased self-knowledge and self-actualisation with enhanced status and power it to act on others. Having reached a certain level of status the individual then becomes a part of the institution that benefits from the myth of personal growth and the power of therapy for change and self-actualisation. The way in which participants perhaps became unwitting parts of the machinations of power implicit in the personal growth discourse was evident in the appearance of the entitlement discourse in the texts.

The entitlement discourse of personal growth was represented in a number of ways. Firstly, linked to the discipline discourse, there was a representation in the text that having 'been through' the process of personal growth that an elevated status was deserved. Secondly it appeared that representing the 'self' in the personal growth discourse entitled participants to talk to others in ways that in other more familial discourses would not have been acceptable. There were powerful links here to the Foucauldian idea that having certain types of knowledge allows individuals to act in certain ways over others. As stated earlier there is resonance between the way in which the medical discourse allows medical practitioners to talk to others in certain ways, which limits the ways in which said others can respond, and the way in which a

discourse of personal growth linked to ideas of elevated self-actualisation and self-knowledge allow Counselling Psychologists to act upon others, whether it be clients or personal associates and family. This appears to support the idea that as individuals become increasingly immersed within the discourse of personal growth, partially due to the power of the discourse and it's pervasiveness as a 'truth' rather than a particular form of knowledge within the institutions that Counselling Psychologists are embedded and perhaps due to the links to economic security that are concomitant with the upholding of this particular form of knowledge as truth, that individuals become more state sponsored in their government of individuals.

This perhaps paints a rather depressing view in which individuals are somehow entrenched within a discourse that paints a particular view of reality, which in fact is merely based on the myth of the individual and the capacity for self-actualisation, which then subsumes them to a point in which they become part of the mechanics of power that maintain the status quo. There is, however, the opportunity for resistance to dominant discourses, which was certainly evident in Gill's text throughout all the interviews, in which personal growth was fairly consistently represented as a historically and socially situated concept to be resisted. The entitlement discourse was represented in Jane's texts, but through the process of co-construction and enabling of the texts to be revisited through the longitudinal methodology, provided an opportunity for resistance to this discourse. Awareness of the entitlement discourse and

it's potentially oppressive nature at least provided the opportunity for Jane to construct herself within alternative discourses, which might be more emanicipatory in their effects. In Krissy's case there was absolute resistance to an entitlement discourse, despite evidence in the texts. It is perhaps difficult to find oneself constructed and thus implicated within a discourse that is potentially oppressive in nature.

In summary the texts revealed both traditional and constructionist discourses of personal growth. It appeared that the constructionist discourses of personal growth opened up the possibility for understanding the concept as historically and culturally situated, opening up opportunities for change. In particular there was a powerful discourse throughout that represented growth as happening between people rather than within people, suggesting that it is in this third space that the concept should studied rather than within the individual.

The traditional discourses of personal growth and in particular the Rogerian discourse of growth, which is closely allayed to the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of Counselling Psychology, was found to carry with it discourses of discipline and entitlement representing it not as something which is a universal and natural process. Instead, within these discourses personal growth was represented as being a forced and painful process and one that once represented within it entitled individuals to act on others in certain ways. There was also a powerful link between the power of institutions to

promulgate the humanistic discourse, within which the idea of personal growth is embedded, and economic activity and the way in which these factors come today to exclude those in society who are already oppressed.

6.2 Methodological reflections

There is no set way to undertake discourse analysis, nor is there a unified approach (Parker, 1992), which could lead to theoretical and methodological ambiguity. In particular Foucault's position is notoriously difficult to pigeonhole and doesn't provide a coherent theoretical framework through which to understand phenomena. However, the strength of this method is that it allows for multiple perspectives. I found it particularly challenging knowing how much reading was required to provide an adequate theoretical underpinning before commencing the analysis. This was compounded by the complexity of Foucault's work and the large number of writers who have since written and critiqued it. After reading broadly around the subject I decided to focus on the original texts and on the work of Parker (e.g. 1994) and Rose (e.g. 1996) because these writers particularly focus on the application of Foucault's work to psychological theory and practice.

Although I was able to use Parker's (1992) twenty steps of discourse analysis as a guide, but it became clear at the early stages of analysis that to follow these steps in order for each piece of text to be analysed did not make sense. Instead I kept the steps at hand throughout the

analysis procedure, as well as bearing in mind the approaches to analysis suggested by the three works of Foucault (1961; 1972; 1977) explored in the methodology section. It could be argued that this approach to analysis was overly subjective, in particular as the first stages involve a free-association with the text. This free association was unavoidably limited to my own existing knowledge and ideas. However, I believe that the unique longitudinal methodology employed in this research helped to offset this limitation to some extent, as the participants were able to challenge and renegotiate the discourses that the researcher had generated from the material. Additionally the funnelling methodology of other qualitative approaches such as IPA (e.g. Smith, 2003) or Grounded Theory (e.g. Charmaz, 2001) would have missed the issues of power and the contradictions that emerged in the texts that elucidated the contextual nature of the concept of personal growth, as the goal of analysis in these approaches is to find underlying themes, implying an underlying reality to be discovered.

A limitation of the research was evident in the amount of commitment and work that was expected of the participants. All of the participants noted that the research process involved more commitment and effort than they had been expecting, but equally they all expressed that it had been a fruitful and thought provoking process, which helped them to challenge some of their previous assumptions about personal growth.

It would have been unreasonable to expect the participants to spend the same amount of time as the researcher analysing the texts. In the second interviews all of the participants engaged fully with the texts from the preceding interviews and discussion around points of disagreement and clarification indicated a fruitful collaborative process in the spirit of co-construction. However, by the third interview it was only Gill who chose to make significant changes to the discourses that the researcher had identified. The other two participants merely asked for clarification on a couple of the discourses, but overall were in agreement. It could be concluded that the co-construction process in the second interview had been successful and that clarification was all that was required. However, it is also possible that there could have been an element of research fatigue in which participants felt it would be easier to acquiesce to the researcher's ideas rather than go through a second process of re-negotiation and discussion. This again is likely to have tipped the balance of power in the research process towards the researcher.

A traditional approach to the structure of the dissertation was used, in part because of the difficulty in organising the material in alternative way and also because of the requirements of the module for which this research is a part. It could be argued that this contradicts the principles of postmodern/poststructuralist thinking as it accepts the dominant positivist paradigm of social sciences research possibly missing the opportunity to resist existing power structures.

I am aware that modifying a discourse analytic approach to a longitudinal research design was a bold move, considering that there were no previous studies to refer to, to provide a framework or structure to the research process. However, the employment of this methodology was the result of careful consideration of the research aims and discussion with two research supervisors. It is my contention that the elucidation of the resistant discourses to traditional conceptions of personal growth was enhanced by the longitudinal methodology.

Qualitative research does not seek to gain consistent results (reliability) but seeks to elicit the response of the researcher and participants in a specific context, e.g. different discourses are likely to have been generated if the participants and researcher had been different in person, space and time. This also relates to the number of participants required for the methodology, as all discourse presents versions of 'reality' a greater number of participants would merely present more versions as opposed to the quantitative view in which greater numbers allow greater generalisability bringing the results nearer to the 'truth'. I feel that the number of discourses that arose from the transcripts of the three participants, both traditional and subjugated, provides implicit justification for selecting this number.

Additionally as the social constructionist philosophy does not accept a 'reality' it would make no sense to talk of validity, which refers to an objective reality. Finally qualitative research does not seek to extrapolate

findings to the wider population (generalisability); instead the aim is to elucidate discourses relating to the concept being researched, with the knowledge that they are historically and culturally bound.

Potter (1996) suggests that the irrelevancy of reliability and validity in discourse analysis research does not mean that the research cannot be adequately evaluated. Potter (1996) suggests consideration of participants understanding, coherence, and reader's evaluation as theoretically relevant alternatives to reliability and validity. The present research has paid close attention to participants understanding due to the longitudinal nature of the design, in which participants had two opportunities to dispute and change the discourses that the researcher had identified. It is clear that each participant's experiences and understanding of the concept of personal growth would have been shaped by their own unique experiences, and therefore would differ to some extent. However, as all the participants attended the same university and completed the same course it would be expected that the discourses they found themselves in would have some similarities. The final criteria of reader's evaluation can be achieved by seeking to publish the work to ensure a wide selection of potential readers in order that it could be evaluated and commented upon.

6.3 Personal reflexive analysis

The position of the researcher is complex in discourse analysis partly due to the role of co-constructor in the research process and issues of

power. Although the research used semi-structured interviews and the questions were designed to be as open-ended as possible they also directed participants in the direction of the research questions. Therefore the direction and content of the dialogue was already balanced in favour of my own interests and goals, giving myself a more powerful position. Additionally I undertook the initial analysis and presented back my interpretations of the texts derived from the preceding interviews to the participants. Whilst it was acknowledged to the participants that this interpretation was just one of a myriad of potential interpretations, because of the power implicit in the role of researcher, it is perhaps more likely that the participants would acquiesce to my version of 'reality'. Therefore, although the process was co-constructive, there was a likely to have been a bias towards my constructions of the material.

In selecting to use discourse analysis to understand the concept of personal growth it is clear that I was already biased towards a non-essentialist understanding of the topic area. Initially I felt that this bias was due to the preparatory reading that I undertook, which led me to seriously question humanistic and essentialist explanations of the concept. However, as the research has progressed I have realised that the development of a social constructionist worldview has occurred through the summation of my early experiences and the development of interests and clinical experiences throughout my training as a Counselling Psychologist.

I grew up in a low-income working class family for whom ideas of personal growth and self-actualisation would have held little meaning, because the focus of life was working hard and surviving. There was considerable surprise when I became the first person in the family to attend university rather than 'choosing' the traditional route of finding paid manual work. For seven years following the completion of my undergraduate degree I was in paid work, feeling that the costs involved in furthering my education would be out of reach. In order to complete the doctoral programme for which this research is a part I have worked and studied full time in order to fund myself through the process. I recall early on my in my training programme for the Counselling Psychology course being told by a tutor that I would have to give up full-time work in order to meet the course requirements and thinking how peculiar it was that someone would assume that people could just give up work and still survive.

Therefore, my own experiences resonate strongly with the assertion of Hannon (2001) that person-centred concepts ignore class differences and Kearney's (1997) observation that Counsellors tend to come from middle class backgrounds because of the excluding nature of the costs involved in training. Although it was not clear to me at the outset of the research it has slowly crystallised that my own experiences, which were perhaps different in terms of social background to the majority of Counselling Psychology trainees, primed me to construct my understanding of the world in a certain way. Rather, than carrying an

assumption implicit in the Rogerian conception of personal growth that people move towards what is positive and life-fulfilling, it already appeared to me that this was not a universal concept and one that would be alien to the people with whom I'd grown up with.

In my clinical placements for the Counselling Psychology course I have worked with prisoners and asylum seekers and in my paid work for the last six years I have worked with people who are street homeless. Working with these people from hugely disadvantaged communities has influenced my belief that is the power mechanisms in society that maintain oppression. For these groups of people concepts such self-actualisation are simply out of reach as they struggle to survive with the tasks of daily living. Therefore, far from entering the process of research with an open-mind, although of course this would be impossible as we are all constructed by our own experiences, I was strongly predisposed to a social constructionist viewpoint on the topic. This has led me to question whether the findings from this research were almost preordained from my own experience and biases. However, it was only through becoming immersed in the process of research that the connection between the historical and cultural location of my own experiences and the research questions became clear. Additionally, an analytic protocol was followed and the participants were able to challenge the discourses that I found through the analytic process.

The fact that I have used a social constructionist approach to understanding the concept of personal growth and that the findings implicate institutions and Counselling Psychology practice in the legitimisation of painful processes and the subjugation of already oppressed groups creates a dilemma with the fact that I am completing a doctorate in Counselling Psychology with an aim to practice. In becoming part of the profession I could easily become part of the machinations of power or technologies of government that perpetuate the power differences that this research has highlighted. However, it is possible to practice as a Counselling Psychologist from a social constructionist perspective (e.g. McNamee and Gergen, 1992), focusing on how we construct ourselves, how others are socially constructing us and how this can be resisted by constructing experience in alternative emanicipatory ways. This of course is somewhat idealistic because the practicality of working within an institution, e.g. the NHS, brings with it many constraints of practice.

In addition I believe there is a place for Counselling Psychologists in Community Psychology (e.g. Burton and Kagan, 1996), and am already involved in a steering group with a number of homelessness and mental health agencies that is looking to use therapeutic engagement models in a novel way with people who are living on the streets. Here, the aim is to use Counselling Psychology to understand the wider experiences of this group of people rather than imposing oppressive concepts and methods of working upon them.

Finally I feel that it is important to acknowledge that although this research has perhaps painted a picture of the world in which institutions through the technologies of government oppress marginalised groups through the proliferation of concepts such as personal growth, that marginalised discourses are also omnipresent within the dominant discourses. This is evident in the way in which I have been able to approach this research from a social constructionist perspective. It was at the university that I first encountered the idea of social constructionism, and through the university that I have been encouraged and supported through the process of writing this research, demonstrating the welcoming of the development of alternative subjugated views of taken for granted concepts, within institutional practices.

6.4 Implications for Counselling Psychology

Discourse analytic research does not set out to produce results that are generalisable because based on the principles of social constructionism all 'realities' are viewed as ever-changing through the constituting effects of language as well as being culturally and historically located. This is an important caveat to precede the following implications.

The findings of this research suggest that the tendency to use the terms personal growth and personal development interchangeably is misleading. Readings of the texts demonstrate that for the participants in

this research, these are different concepts. This would imply that organisers of Counselling and Counselling Psychology programmes should view the concepts separately to avoid the value-judgements implicit in mapping the complex notion of personal growth onto a personal development framework.

The appearance of a discourse that represented personal growth as existing in the interactional space between people, supporting the dialogic relational paradigm of Shotter (1997), has potentially profound implications for the training of Counsellors and Counselling Psychologists. If, as was indicated in the texts from this research, personal growth does not exist in people but rather between people, activities designed to promote 'self-awareness' become meaningless. In particular the requirement of trainee Counselling Psychologists to undertake mandatory personal therapy should be questioned.

The analysis in this research demonstrated the way in which traditional discourses of personal growth were inextricably linked with the goals of institutions and economic considerations. In agreement with Kearney (1997), the linking of personal growth to activities that are out of reach for excluded members of society can result in a sense of elitism for those who can afford the activities which are represented as leading to higher states of self-actualisation and self-awareness, such as personal therapy. The entitlement discourse demonstrated the way in which Counselling Psychologists can 'buy into' the myth of personal growth,

which can lead to the alienation from the individuals whom the profession aims to help, through the representation of the self as having achieved higher states of self-actualisation, self-awareness etc. It seems personal therapy is an important contributory factor in the representation of the self within this particular discourse.

The location of personal growth in the interactional space would imply that rather than focusing on 'self' activities, that Counselling Psychology trainees could become more involved in community activities. This could include getting involved in community projects with oppressed groups in society, for example asylum seekers and homeless groups. If, as this research suggests change is noticed in the space between people then getting people from different communities to come together to work on shared problems could have emanicipatory effects rather than the effects of exclusion inherent in a focus on the trainee Counselling Psychologist's self. As mentioned in the literature review section, this is the goal of Community Psychology approaches (e.g. Burton and Kagan, 1996), whose aim is to create multiple points of contact between communities, including the academic communities, in non-traditional settings, e.g. on the street or in the community centre of a local authority estate.

Based on the findings of this research, which has not been able to identify any compelling arguments that such a concept of personal growth exists or happens within the person, perhaps it would be sensible

to dispense with the term altogether. Instead a focus on discursive community practice could be considered which would involve some of the activities above. Here, the focus for training could be on the way in which trainees find themselves represented in many differing discourses as they engage with communities outside their prior experience, and the opportunities that this creates for positive change.

The implications of the research for Counselling Psychology as a discipline include a radical rethink of the assumptions that emanate from the underpinning humanistic philosophy, and their potentially oppressive role. Placing the responsibility for change on the 'individual', through the understanding that personal growth is a universal internal process, works against oppressed groups in society in at least two ways. Firstly, the cost involved of exploratory therapy excludes these groups from reaching the states of self-actualisation associated with psychological health and secondly it ignores the effect of external factors such as economic and social policy. The employment of a constructionist philosophy for the discipline could militate against the bias towards a humanistic view of man, allowing the emergence of discourses that acknowledge the role of power, institutions and discourses in subjugating oppressed groups.

In terms of usability this piece of research has resonance with action research (e.g. Parker, 2005) in a number of ways. Firstly it could be contended that the process of research elucidated the oppressive role of

traditional discourses for both participants and researcher providing opportunities to work within alternative emanicipatory discourses that emanate from an understanding of the social and political dimensions apparent in the Discipline, Institutions and Entitlement discourses. Secondly I plan to seek publication of this piece of work, which could have the effect of reaching readers who can make a difference within the communities that they work.

Finally as a manager of a frontline rough sleepers service in central London, I can influence the team that I work with and external agencies, by promulgating the view that the difficulties faced by this group of people are not located in 'individual' shortcomings such as lack of self-actualisation, but are in fact perpetuated by the very systems and institutions within which we operate. Goodley and Parker (2000) describe this process as empowerment through the role of vanguard, in which the researcher leads the oppressed and champions their cause against the oppressors. In particular this piece of research attends to class politics, in which political change can be encouraged as we reject theoretical discourses that subjugate oppressed groups, e.g. self-actualisation, and champion emanicipatory discourses.

6.5 Directions for future research

This research looked at the broad concept of personal growth and identified subjugated discourses such as discipline and entitlement that challenge the traditional discourses such as the Rogerian discourse.

Future research could explore existing texts such as counselling transcripts, introductory books on Counselling Psychology or person-centred papers, to investigate whether these discourses appear elsewhere. It is the researcher's contention that these discourses are not unique to the texts generated from the participant's interviews in the present research, but in order to demonstrate this it would be necessary to analyse a wider range of material.

Seven discourses were explored in this research and therefore because of the constraints of the word limit, it was only possible to go into a certain level of depth for each. Future research could look specifically at one of the discourses in order to further elucidate its effects and implications in opportunities for the maintenance of or resistance to current machinations of power.

Finally, the longitudinal methodology applied to the discourse analytic approach used in this research could be applied to other fields of enquiry. It is the researcher's contention that this methodology allowed for the appearance of a wider range of discourses than would have appeared at a single time point and this fits well with Foucault's (1972) method of analysis, which seeks to describe differences and changes in relation to the area of research.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Researcher: Brett Grellier

Address: Department of Psychology
London Metropolitan University
Calcutta House
Old Castle Street
London
E1 7NT

Telephone: 079 7097 4424
Email: brettgrellier@aol.com

Date:

I have read the recruitment material and understand that the research being conducted relates to the experiences of Counselling Psychology trainees in relation to the idea of personal growth. I understand that excerpts from the written transcripts and tape-recorded interviews will be studied and may be quoted in a doctoral dissertation and in future papers, journals and books that will be written by the researcher. I understand that I will have the opportunity to ask questions at any stage in the research and to receive answers that are to my satisfaction.

I grant authorisation for the use of the above information with the full understanding that my anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved at all times. I understand that my full name or identifying information will never be disclosed or referenced in any written or verbal context. I understand that transcripts both paper and floppy disk versions will be secured in the privacy of the researcher's home office, and that versions held on hard drive are password protected. Taped recordings of interviews will be kept locked away, destroyed or returned to me in September 2007 at my discretion. I understand that examiners and the researcher's supervisor will also have access to the material, although my anonymity will preserved at all times

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw my permission to participate in this study without explanation at any point up to and including 7th July 2007.

I agree to the terms and by signing here I am giving informed consent to take part in this research:

Respondent's signature:

Researcher's signature:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. You are encouraged to ask questions at any time about the nature of the study and the methods that I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me; please contact me at any time using the email address or telephone number listed above.

8.2 Appendix 2: Information Sheet

Personal Growth in Counselling Psychology Trainees: A Discourse Analysis

Recruitment Information

My name is Brett Grellier. I am a trainee Counselling Psychologist undertaking the Practitioner Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at London Metropolitan University.

Purpose: For my doctoral dissertation I am undertaking research to investigate the experiences of Counselling Psychology trainees in relation to the idea of personal growth. The purpose of this research is to identify the discourses that relate to personal growth and to identify how these may or may not change as the participants' progress through their final year of training and following chartership. Following analysis, implications for the training requirements of Counselling Psychology trainees' will be discussed.

What the study entails: The research will take the form of three semi-structured interviews with each participant over the period of one year. It is planned that the first interview will take place in July 2006, the second in November 2006 and the final interview in March 2007. It is expected that each interview will take approximately one-hour. The researcher will travel to a place that is convenient for the participant. These interviews will be transcribed and the 'text', which arises, will be understood using discourse analysis. At interviews two and three participants will be invited to provide feedback on the themes and discourses that the researcher has extrapolated from the prior interview.

Risks: The risks for participants qualify as "minimal risk". In terms of data collection the researcher will be using semi-structured interviews meaning that participants will be largely responsible for constructing the discourse. It is possible that as the research progresses and themes are elicited from the 'text' that participants might question previously held beliefs about the meaning, function and even existence of personal growth. Although the researcher feels that this is unlikely to cause any undue distress, participants will be encouraged to telephone or email the researcher if this is the case. Additionally details will be provided of helping organisations to which participants can approach for counselling.

Benefits: Participants may benefit in terms of professional development from having the opportunity to explore in depth the meaning of personal growth for their training and practice as Counselling Psychologists. Participants will also be contributing towards a greater clarity of understanding of one of the implicit requirements of Counselling Psychology training in what is currently an ill-defined area.

Anonymity and confidentiality: Using pseudonyms in the final report will protect participants' rights to confidentiality. All recordings and 'texts' will be kept safe in the researchers locked home office along with back-up files on floppy disks. The analysis presented in the final report will be coded and edited such that no identifying information is included. All participants will be asked to sign an informed consent form (please see attached), which will set out steps taken to maintain confidentiality.

Right to withdraw: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and participants can withdraw at any time until 7th July 2007, two months before the research is submitted.

Researchers contact details: Brett Grellier
Email: brettgrellier@aol.com Tel: 079 7097 4424

8.3 Appendix 3: Ethics Panel Form

London Metropolitan University, Department of Psychology
ETHICS PANEL

Counselling Project Proposals: Project sample 2005-2006

Student	Supervisor	Project topic	Cat	Ethics advisor	Recommendation
Surname, First name	Full name	Title can be shortened as long as the topic is clear	A, B or C	Your initials	Here please either simply state: "No concerns" or give a short account of your concerns and any changes you would like to recommend
Grellier, Brett	Gella Richards	The meanings of personal growth for counselling psychology trainees	A	MD	No major concerns. However, more information regarding briefing and consent could have been provided, e.g. the students says that an information letter will be sent to participants but no indication/summary of its content is provided. Alternatively, the student could have attached copies of his information sheet and consent form. I am happy for the supervisor to ensure that the information provided regarding briefing and consent in this study is adequate.

8.4 Appendix 4: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Semi-structured interview questions (Interview 1)

1. Tell me a bit about your story of becoming a Counselling Psychologist.

2. What does the term, 'personal growth', mean to you generally?

3. What does the term, 'personal growth', mean to you in the context of the Counselling Psychology course?

4. How would you describe your sense of your personal identity and your identity/status as a trainee Counselling Psychologist?

Possible prompts:

5. Thinking about your personal identity, have any of the course activities engendered any changes?
6. Have you noticed any changes in your outside relationships?
7. Has personal therapy had any impact on your personal identity?
8. Has your sense of identity been in any way affected by your clinical work?
9. What effect, if any, has the completion of a self-reflective journal had on your sense of identity?

Semi-structured interview questions (Interview 1)

1. What are your views now on the concept of personal growth?
2. Have your views changed since we last met?
3. Were there any issues raised for you from the transcript of our last interview?

8.5 Appendix 5: Parker's twenty steps of discourse analysis

Twenty steps for Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (Parker, 1992)

1	Treating our objects of study as texts which are described and put into words
2	Exploring connotations through some sort of free association
3	Asking what objects are referred to, and describing them
4	Talking about the talk as if it were an object, a discourse
5	Specifying what types of person are talked about in the discourse, some of which may have already been identified as objects
6	Speculating about what they can say in the discourse, what you could say if you identified with them (what rights to speak in that way of speaking)
7	Mapping a picture of the world this discourse presents
8	Working out how a text using this discourse would deal with objections to the terminology
9	Setting contrasting ways of speaking, discourses, against each other and looking at the different objects they constitute
10	Identifying points where they overlap, where they constitute what look like the 'same' objects in different ways
11	Referring to other texts to elaborate the discourse as it occurs, perhaps implicitly, and addresses other audiences (in children's books, advertisements, etc.)
12	Reflecting on the term used to describe the discourse, a matter which involves moral/political choices on the part of the analyst
13	Looking at how and where the discourses emerged
14	Describing how they have changed, and told a story, usually about how they refer to things that were already there to be discovered
15	Identifying institutions which are reinforced when this or that discourse is used
16	Identifying institutions that are attacked or subverted when this or that discourse appears
17	Looking at which categories of person gain or lose from the employment of the discourse
18	Looking at who would want to promote and who would want to dissolve the discourse
19	Showing how a discourse connects with other discourses which sanction oppression
20	Showing how the discourses allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history

Parker's twenty steps for discourse analysis (Parker, 1992)

Firstly it is necessary to see all 'tissues of meaning' (Parker, 1992) as text for potential analysis. This could mean any object that has been understood in the world and given meaning, e.g. an illustration on a Christmas card could be understood as text, carrying with it discourses around religion, obligation and social norms. For this research the text to be analysed is text in the traditional sense, however it is important to remain aware that the actual words and cassette tape on which the words are recorded could be considered as text. The cassette perhaps carrying meanings regarding the capturing of a historical event and the enactment of rules contained in the psychological discourse of qualitative research methods.

Analysis then takes two layers of objectification. The first is the layer of 'reality' that the discourse refers to. Reality is in inverted commas because it is understood that it is the use of a noun in language that gives the object its reality and allows it to be spoken of as a real object in the world. However, Parker (1992) points out the line is blurred between the sets of things we know have a reality outside discourse and things which only have a reality within it. In terms of this research the first layer of 'reality' would be the concept under scrutiny, 'personal growth'. The second layer of reality and objectification are the discourses that describe the discourse itself. In terms of this research the second layer of objectification could include the earlier identified biological discourse, as we know that growth is a process in terms of increasing division of cells.

The next phase of analysis looks at the subjects involved in the discourse. The subject, e.g. he or she who speaks, writes, hears or reads the text is given a certain object status, within the discourse that inhabits the text. Harre (1979) distinguishes between the 'expressive sphere' in which meanings and selves are presented and contested and the 'practical sphere', which alludes to the selves that go about our daily lives in an organised physical world.

Looking at this piece of research from a meta-level, it could be conceived that as participants in a psychological study object statuses are immediately assigned, which limit and delineate the kind of responses that are allowable within the discourses of research. The participants on one level have a subject position of 'experts' being trained psychologists, which allows for certain responses and puts them in a particular position of power. Equally they have the subject position as 'participant', which also has certain limitations in terms of what should or should not be said within the discourse of the qualitative research interview. In short it is impossible to avoid the perceptions of ourselves and others that the discourses invite. The analysis looks at the relation between the addressor (the text) and the addressee, i.e. what role is adopted on receipt of this message. The second point of importance is the rights that people have to speak in a particular discourse, e.g. in a doctor's surgery we have the right to speak as a patient but not as a medical professional (Parker, 1992).

The next phase of analysis involves understanding the discourse as a coherent set of meanings that paint a particular view of reality. Therefore the statements in a discourse can be grouped together, to indicate that they refer to the same topic. Parker (1992) points out that we can only draw on our own culturally available resources in order to do this, and analysis from a different cultural slant could give rise to an altogether different discourse. Again this is related to the subject positions that we find ourselves in within the discourse and who the discourse benefits and who it oppresses.

Following this, there needs to be a consideration of the way in which discourses are related and to analyse the interrelationship between them. This is related to the idea of reflexivity, which according to the post-structuralist view is merely the employment of more discourses, because the reflections themselves are captured and then distorted by language (Descombes, 1980). Parker (1992) cites Foucault's (1981) critique of psychoanalysis to demonstrate how people using this discourse can talk themselves into, what they believe is an ever deepening spiral of reflexivity and truth. From a Foucauldian perspective there is no primary truth to be discovered, and therefore this kind of reflexivity is folly. Parker (1992) suggests that it is more productive to look at the way in which discourses open up possibilities for other discourses through the use of metaphor and analogies and then to identify contradictions between the ways of describing an object. For example in supporting a humanistic discourse of personal growth, a participant used an information processing analogy, which as a reductionist discourse competes with the original assertion.

The next phase proposed by Parker (1992), is to look at the ways in which discourse reflects on its own way of speaking, usually through self-conscious use of language by the speaker. He suggests this could be through phrases such as, 'for the want of a better word' or, 'don't get me wrong, but...' (Parker, 1992). The idea here is to bring out the implicit meanings that aren't actually voiced but form a way of speaking about the subject. Parker (1992) suggests that this requires a certain level of intuition and that it is often easier to do this by looking at texts within texts in the context of the whole.

The final phase of analysis proposed by Parker is to look at the way in which the discourse is historically located. For example, the discourse of individualism, which was discussed in detail in the review section, has been located as emerging from the enlightenment period and more recently strengthened by late-capitalist discourses around consumerism and consumption (Rose, 1989). As discourses are located in time and history it is necessary for the analyst, in order to demonstrate the structure and force of particular discourses to explain how they arose (Parker, 1992).

Parker (1992) proposes three auxiliary criteria for the analysis of discourse in order to make the analyses politically useful, which are concerned with institutions, power and ideology. The author suggests that the most interesting discourses are those that are implicated with institutions, although Foucault (1977) would suggest that discourses and practices are the same thing, as any action is by nature text. In terms of this research the discourse of

personal growth is inextricably linked with the institutions of humanistic psychology, the Counselling Psychology division, the British Psychological Society and therefore in the daily practices of trainees and trained psychologists.

The penultimate phase of analysis is to look at the way power relations are reproduced within the discourse, for example the way in which institutions are structured around and reproduce power relations. Parker (1992) uses the example of the institutionalisation of psychology as a profession and the way in which this has given it the power to popularise objects such as 'cognitions' and 'behaviour' and then police the boundaries around them in order that non-professionals are excluded from particular forms of discourse.

It is important to note that Foucault did not consider that power was an entity held by particular groups to use on other groups; rather it is strategic and anonymous, not acting on others in a direct and immediate way but through the unstable and flexible arena of micropolitics (Foucault, 1982). For Foucault (1977) power is productive in producing the relationship between what can be said and the visible. Importantly Foucault emphasised the point that there is the continual possibility of resistance and that power and resistance work together in a symbiotic fashion (Foucault, 1980). In terms of analysis Parker (1992) suggests looking at coercive patterns of power and how resistance refuses the dominant meanings and the way in which discourses that challenge power are often themselves tangled in oppressive discourses. An

ultimate aim would be to empower those who are oppressed through the dominant discourses.

The third and final of the auxiliary criteria is to look at the ideological effects of the discourse. This Parker (1992) concedes is a controversial step as Foucault (1980) insisted that ideology presupposed truth and therefore suggests that it would be unproductive to view all discourse as ideology, but rather to look at the relationships and effects of ideologies in a particular place and historical period.