Women Counselling Psychology Trainees’ Accounts of Clinical Supervision: An Exploration of Discursive Power

By

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Abstract

This research has drawn on poststructuralist thinking to posit that assertions of supervision being a benign and necessary process or activity rely on modernist assumptions. Utilising Foucault’s work on discourses and power, this study conceptualised supervision as a social construction that has implications for practice and subjectivity, and that this process, within the context of counselling psychology, with its particular epistemological underpinnings, is worthy of further exploration. This study makes an original contribution through extending the work by Crocket (2004, 2007), who has investigated supervision’s shaping effects on professional identity, to apply it to the particular epistemological and theoretical context of counselling psychology, a profession said to value postmodern ideas such as pluralism and ambiguity (Rizq, 2006). Semi-structured interviews with six women counselling psychology trainees were analysed using Foucauldian discourse analysis, a social constructionist methodology, and found a number of discourses implicated in trainees’ subjectivity and practice. Whilst expert, developmental and gender discourses were found to be implicated in constructions of supervision as hierarchical, which was seen as a key aspect of constructions of power in supervision, other discourses were identified that offered positions from which to resist this. The researcher acknowledges that the discursive resources identified are based on this particular sample, could have been read in other ways and does not assume they can be applied to all trainee counselling psychologists. Rather, it is hoped this study may contribute to debate around supervision and it’s shaping effects and consequently be useful in enhancing counselling psychology’s reflexivity in research and practice.
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INTRODUCTION:

The aim of the current study was to examine the institutional practice of clinical supervision critically, within the context of counselling psychology, and in particular the power relations at work. Specifically, the study explored what ways of being are permitted for women in counselling psychology training by the discourses available surrounding clinical supervision. Some research has explored power in supervision within psychotherapy and counselling generally but not in the counselling psychology context. It is the intention of this study to examine power relations in clinical supervision from a poststructuralist perspective. Such an approach has been undertaken for other professional contexts such as systemic and family therapy but not for counselling psychology. Poststructuralism is an aspect of counselling psychology’s philosophical underpinnings and is therefore appropriate to be utilised in exploring this topic of power in clinical supervision. It may be said then that this research locates itself within social constructionism, which places as central the realisation that such research undertakings are only one of many other (possible) constructions and compels one to be fully self-reflexive about the research process and the supervisory relationship. This tension is succinctly surmised by Burr (2003, p.94):

“…if we understand knowledge, [sic] and truth as human constructions, we have even more responsibility to think, argue and make up our minds about our own views and then defend them”. (Burr, 2003, p.94)

This passage articulates the challenges of exploring women counselling psychology trainees’ accounts of power in clinical supervision from a social constructionist
perspective, which can be both liberating and burdensome. It is liberating because it means that any attempt to write this research the ‘right’ or ‘correct’ way is baseless when we assume that there is no universal truth. It is burdening because it shows that my own construction is only one way of researching this question - it offers only one meaning in a plurality of others - and in its production it runs the risk of sidelining others. Given the fundamental concession to reflexivity required in social constructionist research, I will begin with myself, the researcher who is, at the same time, a counselling psychology trainee.

My interest in and choice of topic was based to some extent on my experience as a trainee studying on a counselling psychology doctorate course. This experience has been characterised at times by confusion and conflicting feelings when attempting to balance the demands of the research component of the course with focusing on clinical practice. This balancing act drew me to think about what counselling psychology is supposed to be, at least according to the university, an institution, at which I am enrolled. This juggling of what could feel like quite disparate endeavours, along with the challenging requirement to undertake personal therapy, could be at times an overwhelming, anxiety provoking experience. More specifically, I experienced this process as quite a disempowering, controlling one. One manifestation took place in one of my first clinical supervisory relationships, where it appeared to me that the supervisor assumed authority about what was the correct interpretation of the client material I had brought. Any disagreement by me of his interpretations, based on my experience of being with the client, was dismissed through re-framing them as my own neuroses or shadow coming into play. On one or two occasions I explicitly rebelled against this (what I perceived as) power over me,
but was wary of the fact that ultimately I would need this same supervisor to give feedback to my university about the quality of my clinical work in order for me to satisfy course requirements, thus, leaving me feeling disempowered to assert myself. Relatedly, I felt my position further weakened by occupying the social category of ‘trainee’, a culturally defined subordinate position. These reflections on my own experience as a trainee appear to be echoed somewhat in the literature regarding this area. For example, Truell (2001) reports that for those entering the profession of counselling the experience of training can be at times stressful or negative, and has been shown to sometimes be anxiety provoking (Kumary & Baker, 2008). Rizq (2006) suggests that in the case of counselling psychology a difficulty often faced by trainees is managing the ambiguity stemming from its pluralistic, postmodern underpinnings, where no single model to practice and research is endorsed. It is not being suggested that the process of training for the counselling profession generally, and counselling psychology in particular, being difficult is a good or bad thing necessarily, but that it warrants further research regarding it. There may be different strands or elements of such difficulty, but the focus for the current study will be on the issue of power for women trainees and specifically in the context of counselling psychology clinical supervision.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Literature Search:

An important initial step was to outline any previous interest in the topic within the research literature. Undertaking a literature search using psycARTICLES, and entering the terms ‘counselling psychology’ and ‘supervision’ revealed 32 results for relevant articles. Altering search terms to U.S spelling (i.e. counseling psychology)
showed up 115 results. Adding the term ‘power’ to this search resulted in only 2 and 3 articles using U.K and U.S spelling respectively. In comparison, pairing ‘supervision’ with ‘psychotherapy’, ‘therapy’ and ‘counselling’ resulted in 899, 1229 and 375 results respectively. Although these figures decreased when selecting full texts only (i.e accessible) during searches, they were still significantly higher than for counselling psychology. This variation would seem to indicate that supervision has been under researched in the counselling psychology literature, pointing to the importance of the current study. Furthermore, it would seem explorations of notions of power in supervision across all the disciplines mentioned have been largely neglected, with searches pairing ‘supervision’ and ‘power’ with ‘psychotherapy’, ‘therapy’ and ‘counselling’ yielding only 16, 25 and 25 results respectively.

**Supervision:**

Despite the fact that clinical supervision historically has been largely under-researched, there is now an increasing amount of research in the talking therapies field investigating clinical supervision (hereafter referred to as supervision) from the perspective of both supervisor and supervisee. Areas such as the supervisory relationship (Burke, Goodyear & Guzzard, 1998), supervisor style (Steward, Breland & Neil, 2001), supervision satisfaction (Ladany, Ellis, & Firedlander, 1999), good supervisee behaviour (Vespia, Heckman-Stone & Delworth, 2002), negative supervisory events (Ramos-Sanchez, Ensil, Goodwin, Riggs, Touster, Wright, Ratanasiripong, & Rodolfa 2002; Gray, Ladany, Walker & Ancis, 2001) and disclosure within supervision (Ladany, Corbett, & Nutt, 1996; Walsh, Gillespie, Greer, & Eanes, 2003; Webb & Wheeler, 1998; Yourman, 2003) have all been explored.
Such growing research interest in this area may have stemmed from observations that the preparation for those undertaking the role of supervisor has traditionally been unsystematic and nonspecific (Salvendy, 1993; Bradley, 1989). In particular, supervisors’ level of experience as counsellors, rather than their possession of supervision specific qualities, has been the primary justification for entry into the role. Consequently supervisors have often based their practice on their own experiences as a supervisee rather than on any theoretical guidance (Proctor, 1994; Bradley, 1989; Holloway & Hosford, 1983 cited in Holloway & Wolleat, 1994). Similarly, Vespia, Heckman-Stone and Delworth (2002) point to a lack of role preparation for supervisees, which they address through their study of characteristics of trainees who use supervision well. Much of the research also stems from the argued importance of supervision in the process of developing clinical competence (Barnet, Erickson Cornish, Goodyear & Lichtenberg, 2007).

Supervision is argued to be “a fundamental ingredient of effective counselling and is essential for the welfare of the counsellor and his/her clients” (Fortune & Watts, 2000, p.5) and is seemingly the preferred method used for the assurance of quality and ethical practice in the profession (Proctor, 1994) in the current status quo. Indeed, the increasing professionalisation of counselling and psychotherapy, via regulatory bodies such as the BPS, BACP, and more recently, HPC in the case of counselling psychology has meant that not only counsellors in training but also qualified counsellors are encouraged, and in some cases required, to receive supervision whilst practicing (Fortune & Watts, 2000; Proctor, 1994; Taylor, 1994). But what exactly is supervision and why is its perceived usefulness taken for granted?
Holloway (1995, p.1) describes supervision as providing “the opportunity for a [supervisee] to capture the essence of the psychotherapeutic process as articulated and modelled by the supervisor and subsequently, to recreate this process in an actual counselling relationship”. Gilbert and Evans (2000, p.1) state that supervision is “a learning process in which a psychotherapist engages with a more experienced practitioner in order to enhance his skills in the process of ongoing professional development. This, in turn, promotes and safeguards the welfare of his clients”. Such definitions are based on various models of supervision, such as the process model of Hawkins and Shohet (1989; cited in Dryden & Thorne, 1991), and the developmental model formulated by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987). Developmental models are based on the view that “supervisory skills need to be adapted to suit the stage of professional development reached by the supervisee” (Woolfe & Tholstrup, 2009, p.593), with stages being defined in terms of the level of competence of the supervisee. Furthermore, some theorists have outlined key functions of supervision, with Carroll (1996) for example listing the functions as educative, supportive, and administrative, which are in line with Proctor’s (1986; cited in Fortune & Watts, 2000) formative, restorative and normative functions. Particularly popular in the UK is the process model which conceptualises supervision as foci located either in client-therapist or supervisor-therapist matrices (Woolfe & Tholstrup, 2009). Hess (2011) has outlined that whilst supervision as a recognised speciality has a relatively short history, its past extends across all major therapeutic approaches and from their very beginnings. For example, Freud felt that analysts should be analysed as part of their training (Hess, 2011).
These definitions would appear to assume supervision to be inherently benign and necessary. However, this is debateable, as Davy (2002) for example, points out that there is little evidence that supervision actually changes therapist behaviour to produce positive effects on clinical outcomes for clients, or that it protects clients from abuse. Gridley (2004) asserts the function of gatekeeping and client protection ascribed to supervision is problematic, due to its “paternalistic and paradoxical assumptions that [clients] require protection via processes that remain beyond their awareness, consent, or control” (p.188-189). Relatedly, Woolfe and Tholstrup (2009) posit that it could be argued supervision functions as much to give legitimacy to the therapy profession as to provide quality control or anything else. Moreover, Feltham (cited in Bates & House, 2003, p.59) states that supervision is “…at least partly a form of surveillance and is associated with professional bureaucracy”. What can also be observed in these definitions and models is an implied degree of hierarchy and inequality between supervisor and supervisee and indeed the client, with the supervisor positioned as the ‘expert’, which suggests a dynamic of power in supervision. These alternative views, which problematise the presumed beneficence of supervision, along with the observation of power operating within it, would suggest that placing supervision under closer scrutiny may be a valuable task. Indeed, it is suggested by some that the helping professions must engage in some form of critical reflection on themselves. House (2011, p.39) for example states, “in order to avoid the imposing of an experiential and subjectivity-limiting straightjacket of profession-centred therapeutic orthodoxy, therapy at its best should be ongoingly and processually deconstructive of its own taken-for-granted professional ideologies and clinical practices”. Such critical reflexivity in research and practice is argued to be an aspect of counselling psychology in particular (McAteer, 2010). In line with this, it is
the intention of this study to deconstruct supervision, exploring the power relations within it, to question it as a taken-for-granted practice, opening up possibilities both within and beyond it.

**Supervision & Power - Some previous research:**

A number of studies exploring the process of supervision have indirectly investigated the concept of power. Burke, Goodyear and Guzzard (1998) for example, in examining fluctuations in the quality and strength of the supervisory working alliance process across time for ten supervisor-trainee dyads, found that weakenings in some of the dyad alliances studied were contributed to by the perceived power of the supervisor in the role of evaluator. The inherent power of the supervisor role due to its evaluative component (Muratori, 2001) has been argued to be a key difference between the therapeutic working alliance and the supervisory working alliance. Holloway and Wolleat (1994) posit that an inequality of power exists in the roles of supervision, given that supervision is a hierarchical relationship in which the supervisor’s tasks include imparting expert knowledge, judging trainees’ performance and essentially acting as a gatekeeper to the profession through their sanctioned ability to fail the supervisee via reports and stopping contact with clients. A study by Ladany, Corbett and Nutt (1996) investigating the occurrence of non-disclosures by supervisees found that the majority of supervisees withhold information from their supervisors and that when the content of the nondisclosure includes negative reactions to the supervisor, the reasons tend to be deference to the supervisor, impression management and fear of political suicide. The authors view these reasons as an extreme version of impression management that also includes a self-protective element in terms of the supervisee’s professional existence (Ladany, et.al, 1996).
They suggest deference, reflecting the supervisee’s deferral of power and control to the supervisor (Rennie, 1994, cited in Ladany et al, 1996), could indicate the supervisee’s heightened awareness of the power differential in the supervision relationship. Webb and Wheeler (1998) similarly found supervisees were more able to disclose if they were being supervised independently of work settings, were not trainees being evaluated as part of their training, or were able to choose their own supervisors. All of these quantitative studies appear to refer to a dynamic of power in supervision.

Other studies have explored power in supervision more directly. For example, Rahim and Buntzman (1989), drawing on French and Raven’s (1959; cited in Rahim & Buntzman, p.196) classification of power into five types, namely reward, coercive, legitimate, expert and referent, investigated the relationship between supervisory power bases and satisfaction with supervision and found that the referent power base, which is derived from interpersonal attraction, was positively correlated with satisfaction with supervision. Murphy and Wright (2005) attempted to examine supervisees’ perspectives of power use in supervision in an in-depth way using the qualitative method of Grounded Theory. They pointed out that the use of power in supervision could have ostensibly positive uses such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘collaboration’, but could also be misused and abused, citing boundary violations such as providing unwanted therapy to a supervisee, forcing a supervisee to disclose and sexual harassment (Bonosky, 1995; cited in Murphy & Wright, 2005), as well as assigning an excessive caseload to a supervisee without appropriate supervision and forcing the supervisee to follow their supervisor’s theoretical framework (Porter & Vasquez, 1997; cited in Murphy & Wright, 2005). Murphy and Wright (2005) found
an expectation among supervisees for their supervisors to have and to use power, and that supervisees experienced such power as contributing to their clinical development, even when experienced as uncomfortable to them, if used appropriately (Murphy & Wright, 2005). The above studies have shown power in supervision to be ostensibly negative and oppressive, in terms of limiting supervisee self-disclosure and weakening the supervisory alliance. However, Murphy and Wright’s (2005) study showed that the power relation in supervision may be a more ambivalent, complex one in which it may also be positive or productive. This apparent complexity warrants some discussion of philosophical issues regarding power.

**Power - Philosophical considerations:**

Although existing research outlined above has touched on some of the parameters/indicators of what may be considered to be power, defining what power is and how it operates is not easily achieved, and whether this is even a worthwhile task is arguable for some. Indeed, it has been argued, based on Bateson’s suggestion that power is a dangerous myth, that “power is…a linguistic distinction which refers to nothing in itself, and talk of which produces more problems in relationships than it solves” (Guilfoyle, 2002, p.83). However, others have placed great importance on power and its effects in the therapeutic context. Masson (1988), for example, goes so far as to argue that psychotherapy contains an imbalance of power that makes it intrinsically abusive and that psychotherapy should therefore be abandoned altogether. Similarly radical critiques and explorations of power in psychotherapy have been undertaken (e.g. Szasz, 1988).
In her exploration of power in relation to counselling and psychotherapy, Proctor (2002) makes a distinction between structuralist and post-structuralist theories of power. Structuralist theories tend to view power “as a possession, and as monolithic and unitary (held in one place and having one form) and unidirectional (held by one group of people)...[and] necessarily conceived of as negative and oppressive” (Proctor, 2002, p.27). Such perspectives are often criticised for leading to structural determinism where people are either oppressing or oppressed by virtue simply due to their position in one group or the other, with no sense of agency. Post-structural theories of power challenge the assumptions of structuralism, broadening power to be “something that is present in the relationship rather than being the possession of one person; as bidirectional and influenced by outside relationships; as inescapable, and as potentially both negative and positive” (Proctor, 2002, p.136).

Understanding Proctor’s (2002) distinction requires some outline of the philosophical positions of Modernism and Postmodernism within which it is located. Modernism, born out of the Enlightenment, maintains that there is one truth and that reality contains underlying structures that can be explained through all encompassing grand theories by rational, unitary individuals (Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998). Examples of such theories in the social sciences include Marx positing economic structures as underlying social class relations, and much of what has been produced in traditional or mainstream psychology, such as psychic structures, cognitions and notions of personality. Positivistic Science, and the production of knowledge based on these modernist assumptions, holds that the nature or structure of reality is there waiting to be discovered, and there is a sense of continuity and linear progression in history and knowledge.
Postmodernism can be viewed as the culmination of a critique of, and extension beyond, modernist assumptions, positing that multiple truths and realities are possible and are historically and contextually situated. Postmodernism has been informed by numerous contributors and has been applied to many different purposes (Bertens & Natoli, 2002), making varied definitions of it possible. Crotty (1998) offers one definition, succinctly stating:

“Where modernism purports to base itself on generalised, indutiable truths about the way things really are, postmodernism abandons the entire epistemological basis for any such claims to truth. Instead of espousing clarity, certitude, wholeness and continuity, postmodernism commits itself to ambiguity, relativity, fragmentation, particularity and discontinuity” (p.185).

An important forerunner to postmodernism and poststructuralism (these terms are often used interchangeably (Crotty, 1998) but have been distinguished as a perspective on cultural and societal organisation and development (postmodernism) and the study of language and meaning (poststructuralism) (Henwood, 1996)) is structuralism. Both structuralism and poststructuralism question two things: the transparency of language, that is, that reality exists prior to and independent of being represented through language, and humanism, that holds individuals have a coherent, unchanging essence that enables them to be the author of their own experience and its meaning (Burr, 2003). Rather, through the framework of language, namely, the links between the signifier and the signified which occur between people, language is constitutive of reality rather than reflecting it. An important distinction between
structuralism and poststructuralism is that although Sassure demonstrated the relationship between the signifier and the signified to be arbitrary, once the relationship had been formed, it is fixed. Such a view accounts for how users of a given language are able to understand each other. Poststructuralism however holds that language, the relationship between signifier and signified, is not fixed, but fluid, provisional, context-dependent (Coyle, 2007b) and contestable, which accounts for meaning changing “over time, from context to context and from person to person” (Burr, 2003, p.54).

**Discourse & Power:**

It is this notion of the contestability of meaning where language may be seen as producing power relations and is pertinent to this study’s focus on power in supervision. The work of Michel Foucault made a significant contribution to such ideas within poststructuralism. He utilised archaeological and genealogical methods of historical analysis to describe and explain (Gutting, 2005) the conditions by which contemporary discourses or knowledges came into being, such as ‘sexuality’ and ‘madness’, and demonstrated the implications of this for power relations and subjectivity. Rather than any given discourse being an unquestionable fact based in reality, it is a version of an event or phenomenon that claims to be truth, and which then has implications for social practices. Foucault (1972, p.49) stated that discourses are “practices which form the objects of which they speak”. Elaborating on this definition, Law (1999, p.117) describes discourses as the “connection between statements and the prevailing social and power relations in which they are either uttered or silenced…. [referring] both to what can be said and thought, and also to who can speak and with what authority so that meaning results from institutionalised
practices that maintain the given discourse” (Law, 1999, p.117). Dominant discourses privilege those versions of social reality which legitimise existing power relations and social structures (Willig, 2008), with discursive practices the “ways of talking, thinking, feeling and acting that when enacted, serve to reinforce, reproduce or silence that which does not fit with that discourse” (Law, 1999, p.119). This illustrates the close relationship between knowledge and power, indeed, Foucault views knowledge and power as inextricably linked, with “knowledge generating power by constituting people as subjects and then governing the subjects with the knowledge” (Ritzer, 2000, p.596). In this way power is exercised in social interaction rather than a possession (Rainbow, 1991), meaning it is an exercise rather than an attribute, with questions like ‘how does it work?’ being more appropriate than ‘what is it?’(Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Importantly, for any given event there are numerous versions of it, numerous discourses, and so wherever there is power wielded by one discourse there is resistance to it offered by another discourse. For this reason, Foucault made a distinction between power and domination, “in a power relation, resistance is always possible, and therefore the directionality of influence (e.g. who influences who) can shift [while]…a state of domination fixes the relationship, rendering effective resistance impossible” (Guilfoyle, 2002, p.83-84).

Foucault, in conceptualising the subtlety of the exercise of power, moved away from juridical and strategic models to a governmental model in which “…one acts upon another not by extracting an act of their will [juridical] or by compelling them physically or even by limiting access to the objects over which they have control [strategic], but rather by acting on their actions, i.e., upon their conduct” (Thompson, 2003, p.121). So rather than power being overt, as is the case in juridical and strategic
conceptions of it, Foucault asserts that the operation of disciplinary power depends on it being invisible to some extent - “Power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault, 1967, p.86; cited in Burr, 2003). Foucault (1979) illustrated this concept of disciplinary power and the notion of surveillance that informs it through his analysis of Bentham’s Panopticon, which was a prison design of the nineteenth century that made it possible for prisoners to be observed at all times without them knowing if this was the case or not. The effect of this surveillance was that prisoners exerted discipline on themselves, conforming to the behaviour acceptable to those potentially watching them (i.e. the prevailing norms or standards of the prison setting), and this being internalised. What is important to note in this example is that the prisoner is portrayed as a self contained individual that is ascribed with certain characteristics (e.g, either conforming to or deviating from acceptable behaviour). Indeed, crucial to the notion of disciplinary power was the emergence of the modern concept of the individual (that is, self-contained) that occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth century (Samson, 1990). Rose (1985, 1990, 1996), in his analysis of the emergence of the psychology discipline, showed how, in providing a means of describing this individual, psychology, as a language and set of norms, also constituted the individual. So in the example of the prison, notions of criminality and deviance supported by psychology are implicated in the prisoners being understood, by themselves and those around them, in a particular way and thus regulated.

**Discourse, Power & Subjectivity:**

Discourses offer subject positions that entail different rights and obligations for the participants, and so in addition to the implications of this for power relations,
discourses also produce subjectivity or identity. This idea of ‘discursive production of the subject’ was partly informed by Althusser, who decentred the humanistic sense of the individual through his concept of interpellation (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This process of identification holds that the subject is formed through language in the moment that they are hailed and recognise themselves as the one hailed, so that in “the exchange by which that recognition is proffered and accepted, interpellation – the discursive production of the social subject – takes place” (Butler, 1997, p.5). Relatedly, it is argued “the other plays a central role in constituting the individual’s self. Without the ongoing relationship to the other, our selves would be invisible…The other gives us meaning and a comprehension of our self so that we may function in the social world” (Madigan, 1999, p.154). Foucault went further with this idea of the self, subjectivity, being formed in interaction and language rather than from a humanistic notion of a coherent core. He did this by problematising the concept of ‘individuals’, preferring the term ‘subject’ or ‘subjectivity’ to highlight that the individual is actually a historically situated phenomenon that has emerged as the ‘site’ where discourses such as sexuality and madness can take place, as ‘technologies of the self’ (Kendall and Wickham, 1999). From this perspective, identities are the product of dominant discourses (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), where “people are spoken through or by discourses” (Edley & Wetherell, 1997, p.205). As an example, a medical discourse framing human distress as ‘illness’ affords different subject positions, namely, the patient and doctor, the former passively receives medical treatment and advice while the latter dispenses it. In this situation, the subject position and rights it affords might be different if ‘patient’ was replaced with ‘customer’. Analysis of the subject positions offered within a number of discourses have been studied, such as addiction (Gillies & Willig, 1997) and masculinity (Edley
& Wetherell, 1997). This decentring of the individual is argued by some to be ‘the death of the subject’, with critics of Foucault arguing this removes any human agency, replacing the structural determinism of modernism with linguistic determinism (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). However, it has been argued that decentring is not to be confused with complete erasure of the self (Winslade, 2005). Kendall and Wickham (1999, p.54) argue that Foucauldian notions of power, knowledge and the subject are intricately intertwined and cannot be separated, precluding “questions of origin or of determinancy”. Important here is the notion of resistance, whereby the human agent may adopt or resist the subject positions offered, so that “change is made possible through opening up marginalised and repressed discourses, making them available as alternatives from which…[to] fashion alternative identities” (Burr, 2003, p.122).

Davies and Harre (1990) developed the idea of discursive positioning based on Foucault’s subject positions, their notion of ‘positioning’ referring to “the process through which speakers adopt, resist and offer ‘subject positions’ that are made available in discourses…For example, speakers can position themselves (and others) as victims or perpetrators, active or passive, powerful or powerless” (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p.43). The work of Davies and Harre allows for people to be simultaneously produced by and producers of discourses (Burr, 2003; Winslade, 2005).

**Rationale for Current Study:**

**A Critique of Supervision - Poststructuralist Considerations Applied:**

The above distinction outlined by Proctor (2002) between structuralist and post-structuralist notions of power may also be considered when analysing supervision itself. The definitions of supervision mentioned above arguably imply modernist
notions, indicating supervision as possessing an ‘essence’, that is, presuming that “…’true’ objective knowledge exists, has been discovered, and can be transferred from the mind of the knower (supervisor) to the mind of the knowee (supervisee)” (Edwards & Keller, 1995, p.144). From this modernist viewpoint, the nature of both supervisors’ and supervisees’ involvement in the supervisory process or experience is a consequence of inherent qualities of each individual, such as developmental level, and bound by what is taken to be truth or knowledge. As Copeland, Dean and Wvladkowski (2011, p.37) state, “[when] supervision stays within a modernist orientation to knowledge, the debate is always about the ‘right’ way to work with a client or the ‘right’ theory to apply to the work”. Holloway and Wolleat’s (1994) claim that supervision is necessarily a hierarchical relationship due to the supervisor’s task of imparting expert knowledge is an example of such modernist assumptions and can be seen as evoking structuralist notions of power, in which power is the possession of the supervisor by virtue of their ‘expert knowledge’.

However, post-structuralist ideas, particularly those of Foucault relating to discourses, power and subjectivity, will be drawn on, just as they have been in similar critiques of psychotherapy (Parker, 1999a), psychopathology (Parker et al. 1995) and counselling/psychotherapy training (House, 2003), to call into question or deconstruct supervision as an object existing independently of its observers and participants. Instead, supervision will be posited as a construct built and maintained through its language and social exchange (Davy, 2002), namely, supervision as discourse or social construction. A number of studies have drawn on such postmodern perspectives in exploring the concept of supervision, although Philp (et al, 2007) points out much more attention has been focused on its relevance to counselling than supervision until
recently. Much of this research seems to have predominately emerged from Family and Systemic therapy fields (Whiting, 2007; Anderson & Swim, 1995; Edwards & Keller, 1995; Turner & Fine, 1995) and so it would appear therefore that further research into postmodern perspectives of supervision within the counselling psychology context would make an original contribution to knowledge within this field. It must also be noted that many of these writings explore ways for supervisors to view supervision, seemingly giving little attention to supervision as constructed by supervisees.

Particularly relevant to this study is the work of Crocket (2007) who argues supervision as shaping of professional identity. Crocket (2004, p.172) writes, “…in supervision…the stories we tell of our practices and the ethics of those practices do not merely reflect our work, they produce us as practitioners and produce our practices…[positioning] supervision as a site of the production of professional selves”. Crocket (2007, p.19) draws on Foucauldian notions of governmentality and disciplinary power, which involves the idea “that the institutions and disciplines of the modern world have us, its subjects, shape ourselves on the terms offered by these institutions and disciplines” to highlight supervision as an act of professional governance. Crocket (2007) extends Rose’s (1985) notion of the ‘psy-complex’ to supervision as an equally shaping and self governing process. Parker (1999b, p.62), in reviewing the term, states that the ‘psy-complex’ is “the dense network of theories and practices to do with the mind and behaviour which divide the normal from the abnormal in order to observe and regulate individuals (Rose, 1985)”. Put simply, it refers to a critique of the psy-based professions because, by virtue of producing standards by which normality and healthy functioning are measured, they shape and
police society. Crocket (2007) suggests supervision overtly and subtly shapes practitioners to become responsible, trustworthy and competent in their practice, and whilst she hastens to add that these are not unworthy of aspiring to, it is equally worthy to explore the strategies by which the participants in supervision act upon themselves to do so. In doing so, alternative discourses may be opened up. It must be noted that Crocket’s (2007) research consisted of analysing an extract of a dyadic conversation between counsellor and supervisor, taken from a peer group of five counsellors and supervisors that met fortnightly over the course of a year. The current study will be exploring the shaping effects of supervision for counselling psychology trainees rather than for counsellors, and will do this by examining the talk of trainees in semi-structured interviews.

Parker (1992, p.6) states that discourses are manifested in texts, which he describes as “all tissues of meaning”, implicating everything in the world that has been described, understood and so given meaning by people, as texts. How discourses construct our experience, and the associated power relations and subjectivities, can be examined “by ‘deconstructing’ these texts, taking them apart and showing how they work to present us with a particular vision of the world, and thus enabling us to challenge it” (Burr, 2003, p.18). Parker (1999, p.11) makes the point that “deconstruction is not a single thing, and cannot be summed up in a neat definition or be put to work as a discrete technique”. Certainly, this ambiguity makes deconstruction difficult initially to understand or engage with. Ritzer (2000, p.475) describes deconstruction as “an alternative epistemological practice to modernism which shows how concepts, posed as accurate representations of the world, are historically constructed and contain contradictions”. It is a process of problematising the dominant discourse, with its
privileged knowledges, which are necessarily, by definition, excluding and oppressing alternative discourses (Swan, 1999). Larner (1999, p.39) explains that it “articulates the paradoxes and double binds inherent in discourses of power and institution, in order to minimise their violent repression of difference and the other”. In deconstructing supervision, how supervisees make meaning of their work with clients may be understood as narrative constructions created within the supervision discourse, restricted by the stories they have access to within the discourse of supervision, rather than as properties of ‘developmental level’ or any other modernist models. Therefore, part of deconstructing supervision may involve questioning modernist conceptions of it in order to reveal alternative voices or discourses, new meanings and possibilities.

In the UK supervision has been viewed as relevant and necessary for not just trainees, but qualified practitioners also. However, this research aims to explore the production of professional selves or identity in the context of trainee counselling psychologists, who are at the beginning of entering the profession of counselling psychology, and the disciplinary power relations mentioned earlier that impact on, or indeed produce it. Trainees in the beginning are said to often have a need for certainty (Anderson & Swim, 1995) and want to ‘know’ what to do and choose the ‘right’ model for intervention (Rizq, 2006). This may explain findings that beginner supervisees prefer direction and structure from their supervisors while advanced supervisees prefer a less structured supervision environment (Worthington & Roehlke, 1979, Heppner & Roehlke, 1984; cited in Quarto, 2003). As a kind of parallel to this, Crocket (2004) points out a dominant idea, based on developmental models, in supervision and even in some postmodern accounts of supervision practice, drawing a distinction between
beginner supervisees and more experienced supervisees in their ability to story a professional identity due to less experience of the former with professional language and knowledge. However, she goes on to argue that this suggestion that there is little material to draw on in storying the professional identity of a counsellor new to the field “is to edit out the possibility that the counsellor brings a richness of lived experience upon which they draw as they story their professional identity” (Crocket, 2004: 176). This in a way places supervision as a technology which consequently creates a problem of dependency where the supervisee’s capacity to have authority and agency, their own voice, can be deprived due to the rights to speak and for action offered by this subject position, just as is argued of the application of technology in therapy (Drewery & McKenzie, 1999).

Trainees or Women in Training: Whose accounts of power in supervision?

Feminist Perspectives

Some mention of Feminist literature is relevant at this point for two reasons. Firstly, although the current study was first conceived as an exploration of what being a ‘trainee’ meant for power relations in clinical supervision, the fact all the respondents that were to end up participating in the study were women demands an acknowledgment that this study is not just about trainees but women trainees, and to explore this. Secondly, in so far as Feminism in all its forms (e.g. socialist, radical etc) is underlined by the aim of overcoming the subordination of women (McNay, 1992), its theory and research is relevant for other subordinated groups such as those who are non-white, non-Western, non-heterosexual and in the case of this study, the non-supervisor (i.e. supervisee). This recognition of feminist perspectives can be seen, at the most superficial level, in the title of the study - ‘Women Counselling Psychology
Trainees’ Accounts of Clinical Supervision: An Exploration of Discursive Power’ – in that the phrase ‘women counselling psychology trainees’ was used rather than ‘female counselling psychology trainees’ to reflect the distinction made by feminist theorists between the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, which have traditionally been understood as interchangeable and as a consequence justifying male privilege (Simpson & Mayr, 2010).

However, it is important to specify what kind of Feminism that can be drawn on given the current study’s poststructuralist, social constructionist perspective. As McNay (1992) points out, there are limitations to assimilating a primarily philosophical form of critique (poststructuralism) with feminist theory which has an emancipatory goal. Nonetheless, she argues that this is possible to an extent, and indeed a number of feminist theorists have utilised poststructuralism (e.g. Sunderland, 2004; Baxter, 2003). Such works can be included in what has been referred to as ‘third wave’ or poststructuralist feminism, which views the term discourse to refer to the constructive nature of language for social reality, subjectivity and practice rather than simply to a dialogue exchange.

A number of feminist studies have explored gender in relation to supervision (e.g. Nelson and Holloway, 1990; Holloway & Wolleat, 1994; McHale & Carr, 1998; Doughty & Leddick, 2007), although these have tended to frame differences in language between men and women in terms of ‘deficit’ (i.e women’s language as lacking), ‘dominance’ (gender inequality) and ‘difference’ (different social roles). Nelson and Holloway (1990), for example, studied the patterns of involvement in supervisory discourse comparing gender. Using a quantitative method of analysis,
they found that both female and male supervisors often fail to encourage their female supervisees’ assumption of power in the supervision session. They also found that female trainees, in deference to a more powerful authority figure, relinquish power significantly more often than male trainees. Nelson and Holloway’s (1990) study, along with that of McHale and Carr (1998), were based on an understanding of gender as ‘difference’ as outlined above and defined supervision discourse as the exchanges that occur between supervisor and supervisee during live supervision. Similarly, Doughty and Leddick (2007) in their review of literature regarding gender and supervision, use language that appears to reflect an assumption of fixed gender differences.

Numerous feminist research has occupied the poststructuralist, social constructionist perspective by challenging gender as a binary opposition through viewing language differences as manifestations of men and women being constructed or performed, emphasising the multiplicity of femininities and masculinities (Pichler & Preece, 2011). Examples include Lester’s (2008) study of how women’s gender is constructed in the workplace, and Lynch and Nowosenetz’s (2009) exploration of gender construction amongst science, engineering and technology students. However, there appears to be a lack of research into the construction of gender in the counselling psychology supervision context. Therefore, the current study may be seen as making a feminist contribution. Some may question the validity of such a claim given that the researcher is a man, with Biever, De Les Fuentes and Cashion (1998) for example stating that “to believe that you can represent a group of which you are not a member may be interpreted as being a continuation of an authoritarian or patriarchal position”. However, Lazar (2005) argues that the social identity of the researcher as a man or a
woman per se is not a problem in feminist research and whilst the researcher
acknowledges the complexities and tensions within this debate, this study through its
exploration of women counselling psychology trainee’s accounts of supervision is
believed to be of some value for feminist perspectives.

Counselling Psychology Context:
This study seeks to contribute to the line of research undertaken by Crocket (2004,
2007) but argues that the particular epistemological and theoretical context of
counselling psychology, a profession said to value postmodern ideas such as pluralism
and ambiguity (Rizq, 2006), may have implications for the available discursive
resources for trainees in this supervision context. Counselling psychology is relatively
new (Milton, 2010), with its birth as a profession regarded to be with the
establishment of the Section of Counselling Psychology in the British Psychological
Society (BPS) in 1982, although it was not fully recognised until 1994 when
divisional status was achieved (Orlans & Scoyoc, 2009). Counselling psychology has
also been accused of being ambiguously defined, with Cross and Watts (2002)
pointing to the British Psychological Society (BPS) describing it in terms of how it is
distinguished from other approaches to counselling rather than stating what
constitutes the profession. The distinction between counselling psychology and other
professions such as clinical psychology is not absolute in terms of methods of practice
and work settings, with much overlap between them (Woolfe, 1996). Indeed it has
become “a broad church, committed to exploring a range of approaches to inquiry and
recognising the contribution of differing traditions” (Strawbrdige & Woolfe, 2009,
p.4), and applied in numerous settings. However it is argued to be distinct and unique
when its historical development and philosophical underpinnings are made explicit.
Counselling psychology emphasises the importance of psychological theory and research being applied to the practice of counselling, to address the perceived failure of counsellors to evaluate their practice (Woolfe, 1996). As demonstrated by McCleod (1993, p.2) for example who defined a counselling psychologist as “a counsellor who has initial training in psychology, and who uses psychological methods and models in his or her approach”. As such the term ‘scientist-practitioner’ has often been used in describing this profession. However, in exploring the philosophical assumptions of the profession as described in this way, some have argued counselling psychology to be a ‘hesitant hybrid’ (Spinelli, 2001) and a ‘conflation of paradigms’ (Williams & Irving, 1996). This is because counselling psychology also holds onto a humanistic value base, privileging “respect for the personal, subjective experience of the client over and above notions of diagnosis, assessment and treatment” (Lane & Corrie, 2006, p.17). Spinelli (2001, p.4), writes:

“…while psychology adopts a logico-empiricist paradigm whose view of the individual remains mechanistic, and whose purpose is not simply understanding but also entails notions of prediction and control, counselling (and psychotherapy), on the other hand, is principally an enabling and empowering process which adopts a phenomenologically-derived perspective wherein notions of intentionality and meaning are the central concepts”.

Orlans and Scoyoc (2009), in outlining psychology’s historical development, highlight its emergence as a separate discipline during a period when positivism became the dominant philosophy. This led psychology to increasingly define itself as a natural science by the 1950’s, holding that through objective, rational science, laws
could be discovered allowing the prediction and control of human behaviour. However, alongside this focus on positivistic methods of theory and practice, from early on there was also an interest in consciousness and subjective experience as central to psychology, and so the appropriateness of applying methods of natural science to humans was questioned (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2009). Van Duerzan-Smith (1990) argues that mainstream psychology was too preoccupied with such a narrowly defined view of science (i.e. natural science model) to adequately attend to what it means to be human, and counselling psychology emerged in response to this. As can be seen, whether the pairing of ‘counselling’ with ‘psychology’ is viewed as a “logical absurdity” (Williams & Irving, 1996, p.6) rather depends on the form of science, namely natural science model or human science model, and its associated epistemological assumptions, upon which the ‘psychology’ element is based. Strawbridge and Woolfe (1996) observe that the activities, role and identity of counselling psychology must be explored in the economic, political and social contexts in which they operate, and consequently as counselling psychologists increasingly work in settings, such as the NHS, which are dominated by the medical model, pressure on what it means to be a counselling psychologist intensifies.

Epistemological and Ontological Considerations:

It was stated at the outset of this thesis that a social constructionist perspective would be adopted, and so some qualification of what is meant by this is appropriate. Giles (2002, p183) defines social constructionism as “an understanding of the world (i.e. ‘reality’) as the product of historical, cultural and social interaction, rather than fixed, universal ‘essences’”. However, it is argued that there is not one form of social constructionism (Potter, 1996) with those who’s work could be described as such
bearing only a ‘family resemblance’ (Burr, 2003). Cromby and Nightingale (1999, p.6), in their review of what unifies these different forms, state that all proponents of social constructionism “agree that social processes, particularly language, are central to...experience...endorse notions of historical and cultural change...accept that knowledge and activity are intimately related...[are] critical of the beliefs, methods and techniques of mainstream psychology, and advocate...alternative models of the person, research and practice”. All forms of social constructionism, in relation to epistemology, which is the study of the nature of knowledge, assert that knowledge is relative (i.e. there are multiple knowledges rather than knowledge) and is socially constructed rather than an ultimate truth to be discovered. However, there has been disagreement in relation to ontology, a branch of philosophy involving the study of existence in the world and questioning what is reality. What has become known as ‘the realism-relativism debate’ refers to the degree to which materiality or the extra-discursive is seen to be important.

Relativists (micro social constructionists) hold their position to be “social science par excellence” (Edwards et al., 1995, p.42) because everything is discursively constructed, so no truth claims are out of bounds, with all views being equally valid (Willig, 2008). This is argued to have made a critical psychology that makes interrogating the truth claims of traditional psychology possible (Parker, 1999b). Some have argued such relativism makes it difficult to refute the claims of revisionist historians as equally valid, as Geras (1995, p.110) states, “…if truth is wholly relativised…there is no injustice”. However, relativists refuse to accept these as a “bottom line, a bedrock of reality that places limits on what may be as epistemologically constructed or deconstructible” (Edwards, et. Al., 1995, p.26).
Rather, relativists have sought to demonstrate that references to physical and material realities such as death and furniture are discursive constructions rhetorically deployed.

Critical realists (that is, macro social constructionists) highlight that the relativist position translates to an inability to take any political position, making it “difficult for us to sustain the project of a critical psychology” (Parker, 1998, p.2). Critical realists are not to be mistaken as assuming a naïve realist position, whereby our perceptions are an accurate reflection of reality. Indeed, they, like relativist social constructionists, hold language to be productive rather than representative and question a universal knowledge and essential truth. However, critical realism does assert that discourse is not completely free-floating and independent of any reality, but is dependent to some extent on the extra-discursive.

Having broadly outlined this debate, what is its significance for the current study? Deciding on which side of the fence this research positions itself can be determined somewhat by the subject matter, namely power within supervision as an institutional practice, which is its focus. Parker (1989, p.61) argues “…we have to refer to the ‘real’ in some way in order to provide an adequate account of power and the development of different forms of power in different cultures”. Along similar lines, Parker and Burman (1993, p.158) note that discourse analysis, a social constructionist methodology, risks falling into idealism if it only attends to language at the expense of attending to the materiality of power, stating that “although power is certainly (re)produced in discourse, power is also at work in the structural position of people when they are not speaking” (p.158). Based on this it is suggested the current study must adopt a critical realist (macro social constructionist) position to address its topic.
adequately. However, what might the extra-discursive consist of? The writings of Bhaskar (1989) and Cromby and Nightingale (1999) have theoretically identified embodiment, materiality and institutions as extra-discursive, with the latter being of particular interest for the current study. Willig (1999, p.48) has provided an example of the relationship between discourses and institutions, stating “the racist discursive practice of checking passports at airports reproduces the material basis of the institution (in this case the nation state) and thus reinforces its power”.

Taking the above into account, this study will attempt two things. Firstly, in line with its relativist epistemological position, it will explore how participants’ talk constructs particular versions of supervision and how these open up and shut down possibilities for them. Secondly, in line with its ontological realist stance, some consideration will be given to tentatively identifying institutional objects and spaces that may afford some discourses to emerge more than others. I say tentatively as there is some argument as to the extent this can be achieved from participant accounts alone, which will be elaborated on in the discussion. It must also be emphasised that adopting a critical realist position is not inconsistent with poststructuralism and Foucauldian discourse analysis, an assertion that will also be explicated in due course.

**Conclusion/Summary – Aims for this study:**

The above literature review has attempted to provide some outline of what supervision is held to be, along with questioning supervision’s taken for granted importance. This critique has drawn on poststructuralist thinking to posit that assertions of supervision being a benign and necessary process or activity rely on modernist assumptions. Utilising Foucault’s work on discourses and power, it is the
contention of this study that supervision may be conceptualised as a social construction that has implications for practice and subjectivity, and that this process, within the context of counselling psychology, with its particular epistemological underpinnings, is worthy of further exploration. By this problematising of dominant discourses, alternative discourses may be opened up (Swan, 1999), adhering to critical psychology’s notion of resistance to any given discourse being possible (Parker, 1999c). The application of postmodern perspectives to supervision has not been pursued to the extent as it has for therapy, and when it has done, the context has been family and systemic therapy supervision rather than counselling psychology supervision, and consisting primarily of theoretical papers rather than empirical research. The current study will attempt to deconstruct counselling psychology supervision, specifically for women in training whose rights to speak and act will be determined by that which is afforded to them by the discourses informing supervision. It must be noted that in undertaking an analysis of women counselling psychology trainees’ talk about supervision and their experiences of power within it, the researcher makes no claims to truth (a modernist ideal), acknowledging that this is only one construction or reading that is possible. However, it is hoped it will serve to bring attention to the ways that supervision discourses may shape women counselling psychology trainees’ practices and subjectivity and in this sense revealing power relations that occur. Such a critical perspective is argued to be valued by counselling psychology as part of its reflexivity.
METHODOLOGY:

Methodology Defined:

Methodology has been described as the strategy, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods (Crotty, 1998). Ponterotto (2005) maintains that methodology should follow from the position taken on epistemology and ontology. That is, the epistemological and ontological stance adopted in research must be considered in determining the most appropriate methodology. For much of psychology’s history, quantitative methodologies have dominated research due to the hegemony of positivism-empiricism, not just in this profession but in most forms of ‘traditional’ science (Woolgar, 1996). Research from this epistemological and ontological perspective, known as the ‘scientific method’, would attempt to measure and control defined ‘variables’, whilst maintaining the researcher as separate from and unbiased in this process, in order to predict and control the phenomenon under study (Ponterotto, 2005). However, this approach to studying human beings became increasingly criticised in the 1960’s and 1970’s, in what became known as the ‘crisis in social psychology’, for “reflecting a limited, mechanistic model of human beings” (Coyle, 2007, p.15). Parker (1994, see pages 4-8 for a detailed account) outlines some of the problems relating to the ‘old paradigm’, including ecological validity, ethics, demand characteristics, volunteer characteristics, experimenter effects, and language. Emerging from this critique was a shift towards qualitative research, as part of a call to a naturalistic paradigm where attention could be given to the complexities of behaviour and meaning in context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; cited in Morrow, 2007). Morrow (2007) outlines the core characteristics of qualitative research to include studying individuals in the natural world, learning about the meanings they make of
their experiences, investigating them in social interaction and in context, and reporting research results in the everyday language of participants.

Embracing qualitative research has been argued to contribute to the methodological and philosophical diversity of counselling psychology (Morrow, 2007) and offering forms of inquiry that can be better integrated with clinical practice (McLeod, 1996). This is not to suggest that qualitative methods are without their own challenges (see McLeod, 1996). As Coyle (2007, p.20) warns, assuming the use of qualitative methods to automatically lead to direct access to research participants’ subjectivities and to a democratisation of the research process is a mistake, as “all research products are the result of a dynamic and inescapable interaction between the accounts offered by participants and the interpretive frameworks of the researchers…[and] addressing the power differential between the researcher and the researched involves much critical, honest, reflective dialogue and flexibility”. Therefore, any consideration to use qualitative methods should not be an arbitrary decision, but based on explicating and choosing between the different philosophical positions from which qualitative research may be grounded, in order to most appropriately address the particular questions and objectives of a study. For example, Morrow (2007) distinguishes between postpositivism, interpretivism-constructivism and ideological-critical theories, which have some overlap with Madill et al (2000), tracing realist, contextual constructionist and radical constructionist strands, and Reicher (2000)’s experiential and discursive approaches. All of these terms refer to different positions along a continuum onto which all research may be placed in regards to each of their epistemological and ontological assumptions, i.e. what claims they make about what can be known and what exists as reality (see Figure 1).
Pertinent to locating the current study along this continuum is the ‘turn to language’, which was informing a growing questioning, in a number of disciplines from the 1950s onwards, that “language provided a set of unambiguous signs with which to label internal states and with which to describe external reality” (Willig, 2008, p.92). Rather, language was increasingly held as productive and constitutive. This research is located within this turn to language and discourse, by looking at the supervision experience as being socially constructed rather than a product of inherent qualities of either supervisors or supervisees. Therefore, in terms of methodological position, this study may not be described as being at the positivistic or naïve realist end of the spectrum. However, it cannot be placed at the other, relativist, end either, because in order to address issues of power and subjectivity (that is the focus of the study) a critical realist position must be adopted, as holding onto some notion of materiality or reality is necessary to investigate these issues (Parker, 1992).
The turn to language first established itself in psychology through the publication of Potter and Wetherall’s (1987) Discourse and Social Psychology Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour, which critiqued psychology’s cognitivism, and gave examples of discourse analytic approaches to research. Since then there has been a significant amount of discourse analytic research, with discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis being the two most dominant approaches that have emerged. These approaches differ in terms of the intellectual traditions from which they have developed, their associated epistemological positions and consequently the types of research questions they address (Willig, 2008), which will be outlined below. Despite these differences, both forms of discourse analysis are intended to address questions beyond those typically asked by mainstream research, such as regarding cause and effect, influential factors or between-group differences (Giles, 2002).

**Discursive Psychology:**

Discursive psychology was inspired by conversation analysis and ethnomethodology and as such shares their concern with the negotiation of meaning in local interaction (Willig, 2008). Rather than language directly representing internal mental states or cognitions, discursive psychology emphasises language as productive, conceptualising these states as discursive actions that people do rather than what people have or are (Willig, 2008). In discursive psychology the focus of analysis is on the performative nature of talk in managing the interests of those in interaction, and involves identifying discursive practices in talk and how people use these to achieve social and interpersonal functions. Examples of such practices include accusations, criticisms and mitigations (Edley and Wetherell, 1997).
Discursive psychology is commonly associated with a relativist position to epistemology and ontology in that it is focused on how certain constructions of psychological phenomena are brought into being through the use of discursive practices, but is not concerned with anything beyond that, i.e. the extra-discursive. For this reason a limitation of this approach is its inability to address questions of subjectivity or power.

**Foucauldian Discourse Analysis:**

Edley and Wetherell (1997, p.205) include Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) in what they describe as ‘top-down’ forms of discourse analysis, that “focus on issues of power, ideological practice and social processes...to highlight the ways in which people are spoken through or by discourses [italics in original]”. It shares with discursive psychology a prioritising of the role of language in the constitution of social and psychological life, but unlike discursive psychology which focuses primarily on the immediate, interpersonal interaction, FDA moves beyond this to examine the relationship between discourse and subjectivity, practices, and the material conditions within which they occur (Willig, 2008). This concern for the role of discourses in social processes of legitimation and power in FDA highlights it as appropriate to be used given this study’s interest in power in supervision. FDA holds that the ways in which we experience ourselves, for example, as ‘sick’ or ‘healthy’, ‘competent’ or ‘incompetent’ (perhaps more relevant for trainees, part of the study’s topic), are informed by discursive constructions and practices. This approach takes into consideration the historical development of discourses and the relationship between discourses and institutions, meaning that how discourses have changed over time and the impact of this on subjectivity, and how discourses both reinforce and
legitimate, and are validated by, existing institutional structures are examined (Willig, 2008). The publication of Changing the Subject (Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984), with its examination of the role of psychological theories in constructing objects and subjects, was instrumental in bringing this approach to discourse analysis to the field of psychology.

Those using discourse analysis within a poststructuralist/Foucauldian framework are reluctant to prescribe a set method, as it may be viewed as reflecting positivistic claims to truth (Graham, 2005) rather than eschewing formulation (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Billig (1988) for example contends that conducting discourse analysis requires a scholarly analytic mentality rather than a rigorous methodology. However, Graham (2005) points out that being explicit about what one is doing is different from a systematised method, which would indeed be contradictory to poststructuralism’s commitment to keeping possibilities open and ‘undecidability’. A number of thinkers have tentatively outlined guidelines that may be usefully kept in mind for conducting this form of analysis (e.g. Parker, 1992; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) suggest four stages or themes as a guide for analysis. These include problematisations (examples where discursive objects and practices are made problematic and consequently visible), technologies (practical forms of rationality for the government of self and others), subject positions (the cultural repertoire of discourses available to speakers on which to ground claims of truth and manage their moral location in social interaction) and subjectification (the practices and authority through which subjects seek to regulate themselves). These suggestions will be utilised in the current study, but Willig’s (2008) six stages of analysis will be primarily drawn on, due to its perceived clarity for the researcher and
its application in previous studies (e.g. Sykes, Willig, & Marks, 2004). It must be acknowledged that Willig’s (2008) stages of analysis cannot be considered a full analysis in the Foucauldian sense as they do not engage with the history of discourses which Foucault’s ‘geneology’ and ‘archeology’ accessed. However, Willig (2008) offers them as a ‘way in’ to FDA.

**Reflexivity:**

Researchers in all forms of qualitative research are viewed as part of the process of knowledge production and must be aware of what they bring to bear on the research, by way of reflection on their actions and reactions at each stage of the research (Lyons & Coyle, 2007). Finlay (2002) highlights that the researcher influences the collection, selection, and interpretation of data, with research being a product of the researcher, participants, and their relationship. Such reflexivity is particularly important in the case of discourse analysis given that it is not ‘reality’ that is being studied but the discourses constructing it which is the focus of study. Parker (1994) suggests that the researcher’s subjectivity should be viewed as a resource rather than a problem. Burr (2003, p.156) argues that reflexivity may be used in research to highlight that the researcher’s account of the event or phenomena studied “is simultaneously a description of the event and part of the event because of the constitutive nature of talk. This open acknowledgement of the social construction of one’s own account as a researcher undermines its potential claim to be the only possible truth”.

Placing such importance on reflexivity, the current study deliberately outlines the context of the researcher at the outset. The researcher’s “personal links to the topic are
not in themselves a sufficient basis for research, but they are a probable starting point for the project. They are not seen negatively as bias but as a position to be acknowledged” (Taylor, 2001, p.17). Reflexive commentary sections will be included wherever possible to give some background and meaning to the way the research was carried out and interpreted by the researcher. In an effort for this process of reflexivity to be meaningful rather than a token exercise, the commentaries will immediately follow the section of the research to which they apply, rather than isolated from them and potentially implying their lesser importance (Coyle, 2007), as could be assumed if located in a separate chapter.
METHOD:

Participants:

The participants in this study were six women in counselling psychology training. Obtaining a large and representative sample is not a necessary aim for discourse analysis, as it is the discourse itself and not the speakers of the discourse that are the focus, and so what is important is having an adequate size of text or sample of discourses to study, rather than the number of speakers (Wood & Kroger, 2000). It must also be noted that the sample size for this study exceeds the minimum of five required for a postgraduate thesis using discourse analysis (Turpin, Barely, Beail, Scaife, Slade, Smith & Walsh, 1997). As Willig (2008) argues, time and pragmatic considerations are pertinent when deciding on sample size and Loewenthal (2010) points out that most relational researchers will recruit a small sample and typically through opportunity sampling. Whilst a large sample is not necessary, having a sample from a population where the discourses of interest are likely to be available is. Given that the topic of interest was supervision and the implications of being a trainee within this institutional practice, it was hoped that counselling psychology trainees’ talk in an interview setting may show at work the discourses relevant to the topic.

Trainees in their first year of training were excluded as it was felt they would not be sufficiently exposed to the supervision experience. Recruitment was initially focused on trainees from other universities and other cohorts to the researcher (in the case of participants attending the same university as the researcher). However, participants from the researcher’s own cohort were not excluded because, as Burman (1994) argues, the researcher’s prior knowledge of participants from non research contexts may facilitate greater disclosure and reflexive commentary in the interview.
Participants are indicated through pseudonyms in the analysis in order to protect their identities. The table below includes some demographic information about the participants. In addition to these details, participants were asked to confirm that they were either in the penultimate or ultimate year of their course, as well as what university they attended. Three participants attended University of Roehampton, while one participant each attended University of Surrey, City University and West of England University.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connie</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White European</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenda</td>
<td>45-55</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White European</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Willig (2001, p.97) warns against including ‘‘standard’’ demographic material…because, from a discourse analytic point of view, provision of such ‘information’ is, in fact, a way of constructing identities”. However, the above table of information was not included to suggest particular social categories capturing the essence of people placed within them, but to give some context to the discourses identified in the data and this rationale was felt appropriate.
Ethics:
Ethical approval for this study was granted by Roehampton University’s Ethical Board before the collection of data commenced. It was the intention of the researcher to conduct the study as ethically as possible, guided by the BPS’s Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2006) and the Division of Counselling Psychology’s Professional Practice Guidelines (BPS, 2006), and in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the university. It was anticipated that participants may experience some distress in reflecting on, and discussing, their experiences given the topic of interest, i.e. power in supervision. Furthermore, qualitative research generally involves participants disclosing sensitive information and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is often very intimate. Because of this, the researcher’s “responsibility to treat participants with high regard and respect is paramount” (Morrow, 2007, p.217). This was addressed by providing potential clients with sufficient information outlining what participating would involve, ensuring they were aware of their right to withdraw from the study, and providing a debriefing at the end of the interview. Additionally, the researcher was probably ideally placed to be aware of and sensitive to difficulties experienced by participants due to his own counselling psychology training (Morrow, 2007) and experience of being a trainee in supervision.

Reflexive commentary: The sensitive nature of the topic became apparent when discussing what participating would involve with a number of the participants prior to commencing the interviews. One interviewee enquired about when the study would be published, anxious to ensure she was no longer in a particular supervisory relationship by the time of publication. In this instance I reminded her of the steps that would be taken to maintain her anonymity and an estimation of study completion. Similarly,
another participant had concerns after the interview about the depth of what she had revealed. The measures that would be taken to maintain her identity, both in the interview transcript and the study write up, were explained to her and her right to withdraw from the study was reiterated. In another case, the participant enquired about what instances a supervisor breaking an ethical boundary would be reported if it were raised in the interview. These instances drove home to me both the risk of perceived repercussions participants were taking through their involvement and this being a manifestation of the power being investigated. It also demanded further consideration of ethical issues, as my focus until this point had been on treating participants ethically, and being mindful of their clients, but less so on my ethical responsibility of when to report ethical violations perpetrated by supervisors.

A further ethical consideration was the issue of participant deception. Whilst making every effort to fully inform participants about the nature of the study, the decision was made to not specifically state the intended method of analysis, i.e. FDA. The reason for this was to encourage participants to talk about their felt experiences, where the talk itself was important, rather than them distancing themselves from their experiences and talking about their talk, due to knowledge of the analysis to be used. This was not felt to be inconsistent with the principle of non-malevolence prescribed by the BPS’s Code of Ethics (2006), and necessary/justified to undertake the study successfully.

**Procedure:**

Participants were recruited predominantly through an announcement in the Division of Counselling Psychology’s regular e-newsletter, and through word of mouth. After
initial contact from participants expressing their interest, they were informed about the study, and that their participation would involve an hour and a half interview, including debriefing. A date and time was then agreed to conduct the interview at a convenient location, in most instances at the university the participant attended. All interviews were carried out in a private space free from interruption to maintain their confidentiality.

**Data collection:**

Parker (1999d) argues that texts within which discourses manifest are limitless, enabling FDA to be carried out “wherever there is meaning”, such as written documents, paintings, and stories for example. Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008), in their reading of Foucault as resisting reducing discourse to meaning, are more specific and outline five kinds of texts suitable for FDA, one of which is ‘social interaction’. This form of text can include a variety of speech activities and settings but the current study used semi-structured interviews for a number of reasons. Firstly, Potter (1996, p.134) argues that interviews are an effective way of accessing the range of interpretive repertoires and discourses a participant has available and can be “as complex and vivid as any other type of social interaction”. Secondly, Byrne (2004; cited in Silverman, 2011) highlights qualitative interviewing as enabling the exploration of voices and experiences believed to have been ignored or misrepresented in the past, which has some appeal given this study’s focus on women counselling psychology trainees.

After explaining what participation in the study would involve, prior to the interview each participant was given a briefing about the study (see Appendix A for Participant
Information Sheet) and signed a consent form (see Appendix B). For each participant, information regarding their age and gender, ethnicity, the university they attended and their academic year was requested both to reconfirm eligibility for participation in the study and to have some detail of the life circumstances of each participant, as a way of providing the context for the reader. Participants were then asked the following four questions:

1) Can you describe how you have found your experience of supervision in your development as a counselling psychologist?

2) In what ways has being a trainee counselling psychologist influenced, or been influenced by, your supervision experiences?

3) Can you tell me about your notions of power in supervision?

4) Is there anything else you would like to say about power in supervision, taking into account your circumstances obtained at the beginning of the interview, such as your age or gender?

These questions were designed to facilitate participant discussion with regards to supervision and power in supervision, taking into account their status as trainee counselling psychologists as well as other contextual elements (e.g. age). Throughout each interview, facilitative questions, as outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2008), were used to promote obtaining a thorough understanding of participants’ expressed experience. For example, the use of probing questions, which allow the interviewer to obtain more precise descriptions. The four questions forming the framework for the interviews, outlined above, were not necessarily asked in the same order across all participants. That is, whilst question one regarding the influence of their supervision in their development as counselling psychologists was always the first question asked, there was some variation in the order of asking questions two and three, according to
how each interview evolved. A further variation related to question four. For the first interview conducted (with Andrea), following the pilot study, the demographic information was asked for at the end and was not explored with the participant as to its influence on the topics discussed during the interview. On reflection, this was a consequence of initially viewing this information as something to be used later on by the researcher as background information to provide context. However, for all subsequent interviews this information was asked for at the start and revisited with participants, to explore if they drew on it as important in their constructions of supervision and power in supervision. This shift was due to recognising the importance of allowing participants to construct their own meaning of their context for what was discussed, rather than removing it from them to assert the researcher’s own meaning at a later point. To not do this would be replicating what Gergen and Gergen (1991, p.86) attribute to traditional, positivistic research, where participants are “not encouraged to reflect on their situations within the study”. The duration of each interview was between 55 minutes to 80 minutes and was followed by a debriefing.

**Reflexive commentary:** Wood and Kroger (2000) argue that discourse analysis should focus upon naturally occurring discourse, and focus groups are often viewed as moving in the right direction towards achieving this ‘naturalness’. Therefore, focus groups were first considered as a method of data collection for this study. However, semi-structured interviews are considered appropriate for discourse analysis (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008). Moreover, Speer (2002) has questioned the usefulness of making distinctions between ‘natural’ and ‘contrived’ data, arguing that within this approach to analysis, where it is assumed participants construct rather than reveal
meanings, bias is inevitable and interesting. Therefore, the research-prompted setting of interviews was considered to be an equally ‘genuine interaction’ (Potter & Wetherell, 1995). Weighing up these various considerations, in the end interviews were decided upon as the method of data collection for its practical benefits such as being able to co-ordinate locations and timings with participants more easily than some other methods (e.g, focus groups).

In order to practice conducting interviewing and to allow an opportunity to refine the interview questions, a pilot interview was conducted with a fellow counselling psychologist in training who fulfilled the eligibility criteria. Initial analysis and reflection on the pilot interview indicated that the order of questions first devised could benefit from being altered to meet the purposes of the study. Specifically, to facilitate participants to speak of power relations through their constructions of supervision and allow discourses around supervision besides power to emerge, it seemed necessary to ask about their experiences of supervision generally before explicitly inquiring about their notions of power in supervision rather than after. Because of this decision to alter the question order for further interviews, it was decided to treat the pilot interview as a pilot only and not include it in any further analysis undertaken. A second reason for excluding the pilot interview from subsequent analysis was that it turned out that all respondents to the recruitment phase were women whereas the pilot participant was a man. This was interpreted as being important and it was decided to focus on their constructions of supervision only, rather than attempting to make some cross gender comparisons, as having only one man’s constructions to compare to was seen as making this difficult to do
meaningfully. Possible reasons for only women expressing interest in participating and the implications for the study will be explored in the discussion.

Before commencing the data collection I was anxious to conduct the interviews correctly to ensure that I obtained the best data possible. This translated to a concern over the order of questions to ask, and how to conduct the interview to foster meaningful data but without leading or directing participants. However, it began to dawn on me that although such concerns are common for the novice researcher interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 1999), they perhaps reflected a mindset owing to a more positivistic position to research where it is assumed the process of interviewing can be somehow standardised across all interviews to control variability. Therefore, I realised I needed to be aware of the idiosyncracies of each interview - such as variation in the way and order in which questions were asked - impacting on the data constructed in these interactions, but not pretend that they could be eliminated or weren’t valuable and meaningful.

**Data Analysis:**

The process of analysis once the interviews had been conducted involved listening to and transcribing the recordings. The level of analysis is the primary determinant of the level of transcription that is required (Walton, 2007). As Kvale and Brinkmann (2008, p.186) state, the “question ‘what is a useful transcription for my research purposes’ is a more constructive question then ‘what is the correct valid transcription’”. As this study would be adopting a Foucauldian approach to analysis, the researcher was less concerned with micro-textual details or paralinguistic features of talk, such as pauses, emphasis and overlaps, than with identifying discourses contained in the content of
the talk (Giles, 2002). Transcribing was completed by the researcher, in a similar way to Gillies and Willig (1997) who do not make a note of micro-textual details of talk due to their macro focus.

Following on from the conducting and transcribing of the interviews, the next stage in the process of analysis, as guided by Willig (2008), involved identifying the different ways the discursive object was constructed in the data, with the discursive object focused on depending on the research question. For the current study, ‘supervision’ was posited as the discursive object of interest. Any instances of reference to the discursive object, both implicitly and explicitly, were underlined as the transcripts were read through. The differences in how the discursive object was constructed were then focused on in attempting to identify the wider discourses surrounding the discursive object that could account for the different constructions. For example, Parker (1994) in exploring possible discourses emerging from analysing a children’s toothpaste container, identifies ‘medical’ discourse through noting references to chemical components contained in the product and professional treatment. Examining the action orientation, or functions, that the discourses were fulfilling and how they did this was then undertaken by identifying the alternative versions of events, alternative discourses, that the existing ones may function to sideline, and identifying variations that occurred within an individual participant’s discourse (Coyle, 2007). A related step was identifying subject positions, the positions within the text that could be taken up by speakers as afforded by the discourses identified. The penultimate and ultimate stages of analysis then followed from the subject positions identified. Namely, exploring the implications of different subject positions on what could be
said and done (practice) and what could be felt, thought and experienced (subjectivity).

**Reflexive Commentary:** Due to the epistemological position of social constructionism underlying discourse analytic research, Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest the researcher suspends a belief in language as representing underlying social and psychological realities, seeing the data instead as constructing a particular version of events. This was initially difficult to do, as I would find myself attributing the way the particular participant spoke about supervision to them as an individual. This temptation to speculate about the intentions of the speaker can be difficult to resist but is necessary in discourse analytic research (Giles, 2002). For this reason, I applied each stage of analysis to the data as a whole, rather than completing the process for each set of data (i.e. each transcript) individually. I found this enabled me to step away from modernist, naïve realist assumptions to explore how discourses afforded subjectivities rather than subjectivities constructing discourses as it were.

Another difficulty involved the process of identifying discourses, as it necessarily required me to interpret the different discursive constructions based on my cultural awareness and knowledge, which can be an uncomfortable process (Walton, 2007). According to Parker (1999, p.10), realising that the qualitative research process is an activity of interpretation, the researcher must take responsibility for the sense they are making, and reflexivity thus becomes a part of this.
Evaluative criteria:

Reliability and validity criteria, commonly used in evaluating research, are inappropriate for this study as they are based on the assumption that the researcher and researched are independent of each other and ‘objectivity’ can be achieved. That is, they contradict the social constructionist epistemological assumptions underpinning the study. As Pugh and Coyle (2000, p.87) argue, “discourse analysts cannot point to the ways in which the social world is constructed through language and then make an exception for their own language use”. In discourse analysis and most qualitative research, the researcher shapes and influences the research process, and so alternative criteria must be specified from which this study may be evaluated adequately. Due to the diversity of qualitative research in terms of epistemological positions, there is little consensus on appropriate evaluation criteria as there is for traditional, positivistic research. A number of authors have attempted to identify criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research, such as Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) and Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999).

Yardley (2000) recommends ‘sensitivity to context’ (i.e. the context of theory and socio-cultural setting is acknowledged), ‘commitment and rigour’ (i.e. substantial engagement with the research topic and sense of completeness of data collection and analysis), ‘transparency and coherence’ (i.e. detailing each aspect of the process of data collection and analysis, and the ‘fit’ between the research question and the philosophical perspective adopted), and ‘impact and importance’ (i.e. the socio-cultural, theoretical and practical implications) as present in good qualitative research. These criteria, Coyle (2007) argues, can be appropriately applied to discourse analytic research and will be adopted for the current study. Other discourse analytic studies
have asserted the importance of including as many extracts from the text as possible to show the reader how analytic interpretations were reached and allow them to judge whether these were justified (Coyle, 2007; Pugh & Coyle, 2000). To facilitate this, transcripts of all the interviews have been included in the appendices to give some idea to the reader of how the interviews were carried out and in understanding the context of extracts from which interpretations were made by the researcher. One of these transcripts will also include notations made in the side columns by the researcher in identifying discursive constructions in the text. It is hoped this will add to an understanding of how the analysis was actually carried out.
ANALYSIS

Introduction:
The aim of this study was to critique supervision by drawing on poststructuralist
thinking to explore power in supervision in the context of counselling psychology and
the implications of power for trainee counselling psychologists’ identity. The
intention was to analyse how supervision, and the discourses informing it,
legitimatised some meanings over others and offered certain ways of being for
trainees, and in doing so show the power relations at work. Therefore the first
discursive object of interest was supervision. However, it became apparent in reading
the transcripts that another discursive object that was prevalent was power. Whilst
each participant in the interviews was asked about their experience of supervision
generally before notions of power in supervision was raised, all participants
orientated themselves to notions of power in supervision from early on in the
interviews. Possible reasons for this and problems surrounding them will be discussed
in the discussion section of this paper. Power was therefore a second discursive object
that was analysed. It is important to point out that these two discursive objects are not
necessarily distinct from each other within the data, with some overlap or mutual
influence between them. For example, by constructing power in supervision, speakers
were also to an extent implicitly constructing supervision. The following analysis will
begin with the discursive object of supervision. This will include how it is explicitly
constructed before moving to power as the discursive object, paying attention to how
constructions of power appear to implicitly construct supervision. The subject
positions available within these constructions, and their implications for practice and
subjectivity, will then be examined to demonstrate the power relations at work. In
acknowledgement of Foucault’s view of power and resistance as interconnected,
alternative or counter-discourses that offer resistance to dominant discourses will then be explored.

The first step of analysis after conducting and transcribing the interviews involved reading through the text a number of times in order to become familiar with it, underlining any statements interpreted as referring to the discursive objects, either explicitly or implicitly, as they became apparent through this reading process. Such noted statements, through their referencing to the discursive object, could then be seen as constructing it in some way. As an example, Bella in her opening dialogue seems to construct supervision as a complement to, and accompanying, her training through which she has achieved learning – “it is one of the most vital part of the training…that I learnt a lot through” (App. E: L4-6). This process was carried out for each transcribed interview. The references were then grouped as examples of the different constructions of the discursive object, based on interpreted similarities between them (Gillies & Willig, 1997). Whilst aiming to adhere to the evaluative principle of transparency (Yardley, 2000), by using linguistic evidence from the transcribed data to support the interpretations made, it was not possible to include every reference to the discursive object made in every interview due to limits of time and space for this study. However, it is hoped that enough excerpts have been included to qualify sufficiently for the reader how the discourses were identified. Indeed, Widdicombe (1995, p.108) warns against the tendency towards ascriptivism that she argues can occur in a rush to identify the political significance of discourses in a text. This refers to “the tendency to impute the presence of a discourse to a piece of text without explaining the basis for specific claims”. Furthermore, it must be
noted that another reader may interpret these examples in others ways, as this is only one reading of meanings where many are possible.

**Discursive constructions of Supervision (as learning, as test, as insight):**

Careful reading of the data showed supervision constructed in a number of ways. In a number of the transcripts, supervision is constructed at times as vitally important and helpful in facilitating learning for the trainee. For example, Bella refers to supervision as:

*Extract 1 (App. E: L4-25)*

“the most vital part of the training…that I learnt a lot through...because it’s a way of understanding how you work and being challenged sensitively...[by] somebody who has experience and...you trust their clinical opinion...even peer supervision...[was] a great learning opportunity”.

Glenda similarly frames supervision as a support to her learning:

*Extract 2 (App. I: L157-163)*

“it makes me feel supported, it makes me feel that if I have a problem or with a client or I I feel like I’m floundering with a client, I have somewhere to go to discuss it and get some illumination...I had one client who turned quite nasty...and I found being able to talk about it in the supervision was quite helpful because um you know this does happen to therapists quite a lot”.

Andrea seems to imply that supervision should consolidate learning and training, through constructing supervision as failing to do so for her:
“I don’t really feel that process of consolidating some of my training really happened in supervision”.

Supervision is also constructed as an assessment or test.

“they assess you directly and they assess you indirectly as well because they comment on your work”.

“I was quite intimidated by him because again you know he was my supervisor, he was going to give me an evaluation”.

“I felt with him that he’s kind of testing me and if I stood up to him and he could see that I could take it he’d back off and stop doing that”.

Thirdly, supervision is constructed as revealing trainees’ blind spots or bringing insight.

“they can observe things that you cannot observe about the pattern that you do have with the client...there are some blind spots that you can’t really see for by yourself”.

Extract 3 (App. D: L54-55)

Extract 4 - Bella: (App. E: L230-231)

Extract 5 - Diane: (App. G: L42-44)

Extract 6 - Glenda: (App. I: L90-92)

Extract 7 - Bella: (App. E: L41-53)
Extract 8 - Andrea: (App. D: L12-15)

“I think when you’re a trainee or I was at least you’re really clinging to any bits of supervision because you’re sort of overwhelmed, you’re with different clients and really kind of valuing that ability to kind of explore what’s really going on”.

Supervision Discourses (Expert & Psychodynamic):
A discourse, as defined by Parker (1992, p.5), is “a system of statements which constructs an object”. Willig (2001), in outlining her second stage of analysis, is not particularly clear about exactly how the discourses in a text are identified. Rather, by way of explanation she gives the following example:

“within the context of an interview about her experience of her husband’s prostate cancer, a woman may draw on a biomedical discourse when she talks about the process of diagnosis and treatment, a psychological discourse when she explains why she thinks her husband developed the illness in the first place…Thus, the husband’s illness is constructed as a biochemical disease process, as the somantic manifestation of psychological traits...within the same text”.

It would appear that Willig in this example focuses on particular words, such as ‘diagnosis’ and ‘treatment’, that may be viewed as networks of meaning (Gillies & Willig, 1997) or coherent ways of talking about a particular object (Breheny & Stephens, 2007) in order to identify the discourses involved. Parker (1994) suggests ‘free associating’ in this process of identifying discourses at work, whereby the researcher attempts to stay as open as possible to the different social worlds that the
text may be calling into being. Further support for claiming what discourses are contained within a text may be drawn from previous discourse analytic studies that have identified such discourses (Nikander, 2008b). The construction of supervision as learning and a test may be associated with an expert discourse. Drawing on expert discourse, one person in social interaction is positioned or labelled as an authority on a topic due to the knowledge and experience they possess, and can therefore act as a source of knowledge for non-experts to learn from, and as an assessor of whether such learning is adequately achieved. A second discourse that is present, when supervision is constructed as bringing insight, is psychodynamic discourse. This discourse can reinforce expert discourse, in that the things that need to be learned by supervisees and tested for are constructed as involving unconscious processes that require expert knowledge and self-awareness to interpret. Expert and psychodynamic discourses contain assumptions about relationships operating within them. For example, they may be seen to legitimise a hierarchical relationship between the non-expert, un-selfaware and the expert, self-aware. This hierarchy is demonstrated by extract 1 when learning in supervision is constructed as requiring “somebody who has experience”. Learning is positioned as possible with other non-experts, although this is inferior to learning from someone one can “trust”, implied through the comment “even peer supervision”. Extract 2 may also be read as invoking an expert discourse, and possibly a psychodynamic discourse, and thus contributing to a hierarchical relationship, as it seemingly implies that Glenda is in the dark in understanding what is going on with her client and that supervision, the supervisor, can give her this understanding – “get some illumination”. Extract 3 implies that supervision should be about learning, but through learning being absent for this participant it would seem that supervision is constructed as not learning, contradicting the previous two
extracts. Therefore, it is not immediately apparent that this extract appeals to an expert discourse or reinforces a hierarchical supervisory relationship. However, exploring the context within the text from which it was extracted, that is, its function or action orientation, as will be done shortly, may provide some explanation for this. In extracts 4, 5 and 6, a hierarchical relationship is alluded to in that the person doing the assessing or evaluation is the supervisor, not the supervisee, with responsibility for action lying with the former, and this process is referred to as intimidating. A psychodynamic discourse, and a hierarchical relationship it may support, is demonstrated in extracts 7 and 8, where “blind spots” are pointed out by the supervisor, who helps the supervisee to understand “what’s really going on”. This conjures notions from psychoanalytic theory of unconscious processes between supervisees and clients that it is implied the supervisor can help illuminate. Further support for the construction of supervision as learning and test for trainees invoking an expert discourse is the presence of a sense of progression at other points in the accounts. That is, within an expert discourse is the presumption that those learning from an expert may move from naivety to possessing knowledge themselves, so that the further along on a training programme one is, the more knowledge you are presumed to have gained in moving towards becoming an ‘expert’ oneself. Therefore, references to progression in terms of development in the accounts appeals to expert discourse. For example, when Glenda states:

*Extract 9 (App. I: L4-5 & L26-28)*

“I enjoy it more now than I did when I first started with it and at first I was intimidated by it um because I felt that I really didn’t know anything…my confidence
in supervision has changed enormously. I would not say very much and I would just observe a lot whereas now I take part more”.

This notion of progression, emerging from an expert discourse, is also evident in the following interaction with Eve:

Extract 10 (App. H: L669-675 & L680)

INT: But trainee status has a positive and negative um influence on you in a way
Eve: Mmm

INT: It allows you being a trainee you can make mistakes and it's forgivable or?
Eve: Mmm. Not so much now, I don’t think in towards the 5th year but definitely earlier on...at this level you shouldn’t be doing that.

The two extracts above illuminate expert discourse to also be productive. For example, although expert discourse can be inhibitive – by informing hierarchical relationships where those constructed as not possessing the particular legitimated knowledge are limited in their ability to participate and co-construct meanings – it can also be productive for trainees when they are deemed to have accumulated the expert knowledge and thus able to ‘take part more’. Expert discourse also appears productive, even within a hierarchical relationship arrangement, as it enables the trainee to ‘make mistakes’ and not be punished for them (i.e power as domination).

Despite these constructions of progression the further along in their training participants were, due to the expert discourse, participants constructed a distinction between being in training and being qualified for how supervision was experienced.
That is, a number of participants constructed their status as trainees as implicated in supervision as hierarchical relationship. For example, Connie says “when you go to the university it feels that you are powerless because there are people who have the knowledge and the expertise…if you are in supervision as um qualified person it’s different because you feel um yeah you are a more complete professional” (App. F: L332-339). Adding to this she says “you go to supervision as a student….your ground can be easily shaken because you carry the uncertainty from the fact that you’re still a trainee…when you finish your training um it is it is like it is implied that now you are prepared now, you are ready” (App. F: L356-358 & L386-388). Diane states “the title that you get is is quite puts you in a powerful position” (App. G: L709-710). Eve states “supervision wouldn’t be the same if you were out of training I think” (App. H: L148-149). Eve goes on to describe a scenario where she tried to introduce knowledge she had acquired from outside the supervision group to try to help a fellow supervisee: “people were saying ‘well you know I can’t get my head around this client and I’m not sure where to go or what clinical work to do whatever INT: Mmm P: Um and I had been I had done some formulation training…I knew there was some feelings in the in some parts of the counselling world that…the word formulation I think scares people but anyway I brought in [technical label for a formulation perspective]..way of looking at things…I thought she was going to have a fit in the room you know she went sort of bright red and said ‘of course you don’t have to’” (App. H: L174-183). One way of interpreting this would be that due to Eve’s status as a trainee, any knowledge gained from outside the sphere of knowledge of the supervisory context she was in was deemed inappropriate, irrelevant, or what Foucault called subjugated knowledge – one accorded lower status than scientific knowledge (Alldred, 1996, p.149). It must be said however that Eve’s appeal to
experience was related to scientific knowledge itself, as the idea of formulation stems from the medical model (Johnstone & Dallos, 2006), complicating the interpreted meaning of this construction.

**Problematising supervision as hierarchical relationship – discursive constructions of power:**

The hierarchical relationship formed by the constructions of supervision and the discourses they draw on, as outlined above, is problematised by participants in constructing power. Power is constructed as “always there” (App. E: L223 & L238) due to this hierarchical relationship where the supervisor is always in the position of evaluating and assessing supervisees, and “might use that somehow” (App. E: L236). The implication being that it could be used to the supervisee’s detriment by inhibiting supervisees being able to pass the training they were on that required supervisor’s reports, and therefore not access professional status and employment. Power is therefore also constructed as negative – “negative meaning came to my mind” (App. E: L249); “I associate it with something bad…with manipulation” (App. F: L226-227). Power is constructed as being avoidable through not challenging the hierarchy of the supervisory relationship. For example, Bella distances herself from power in her account by being compliant with her supervisor’s authority – “I don’t have a big problem with that with the power…because I consciously trying not to…I took a position that I would not challenge that…so I adjusted my behaviour in terms of not to become an issue” (App. E: L254-266). However, this in itself demonstrates power relations at work as what she can say and do is inhibited. Power is constructed as difficult to describe and subtle – “it’s just a feeling that I got”; “she doesn’t do anything in particular…it’s more an attitude…if I was to give a definition of power I
couldn’t” (App. F: L133-136 & L223-224). A number of the participants construct power as involving a blurring or breaking of professional boundaries by supervisors. This was in terms of changing supervision times, supervisors being late for supervision, attempting to instigate dual relationships with supervisees and discussing the content of supervision sessions with people outside of the supervision group. Power is constructed as when participants’ supervisors adopted an authoritarian subject position within supervision as a hierarchical relationship - “power is about um feeling superior and better and being able to control…it’s like saying to you ‘I decide I kind of decide when you start talking, when you stop talking and I have the last word and I’m the experienced one, my view my view’s what counts not yours’” (App. F: L243-248).

In summary of the above, power is constructed as contained within supervision as hierarchical relationship, when an authoritarian rather than egalitarian relationship is fostered by the supervisor. An example of this is the following:

**Extract 11 – Connie (App. F: L117-122)**

“one supervisor is ah quite intimidated by different opinions and the supervisor that doesn’t facilitate the openness I mean um quite judgemental, quite fixed in her ways and in her opinions and quite feels the power and the difference between us. So the other one feels more equal feels more like a person to person thing where we both explore and we try to help the client and ourselves to develop you know”

During the interviewing stage, the researcher became aware of participants’ accounts of power in supervision revolving around supervisors, with a noticeable absence of
their own role or influence. That is, constructions of power appeared to evoke modernist notions of power as oppression or dominance going in one direction (i.e. from supervisors). However, this study adopted Foucault’s conceptualisation of power as more subtle and productive. Relately, positioning theory suggests speakers are not just produced by discourses but are also producers of discourse. Therefore, in a number of the interviews participants were asked if they had any power. Eve responded that any power she had was never more than that of her supervisors and often less – “the responsibility of you know there’s only fifteen percent in the relationship but sometimes the power shifts over one way I think and um I’ve never felt anymore than half the power in relationship with supervisor” (App. H: L828-830). She acknowledged that as a trainee, “you would encourage…the power because then you you lack the responsibility in some ways” (App. H: L837-838). Bella states: “the finer I adjust and eventually I don’t have any problem is a powerful thing…if I was totally honest I would express my anger and my anxiety but somehow I couldn’t be totally honest so I expressed my anxiety and then immediately she got in that position of having to support me” (App. E: L578-579 & L630-632). In these instances the power relationship is productive in that responsibility can be avoided (in the case of Eve) and support can be elicited (in the case of Bella). That is, it is in these trainees’ interests to remain within an expert discourse informed hierarchical supervisory relationship.

**Power Discourses (Expert, Developmental and Gender):**

Similarly to constructions of supervision as learning, test and insight that support supervision as hierarchical relationship, constructions of power as authoritarian also resonates with an expert discourse. ‘Authoritarian’ has been defined as “favouring or
enforcing strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom” (Oxford Dictionary online), with authority defined as “the power to influence others, especially because of one’s…recognised knowledge about something”. This notion of ‘recognised knowledge’ may be seen as resonating with being an ‘expert’. However, two other discourses were also identified as relevant to discursive constructions of power in supervision, namely, developmental discourse and gender discourse.

Notions of people moving in a developmental trajectory across the lifespan from having no knowledge, and not being able to see or understand something and moving to a state of knowing or understanding, are prominent in contemporary talk about development. Breheny and Stephens (2007) for example, in their analysis of constructions of adolescence and motherhood, identify a developmental discourse within the accounts, constructing adolescents as having shared characteristics related to their age. Analysis of the data in the current study revealed that age was constructed as impacting on supervision as hierarchical relationship and power as authoritarian supervision. For example, some participants constructed the older age of supervisors as associated with greater knowledge and experience. Bella states: “It’s this assumption that when someone is older, they have more experience. Because of the age and more mature usually” (App. E: L700-701). This may be seen as drawing on a developmental discourse as it is constructing older supervisors as possessing certain characteristics, such as greater knowledge, because of their age. Conversely, based on this discourse, when the participants and supervisors were around the same age, either both younger or both older, this appeared to create difficulties for a hierarchical relationship being constructed. For example, Bella, one of the younger participants states “maybe the fact that she’s female and she’s young INT: Mmm P:
maybe there’s more competition…when you are very close in age maybe maybe things feel, this competition” (App. E: L676-678 & L690-691). In such circumstances, the equally young supervisor is constructed as needing to appeal to the fact they are qualified to assert their authority, as Bella says “she did say something along the lines [laughs] ‘at the end of the day I’m five years qualified counselling psychologist” (App. E: L350-351). As an example of developmental discourse being evoked in an older participant’s account, Eve states “I’m around about the same age and they’ve experienced twenty, thirty years of practice um so you know I sometimes feel they are trying to separate out the affinity we might have through being the same age…’I’m really the boss here’ sort of thing” (App. H: L744-750). Similarity in age here seems to be constructed as making it difficult for a hierarchy between this participant and her supervisor to be maintained, calling on the supervisor to create distance between them to do so. On the other hand, rather than similarity in age being constructed as a cause for supervisors asserting their authority and power, it is also constructed as having an equalising effect. For example, Glenda says “I think maybe because of my age I’m at an advantage to some students because I think supervisors may be a bit more conscious about the way they speak to me than the way they speak to someone younger” (App. I: L373-376). Developmental discourse also appeared to create a tension for older participants within the supervisory relationship. For example, Eve says “it feels quite difficult to be this age and you know re-training um learning new things…there’s something perhaps a little bit um I was going to say humiliating” (App. H: L701-704). The implication possibly being that being in a position of not knowing and learning from others presumed as more knowledgeable during the process of training and supervision is at odds with the expected characteristics of someone of an older age. That is, the expectation to be competent
and knowledgeable themselves, and therefore to be constructed as trainee is reported as “humiliating”.

Analysis of the data also indicated that gender discourse was being evoked. For example, a number of the participants construct their supervisors as authoritarian when they are female, citing competition between them as involved in this. Eve - “in terms of dynamics whether this woman didn’t like me particularly and part of me being a woman was a part of that or I threatened her and I was the same sex as her sort of thing I don’t know” (App H: L740-742). Bella - “I thought that maybe the fact that she’s female… maybe there’s more competition” (App. E: L675-678). Diane – “it’s actually about young female supervisors who may not be, I mean I don’t know if there was any kind of female rivalry going on in that relationship” (App. G: L536-538). Numerous studies have explored how certain characteristics have often been attributed to one gender or the other in society and how this has shaped the subjectivity of each gender. For example, Baxter (2003, p.92) in her study of classroom talk in a British secondary school identified a discourse of gender differentiation which she defined as “a conventionalised set of ways of differentiating individuals’ identities in the world primarily according to their sex or gender”. In this instance it would seem that some of the participants are associating certain behaviour such as competitiveness to interactions between women. Gender discourse also seems to be evoked when Diane makes a distinction between male and female supervisors – “very cautious with male supervisors in general…heterosexual men that’s when I feel really intimidated um because…they may do something or say something that may be inappropriate…I only have one male supervisor but…he’s I guess a homosexual male so with him there is, I can just be myself, I don’t feel any kind of tension” (App. G:}
This would appear to be constructing male supervisors as threatening or not depending on their sexuality as perceived by her, and having implications for her subjectivity. That is, whether she feels cautious or able to be herself.

**Action Orientation:**

Establishing the action orientation or function of each of the constructions of supervision, and the discourses that form them, requires a closer examination of the discursive context in which they are deployed. Practically, this involves noting what precedes and follows each of the constructions of the discursive object, to identify what functions the construction might serve such as promote one version of events over another or assign responsibility (Willig, 2008). Due to time and space limitations, examining the action orientation of each and every reference contributing to each discursive construction of supervision will not be possible. As suggested, the above outlined discourses legitimise a hierarchical relationship, where responsibility for the speakers’ learning, assessment and insight is assigned to supervisors. For example, regarding extract 1, supervision is constructed as learning in response to a question about the influence of supervision on development (“can you describe for me how you have found your experience of supervision in your development as a counselling psychologist?”). It is possible here that the notion of learning is introduced by the use of the word ‘development’ in the question. Drawing on an expert discourse may allow the speaker, Bella, to confer responsibility for her learning and understanding onto supervisors as the ‘experts’ who must then treat her “sensitively” because of her lack of knowledge as a trainee. In the dialogue following extract 1 Bella appears to equate how much she is able to “open up” and not be
“defensive” with the “fit” with supervisors, and the responsibility for achieving this fit is constructed as lying with the supervisor rather than with the supervisee as a result of the expert discourse evoked. It seems to be implied here that opening up and being non-defensive are positive or valued qualities. Extract 2 follows a section of dialogue where Glenda speaks about increasingly being able to “hold my own”, which she defines as deciding not to be intimidated by the supervisor’s authority. The extract is in response to being asked how holding her own has influenced her development. In this context, the extract constructing supervision as learning, evoking an expert discourse, may enable Glenda to accept supervisors’ authority enough to “have somewhere to go” where she can feel that her experiences with clients can be defined by a more experienced other as normal – “this does happen to therapists quite a lot”. In examining the surrounding text from which extract 3 is taken, it appears that in response to the initial interview question regarding the influence of supervision on her development as a counselling psychologist, this participant particularly focuses on what it means to be a counselling psychologist. Specifically, she highlights that her supervisors were not counselling psychologists and would explore her work with clients from only their own theoretical perspective, the implications of this being it was difficult for her to “explore what it means as a counselling psychologist to be working with this client...what they were offering was really useful but it’s coming from sort of a quite narrow um perspective” (App. D: L30 & L36-37). This construction of counselling psychology as having a broader perspective than one theoretical position resonates with how counselling psychology is defined in the literature (Milton, 2010) and by the BPS. The function then of constructing supervision as not learning, as depicted in extract 3, may be to question the position of supervisors as ‘expert’ and as able to consolidate learning for counselling
psychology trainees if they are not counselling psychologists themselves. Bound up in expert discourse is the notion of the completion of a high level qualification indicating a higher level of knowledge and expertness than a qualification designated as lower. Perhaps alluding to this, this participant suggests that working towards a qualification perceived as higher than that obtained by her supervisors may have undermined them as experts and therefore also undermining the hierarchical nature of the supervisory relationship – “a lot of the supervisors that I had were trained to a level below what I was aiming to achieve and I don’t know, at times I felt that there may have been some awkwardness because of that” (App. D: L19-20). Related to this, she constructs her level of training as a reason why some of her supervisors appear to give her less attention or support – “I sort of felt like you know the counselling psychology training they know you know it’s very long it’s very intense…there’s somehow this feeling that we don’t need maybe as much support or something” (App. D: L152-154). Nevertheless, the subject position taken up by this participant through much of her account would be described as one of compliance with supervision as hierarchical relationship, as will be described below. This may be explained by her construction of counselling psychology at different points in the interview as having an unclear or contradictory identity – “what are we, what do we do”; “we’re kind of into that whole counselling world obviously but then we’re doctors, so it’s kind of a contradiction INT: Mmm P: I think where as clinical psychologists you know they’re in hospitals, they work with psychiatrists for the most part, it’s quite clear but we’re kind of half that, half hippy dippy kind of alternative side”; “kind of uncertain who we are and they’re uncertain of who we are” (App. D: L51, LL222-227 & L251-252). It would seem that such a construction, defined by a lack of clarity, functions to make it difficult for this participant to assume their own
authority or expertness and step out of a hierarchical supervisory relationship. In contrast with this construction of her own identity as unclear, one of her supervisors is constructed as having a clarity in their identity, derived from their knowledge and experience, and from their theoretical perspective, that leads to them being described as a guru – “here’s this sort of guru…the insights that he came up with were just incredible and I do think there is an intimidation factor…here’s somebody who’s done Jungian training which is pretty extreme and practicing for like years and years” (App. D: L276 & L303-304 & L306-308). Here it seems that despite the level of training to be a counselling psychologist (i.e. doctorate) potentially offering this speaker a subject position of authority, their supervisor’s authority is constructed as superior.

**Subject positions:**

Reviewing what subject positions may be available to the speakers when supervision is constructed as a hierarchical relationship where learning, assessment and insight takes place, appear to include a position of compliant and submissive trainee in relation to the supervisor and their views. This may be seen in the following comments. Andrea: “trying to kind of fit with the supervisor’s ideas of what should be going on…biases coming from the supervisor that means that you kind of you play along, because that’s the tone they’re setting” (App. D: L280-285). Bella: “I need to be careful how I’m going to say things. So in supervision I need to say ah good point good point I need to make her feel that she’s my supervisor that she’s there and I’m there, I need to make her feel like that…I don’t feel that challenging her is going to lead anywhere rather than coming more trouble on myself” (App. E: L374-377 & L388-389). On the other hand, the subject position available to supervisors when
supervision is constructed as hierarchical relationship, drawing on the discourses outlined above appeared to be an authoritative subject position where they act as if they are right.

**Practice:**

Different discourses and the subject positions associated with them offer different possibilities for action for the participants, for what can be said and done by them. For example, Willig (1995) in her study exploring heterosexual adults’ accounts of condom use and their implications for sexual practice found that unprotected sex was related to a marital discourse, in which marriage was constructed as incompatible with condom use. In the current study the above constructions of supervision as learning, test and insight are concerned with expert and psychodynamic discourses, affording subjects to be positioned as the compliant and submissive non-expert. From such a subject position, participants may say little in supervision that is contrary to this subject position, such as asserting their own views over those of the supervisor, or formulating clients’ problems in ways other than those offered by the supervisor, to maintain the hierarchical relationship the compliant subject position sits within. For example, Connie states “if I wasn’t a trainee she wouldn’t have spoken in the same way and I wouldn’t have to stop, I mean to shut up and listen to her…there is an inequality that they can say if they agree or if they don’t but you can’t because you’re a trainee” (App. F: L373-378). Here the compliant subject position restricts being able to disagree or do more than just listen. Eve states “just starting counselling training…I would have just accepted what this woman was offering and thought it was right and um you know I didn’t question it” (App. H: L637-640). These quotes also illustrate the subject positions available to supervisors and their implications for practice. That
is, it would seem they are constructed as able to control who speaks in the supervision interaction and whose interpretation of the meaning of what supervisees bring to supervision is accepted as the correct one. For example, Connie states “she wants to label things and have the power to say ‘this is this, this is that’ um and doesn’t allow you to go on and on and describe your experience” (App. F: L143-145). Supervisors are also constructed as able to use their expert knowledge to deflect challenges from trainees as a problem with the trainee rather than addressing their own role. For example, Eve says “when I tried to complain she sort of manipulated very cleverly manipulated the situation into…something wrong with me…I was pathologised by being angry” (App. H: L70-72 & L79). Another example, Bella says “another trainee challenged her and said ‘well I’m quite annoyed because you’re late’ and instead of taking responsibility…she started saying to the trainee that ‘I realise I sense that you are passive aggressive towards me’…she put all the focus on the trainee” (App. E: L321-326 & L334-335).

**Subjectivity:**

As Willig (2008) suggests, making links between the discursive constructions used by subjects and their implications for subjective experience is the most speculative stage of analysis as there is no direct relationship between language and mental states. Therefore no claims can be made about what different speakers actually do feel, think or experience, only what can be felt, thought or experienced from within various subject positions. Nevertheless, statements from the data, where they indicate participants’ reported feelings and experience, will be drawn on to support claims made about subjectivity. In relation to the subject position of compliant trainee, based on the construction of supervision as hierarchical informed by the discourses outlined
above, it could be argued that subjects may feel less powerful than supervisors. This is implied by Bella’s comment, “I don’t feel that challenging her is going to lead anywhere” (App. E: L388), and by Eve, “I didn’t feel like I was in a position to do anything about it” (App. H: L49-50). This construction of supervision which leaves little room for supervisees to express alternative views (be non-compliant), left participants experiencing supervision as “scary”, “intimidating”, “tiring”, “unpleasant”, “daunting”, and feeling “annoyed”, “frustrated”, “persecuted” and “forced to kowtow to the supervisor”. Some participants also described feeling cautious, not trusting their supervisors and not being able to be themselves with supervisors. For example, Bella says “it would be great if you had a very open person that you could really um be even more yourself” (App. E: L407-408), the implication being this had not been her experience. Within this hierarchical relationship, the discourses at work mean that other constructions such as supervisee as their own expert are sidelined, as reflected in Eve’s comment – “there was a lot of focus on her and there was her as the expert and it was it was sort of it it is very difficult to build up the confidence in yourself …what she was doing was ‘right’” (App. H: L168-169 & L172). Such subjective experiences appeared to be drawn on by participants when constructing power as present in supervision. However, it must also be pointed out that, in line with the Foucauldian notion that discourses are also productive or enabling, there was evidence within the accounts that participants may also feel safe or reassured to be compliant within a hierarchical supervisory relationship because the discourses informing it may serve the function of normalising feelings about clients or removing their responsibility. In extract 2 for example Glenda is reassured that her difficulty with the client is ‘normal’ by being in hierarchical relationship with her supervisor who can label it as such. Rather than negative, being in a hierarchical
supervisory relationship may also take pressure off trainees to be perfect and give them confidence to be able to try different things with their clients.

**Resistance through alternative constructions – supervision as protection for clients and as human relationship:**

The purpose of highlighting alternative constructions of supervision to those outlined above is to make explicit within this analysis Foucault’s (1982; cited in Hook, 2001) notion that resistance is a feature of every power relationship. It is important to note that Foucault’s conception of resistance shifted from one of ‘tactical reversal’ to one of ‘care of the self’ as his model of power shifted from a strategic to governmental emphasis (Thompson, 2003). In his latter conceptualisation - where power manifests not through force or repression but more subtly through subjects freely regulating their conduct via technologies of the self based on dominant discourses and knowledges - resistance in the form of self formation is possible when alternative discourses and knowledges are opened up from which new subjectivities may be constructed. Through identifying contradictory discourses, resistance is possible that can “challenge current self-understandings and [sic] create the space for new forms of subjectivity” (Sawicki, 1994, p. 307; cited in Sternd, 2011, p.295), and to refuse to respond within dominant meanings (Parker, 1992).

Following this, in contrast to the constructions of supervision as learning, test and insight by participants which appeared to maintain and legitimise a hierarchical relationship between participants and supervisors, supervision is also constructed as
an activity that should be for the benefit and protection of clients within the participants’ accounts. Examples are the following extracts from Connie and Eve:

“the supervisors provide the same um qualities should try with me or with the supervisee to kind of achieve this way of being in the supervision. Because what my client brings to me with so much effort I bring to the supervisor in order to help the client. So if I’m not, if I’m judged if I feel judged then I’m not free to communicate all that I feel, the client won’t be helped”.

Extract 13 (App. H: L89-92)
“that is why I complained in the end was that though it was intolerable for me um you know ultimately it was entirely unethical situation where we weren’t being, our clients weren’t being supervised”.

Both accounts construct supervision as for the benefit and protection of clients, which may be drawing on a ‘professional’ discourse, where both participants and supervisors are constructed as professionals who must put the needs of clients first. However, in Connie’s talk she still occupies a compliant and passive position as she appears to allocate responsibility for clients’ welfare to supervisors, in that whether Connie feels judged and restricted in communicating in supervision is dependent on supervisors adopting an authoritarian subject position or not. So in this instance prioritising the welfare of clients requires supervisors to not assume an authoritarian subject position, implicitly showing expert discourse to be more prominent than professional discourse.
It is in Eve’s account that professional discourse may be seen as enabling this participant to resist the compliant and submissive subject position and adopt a more assertive subject position, leading to the possibility of a different ‘self-formation’. For example, she complains about her supervisor not because it is “intolerable” for her but because her clients weren’t being supervised, implying that their welfare was at risk. This discourse therefore justifies her not being compliant with her supervisor adopting an authoritarian subject position.

These extracts demonstrate that the construction of supervision as for the welfare and protection of clients offers different subject positions, depending on whether the expert discourse or professional discourse is more prominent. In the former, a compliant subject position is available, while the latter could be said to position subjects as assertive in the supervisory relationship. In terms of practice, the ‘responsible for client’ subject position affords supervisees the obligation to act in the interests of the client, which may involve acting contrarily to the views of the supervisor and the hierarchical relationship. The implications for subjectivity might be that supervisees feel empowered to assert themselves in the supervisory relationship believing that to do so would be in clients’ interests.

Power is constructed as when supervisors adopt an authoritarian subject position within supervision as hierarchical relationship, while the absence of power is constructed as being marked by an egalitarian relationship between supervisee and supervisor, where supervision is constructed as a human relationship. This egalitarian aspect is constructed as being characterised by supervisors taking into account supervisees’ feelings. For example, Bella states, “even as a supervisee how I have been feeling at a particular period he addressed that” (App. E: L150-151). The phrase
‘even as a supervisee’ reflects a hierarchical perspective of supervision but despite this the supervisee’s feelings are considered by the supervisor, contributing to equalising the relationship. It also involves supervisors being aware of their own role in the supervisory relationship. For example, Andrea talks about one of her supervisors being aware of ‘taking space’ in sessions, but invited supervisees to challenge them regarding this (App. D: L126-133). Bella spoke of one supervisor who invited discussion about the supervisory relationship, which she saw as taking responsibility for, and being open to, their own part in this relationship (App. E: L138-140).

Somewhat paradoxically, power was sometimes constructed as involving a blurring of boundaries, while its absence was constructed as part of supervisors being less formal. For example, Andrea states that one of her supervisors was a “real mumsy lady…supervision in her house…was like really cosy…it didn’t feel at all like supervision…I always felt comfortable to bring anything and we would talk about everything” (App. D: L316-318 & L321-322). In this instance the participant feels unrestricted in what they can talk about but constructs this as difficult to associate with supervision, almost as if the presence of power is an element of supervision for this participant. A number of participants talk of power being decreased through stepping outside of supervisory roles, appealing to their shared humanness instead. For example, Glenda says “the way that the balance of power sorted itself out was by very honest communication…it for me was about dissolving those projections that everyone had…we were just three human beings in a room” (App. I: L56-57 & L66-71). Connie similarly appears to define an egalitarian supervisory relationship as one where it is “a person to person thing where we both explore and we try to help the
client and ourselves to develop you know” (App. F: L121-122). The implication here is that rather than being a hierarchical relationship where the supervisee is learning from the supervisor, both are developing together.

These constructions of supervision drawing on a professional discourse and human relationship discourse would appear to open up possibilities for participants’ subjectivities that are more assertive, resisting the compliant subject position offered by constructions dominated by expert discourse. This is not to say that these constructions are straightforward or necessarily offering resistance to occur, as can be seen within extract 12 where Connie still remains unassertive. Due to participants orientating themselves to power in supervision in an explicit way, and thus often constructing power as negative, instances of resistance through tactical reversal can be more easily seen. However, I would argue that the construction ‘supervision as human relationship’ may be viewed as an example of resistance as self-formation. Whilst ‘supervision as protection for clients’ enabled the participant Eve to resist being compliant and submissive to her supervisor’s expertise, her subjectivity still consisted of supervisor as knowledgeable and her less so. Supervision as human relationship allows a new subjectivity outside of this knowledge continuum but not necessarily in conflict with it.

**Analysis Summary:**

The analysis of the data showed supervision as the discursive object to be constructed in the participants’ talk in a number of ways. Supervision was constructed as learning, as assessment or test and as insight. Examining each of these constructions, expert and psychodynamic discourses were identified as involved in these constructions. The
effects of the deployment of these discourses were the establishment and maintenance of supervision as a hierarchical relationship. Exploring the implications for practice showed participants as compliant and submissive within the supervisory relationship, in terms of not disagreeing with the supervisor or not contributing much to the interaction. Within such a hierarchical relationship supervisors could adopt an authoritarian subject position, and this was highlighted in constructions of power in supervision, where supervisors dictated what was spoken about and what was taken as the correct or right meaning of clinical work. The impact of these constructions of supervision as hierarchical relationship, in which power could be constructed as supervisors adopting an authoritarian subject position, for trainee subjectivity included trainees feeling intimidated, frustrated and unpleasant. However, consistent with Foucault’s view of power as being enabling and productive rather than just negative or restrictive, was evidence in participants’ accounts of supervision as hierarchical enabling trainees to avoid responsibility and power as domination, and to make mistakes. Interestingly, taking gender into account seemed to have an affect on constructions of supervision as hierarchical. For example, some of the trainees constructed their female supervisors needing to adopt an authoritarian position as a consequence of rivalry or competitiveness due to them both being women. In these accounts there was an absence of notions of competitiveness with male supervisors. In contrast to constructions that led to supervision as hierarchical, there were alternative constructions in trainees’ accounts that afforded resistance to the above constructions enabling participants to form themselves as more equal within supervision. These were supervision as human relationship and as for the protection of clients. These afforded the possibility for more active subject positions for trainees that enabled resistance to hierarchical supervisory experiences and for meaning (i.e. knowledge)
within the supervision interaction to be co-created. It is not being suggested that within supervision as hierarchical supervisees were powerless, as they often invested themselves in this dynamic as a kind of protection against responsibility for clients or to try and avoid dominating forms of power.
DISCUSSION

Introduction:

The purpose of the discussion section of a piece of research is to review and evaluate the analysis in addressing the topic of interest, highlighting clearly what was found from the analysis and what the implications are for theory and practice. This is not an uncomplicated or straightforward task for social constructionist research. Discourse analysis, a social constructionist methodology, has been argued to be a craft like process that is hard to specify (Potter, 1988) and Harper, O’Connor, Self and Stevens (2008, p.199) state that “confusion, analytic paralysis and losing sight of one’s research question are all normal experiences for novices” using this approach. McLeod (2001, p.103) points out that the reluctance of discourse analysts to specify their method “makes it difficult to know whether they are, in fact, carrying out work that is distinctly different from other qualitative traditions”. Whilst the researcher of this study certainly at times struggled with how to conduct the analysis adequately from a discursive perspective to avoid the ambiguity McLeod alludes to, what follows is an attempt to review and present what may be usefully gleaned from the analysis undertaken in relation to the topic of interest from a discursive standpoint.

The intention of this study was to critique supervision as a taken for granted institutional practice in the counselling psychology context. This was undertaken by drawing on poststructuralist ideas to conceptualise supervision as a historically and culturally specific social construction in which the possible meanings constructed within and about it are dependent on the discursive resources available to speakers. Doing so moved away from viewing supervision from a modernist perspective, in which it is presumed that there is ‘truth’ that can be unproblematically transmitted
from those supposedly in possession of such truth or knowledge to those that aren’t, to one where the discourses of supervision are implicated in technologies of the self regulating supervisees’ subjectivity and conduct. As the central concern was to explore power in supervision, Foucauldian discourse analysis was utilised to identify the discourses shaping participants subjectivity and practice as supervisees and as women counselling psychologists in training. The following discussion will attempt to critically evaluate the extent to which this was achieved, and whether the chosen method was appropriate to this end. Given Kasket and Gil-Rodriguez’s (2011) observation that trainee counselling psychology research often neglects explicitly linking its significance to the counselling psychology context, particular attention will be paid to the interaction of this profession with the constructions and discourses identified. Limitations of the study will be explored along with a discussion of the notion of applicability and what may be seen as potentially useful for counselling psychology from this research.

‘Applicability’ of Research?:
An important issue that must be engaged with is the notion of the applicability of this research. In traditional, mainstream psychology research it is also the task of this final section to make assertions about its applicability. That is, the generalisability of the findings and concrete recommendations for policy and further research that may follow from them. However, when research assumes a social constructionist position the idea of applicability becomes problematic. Indeed, research utilising discourse analysis has often been reluctant to move beyond deconstructing taken for granted categories and practices to make recommendations for change in social, political and/or psychological practice (Willig, 1998, 1999). Widdicombe (1995), for example,
warns against committing to particular recommendations as to do so risks reifying these, imposing categories of meaning upon others rather than adhering to contextualised analysis. This in effect means deconstructing one discourse only to replace it with another. Moreover, Harper (1999) questions the use of the term ‘application’ arguing that it implies a division between theory and practice whereby ideas from research can be taken out of context and applied to a context of practice unproblematically. In addition to these reification and ideology of application critiques, it is argued research findings can be abused in the pursuit of political and/or economic objectives by powerful groups (Willig, 1999). As a consequence of these objections to the notion of application, Harper (1999, p.128) prefers the term ‘usefulness’ as more appropriate for social constructionist research, referring to “whether a particular idea or intervention leads to richer understanding and to just and socially responsible outcomes”.

The current study, working within social constructionist assumptions, adopts this notion of usefulness in evaluating its relevance. That is, rather than pretending that this is the only and most truthful reading of the data that could then be applied universally, the researcher acknowledges that the discursive resources identified are based on this particular sample, could have been read in other ways and does not assume they can be applied to all women counselling psychologists in training. Rather, it is hoped this study may contribute to debate around supervision and it’s shaping effects and consequently be useful in enhancing the reader’s (potentially trainee counselling psychologists and their supervisors) and counselling psychology’s reflexive research and practice. However, it is not being suggested that the idea of application or moving beyond deconstruction be abandoned altogether. As Willig
(1999b, p.39) states, “a social constructionist perspective need not necessarily entail relativism”, with its paralysing effect on taking any political action. Which discursive objects are deconstructed through discourse analytic research is inevitably a political choice requiring grounding, and “any contribution to a body of knowledge is always also a recommendation about how things should or should not be done” (Willig, 1998, p.94). So, to clarify, it is not being argued that application is impossible, making research such as this worthless or redundant. Rather, because of the epistemological position this study is taking, where language is seen as constitutive or performative, any notion of findings being applied to make recommendations must be considered critically and reflexively. As a possible way forward regarding this, Willig (1999) has outlined three forms discourse analysis can take that may enable those who wish to address social and political practice and engage with application. These are discourse analysis as social critique, as empowerment and as guide to reform. As social critique discourse analysis is concerned with problematising language and its consequences through exposing the discursive processes by which certain ‘truths’ and categories are legitimated and perpetuated. Its method of intervention is exposure through publication, so that the reader is then able to resist and challenge dominant discursive constructions, although how such resistance is to take place in practice is not usually elaborated on. Discourse analysis as empowerment seeks to move beyond deconstructing dominant discourses to identifying counter-discourses so that subversive discursive practices and areas of resistance are promoted. For example, Parker (et. al, 1995) in addition to deconstructing discourses and practices of psychopathology, identify alternative forms of mental health practice such as deconstructive therapy and the Hearing Voices Network. An outline of the findings of this study, and how they may be viewed as offering the possibility for social critique
and empowerment in the area of counselling psychology supervision, will be provided. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to expand the analysis in order to make some account for the extra-discursive, as dictated by the study’s critical realist position outlined in the introduction, and gendered aspects of the findings.

**Analysis expanded - The extra-discursive conditions for discourses identified:**

A description of the discourses available for women counselling psychology trainees and the various ways in which they were deployed, and with what consequences for subjectivity and practice, has been given above. However, Willig (1999b) says that non-relativist social constructionist research must also analyse the conditions (historical, social and economic) that made possible the subjective accounts and the discourses which constitute them. An exploration of the historicity of counselling psychology supervision discourses was beyond the scope of this research, the reasons for which will be elaborated on in the methodological critique that will follow shortly. However, it is possible to explore links between the discourses identified and materiality or the extra-discursive within the data. Extending the analysis in this way is not unusual in discourse analytic research (Parker, 1994). Analysing power in supervision necessitates retaining some notion of materiality, as Hook (2001, p.538) states, the “discursive effects of the material, and the material effects of the discursive” both need to be considered in analysing power. Taking up a critical realist position in this way is not to be viewed as being in conflict with poststructuralism as espoused by Foucault. Although he argued for a critique of knowledge and ‘truth’ Foucault did not adhere to an absolute relativism where a reality outside discursive practice does not exist or at least cannot be accessed directly – a position adhered to by micro social constructionists who utilise discursive
psychology. For example, Hook (2001, p.529-530) in his careful reading of Foucault's The Order of Discourse (1981) criticises “much of discourse analysis…[as] critical linguistic practices that, within the context of their analyses, focus on power as a function of the text alone…[Foucault argues] such forms of analysis attribute undue power to the internal properties/structure of language [because]….the power in language links to, and stems from, external, material, and tactical forms of power”. Relatedly, Hook (2001, p.) surmises from Foucault that “material conditions of possibility…[such as] institutions, social structures and practices [sic] limit and constrict the free flow of discourse, [sic] both reinforce and renew it, and as such they need to take their rightful places within a thorough analysis of the power of discursive practices”. Although already alluded to above a number of thinkers have explicated what might constitute the extra-discursive. For example, Parker (1992) lists direct physical coercion, the habitual and physical orientation of the individual to different kinds of discourses and the physical orientation of space, while Nightingale and Cromby (1999) refer to embodiment, the physical nature of objects in the world and the power of institutions. It is the latter authors’ reference to institutions that most relates to the current study, which has focused on supervision as an institutional practice. It is important to emphasise that proponents of a critical realist or macro social constructionist position (e.g. Willig, 1999; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999) are not suggesting that social and physical conditions determine the emergence of discourses, but that they provide the possibility for them to take hold. Indeed, to claim anything more than this would be to betray social constructionism and falling back into positivism. The work of Guilfoyle (2002) exploring power in therapy is helpful for this purpose of engaging with materiality in the current study. He argues, in referring to therapy’s material dimensions, that it is as much a place as a
practice, stating that due to the “dispersion of psychological awareness and therapeutic language in the lay community (Rose, 1989), people recognise that there are ‘places’...for those who are dissatisfied with some...aspect of their life [which are] marked as sites in which expertise can be found” (Guilfoyle, 2002, p.85). Similarly, this research asserts that people, being trainees or not, are aware of supervision as sites in which expertise is provided by the supervisor. This idea of place being important for such sites is evident in some of the participants’ accounts. For example, Andrea seems to describe a tension between where one of her supervision sessions took place (i.e. the supervisor’s home) and her assumption that supervision takes place in a formal setting—“supervision in her house...was like really cosy...it didn’t feel like supervision at all” (App. D: L316-318). Not that this idea can’t be contradicted, as is reflected when she says “I always felt that I got exactly what I need” (App. D: L321). Another example of the materiality of supervision as institutional practice can be seen in the participant Glenda describing having difficulties with one of her supervisors. Outside of the context of supervision and before having started her training she says she would have explained it as a ‘personality clash’, but being located in the supervision setting she constructed it in the terms of the knowledge connected to this setting – that is, as dynamics and ‘projections’. This example also shows how the discourses institutions reinforce are internalised by individuals to regulate themselves - “could I have seen it another way, I don’t really know because it’s become part of the way I think now” (App. I: L241-242). Guilfoyle (2002) argues that material administrative ‘objects’ such as qualification certificates make the therapist’s expertise visible; enabling or legitimising them to freely question and interpret the client’s personal experiences in a way that he suggests would not happen outside of the therapy context, away from
these objects. This may equally be seen in supervision via supervisor’s reports. For example, a supervisor of the participant Eve, when questioned about including the fact Eve had suffered a personal bereavement in a report, replies “nothing is confidential in supervision” (App. H: L241-242).

The above has expanded the scope of the study’s analysis by examining instances within participants’ accounts that referred to material conditions, such as the place or location where supervision occurs and objects (e.g. supervisor reports), and found that they both reinforced and were reinforced by expert discourse in supervision. Doing so was an attempt by the researcher to adhere to a critical realist and FDA position of including the extra discursive in exploring power within discursive practices. However, there is an argument as to whether this was achieved given that the accounts of the extra discursive examined were exactly that – ‘accounts’. That is, although extra discursive conditions were seemingly identified within participants’ talk that appeared to effect the enabling or inhibiting of discourses, the current study did not corroborate the ‘existence’ of these material conditions through collection of non discursive data. This was achieved by Sims-Schouten (et.al, 2007) in their development of a critical realist approach to discourse analysis which involved “an examination of government policy and the genealogy of knowledge that enabled these policies; and a study of the participants’ social and physical environment”. This study is not alone in being open to this criticism, with Hook (2001, p.525-526) pointing out Parker (1992)’s form of discourse analysis similarly fails to move beyond textual analysis, with “what counts as knowledge…not traced back far enough to the material conditions of possibility [italics in original], to the multiple institutional supports and various social structures and practices underlying the production of truth”. However,
claims to the extra-discursive are only being made very tentatively, and should in no way be interpreted as making naive essentialist claims.

Another aspect of the findings needing expansion relates to gender. Analysis of the data showed that trainees constructed gender as part of hierarchical supervision but in complicated ways. That is, all of them referred to both men and women supervisors adopting authoritarian subject positions, but in the case of women supervisors a number of trainees spoke of ‘rivalry’ and ‘competitiveness’ as part of it. It appeared that with women supervisors trainees constructed power and meaning in supervision as ‘up for grabs’ but this was absent when speaking of supervision with men. A way of understanding this, and being consistent with the study’s social constructionist framework, is to view gender not as having fixed, determined characteristics as a modernist perspective would (e.g. Ounsted & Taylor, 1972), but as negotiated or done in interaction based on available gender discourses (Weatherall, 2002). So, in relation to the above findings, the trainees may be enacting notions of gender differences whereby the ‘expertise’ of their male supervisors is not up for questioning whereas that of their female supervisors is. It can be argued that by acting as if expertise is a fixed characteristic of male supervisors, the trainees were reinforcing gender identity and obscuring power relations unfavourable to women in the process.

**Findings of the study and their relevance to supervision theory & practice:**

In relation to the current study, the analysis can be read as social critique as a result of having identified (deconstructed) the implications of different discursive constructions of supervision on women counselling psychology trainees’ possibilities for action and subjectivity in supervision. Specifically, constructions of supervision as learning, test
and insight shaped by expert, developmental and gender discourses were shown to have implications for how the trainees interviewed could act within and experience supervision. These implications were not straightforward, however, showing supervision discourses to be complex and contradictory in their effects. For example, the hierarchical supervisory relationship informed by the above discourses had both positive and negative, enabling and restrictive consequences for women counselling psychology trainees’ within their accounts, such as being able to avoid responsibility and make mistakes legitimately but also having less input in the creation of meaning in the supervision process. This finding would appear to be consistent with Murphy and Wright (2005) who found power in supervision could be both oppressive through limiting self-disclosure but also positive, with supervisees experiencing power in supervision as contributing to their development as therapists. It is important to note that Murphy and Wright’s study did not explicitly draw on Foucauldian notions of power to interpret their findings but they would appear to support them nonetheless, as does this research. This study may also be read as empowerment, having identified alternative discourses, such as ‘professional’ and ‘human relationship’ discourses, that offered alternative positionings or resistance to hierarchical power relations in supervision for the women trainees interviewed. Again, this was highlighted to be complex, with participants not always taking up these alternative discourses in such a way as to transform or resist the hierarchy of the supervision relationship. Some have suggested that psychoanalytic theory, particularly that developed by Lacan, can be drawn on as one way of accounting for these apparent contradictions (Burr, 2003), although utilising psychoanalysis within social constructionist research is argued to present a risk of falling into essentialism.
The current study through its deconstructive analysis may be seen as adding to the work of Crocket (2007) - who analysed the talk in one supervision interaction to show how supervision culture is implicated in supervisee’s self-regulation – by examining the shaping effects of discourses in the counselling psychology context (from trainees’ talk in interviews). This is seen as important, as counselling psychology has been argued to be a distinct profession with its own epistemological foundations (Spinelli, 2001; Williams & Irving, 1996). Indeed, the findings of this study suggested that that the conflicting paradigms informing counselling psychology posed difficulties for some trainees interviewed, in terms of how this impacted on the expert discourse involved in their talk of supervision. For example, within Andrea’s account the level of qualification required to be a counselling psychologist seemed to offer the opportunity to resist the authority of supervisors as experts. However, counselling psychology’s valuing of pluralism seemed to undermine this, as she was not able to adopt a position of certainty that her supervisors who firmly worked from one therapeutic approach (non counselling psychologists), could do. A conclusion that could be drawn from this is that more effort should be made towards facilitating counselling psychology trainees accessing supervision from counselling psychologists, as a way of reducing this epistemological tension. However, the reality for counselling psychologists once qualified is to work in diverse settings that pose similar epistemological tensions for counselling psychology identity.

A finding that should be revisited for its significance to counselling psychology is the identification within participant accounts of supervision constructed as human relationship. This construction enabled the participant Glenda’s subjectivity to be formed as ‘a human being’ rather than ‘a less knowledgeable, trainee and woman’,
offering a point of resistance. Equally interesting is the obvious parallels with counselling psychology’s emphasis on, and research into, the relational as fundamental to the therapeutic process (and supervisory process!). Whilst acknowledging the productive power of supervision as hierarchical relationship, it seems reasonable for counselling psychologists within supervision to emphasise this process as being a human relationship as much as an exchange of knowledge. To do so could promote the knowledge exchange being mutual and co-constructed.

In addition to the above, the findings of this study can be viewed as contributing to filling a gap in the research literature regarding social constructionist explorations of gender constructions in the counselling psychology supervision context. They highlight the ways gender identity may be constructed in supervision which risk reinforcing gendered power relations.

**Reflexivity Appraised:**

Reflexivity in qualitative research is vitally important, particularly in social constructionist research - an approach that recognises that knowledge claims, including those made from research, are “ideological, political and permeated with values” (Schwandt, 2000, p.98; cited in Frost et al, 2010, p.444). Furthermore, it has been argued that “qualitative research is as useful as the reflexive nature of the researcher regarding his/her influence on data production and analysis” (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009, p.52), and Steier (1991) goes as far as to argue that research only becomes social constructionist when reflexivity is taken seriously. This study has attempted to centralise this process of reflexivity through outlining the researcher’s interest in the topic and including reflexive commentaries designed to explicate the
researcher’s influence on data collection and analysis. This may be seen as addressing personal reflexivity and functional reflexivity (Tindall, 1994). To what extent such reflexive strategies have been successful in firmly situating the researcher in the research process (Cooper & Burnett, 2006; cited in Alex & Hammarstrum, 2008) is difficult for the researcher to assess due to continuing to be emerged within it. That is, some have argued that understanding what shapes the research (reflexivity) may only become apparent after completing it (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003).

Nevertheless, as part of a continued engagement with reflexivity, how the social location or positioning of the counselling psychology trainees interviewed and that of the researcher influenced the research process require deeper consideration (Buckner, 2005). Specifically, given that all participants were women and the researcher was a man, what was the impact of this on the narratives produced during the interviews, and on how the data was analysed? As in all human interactions, power is always present in the transaction of an interview (Numkoosing, 2005; cited in Alex & Hammarstrum, 2008, p.170), but what bearing did gender and the shared status between researcher and researched as counselling psychology trainees have on exacerbating or minimising power relations? It is possible that the researcher also being a counselling psychology trainee may have enabled participants to talk more freely of their experiences of power in supervision than if the researcher was a supervisor. Regarding the situation of the researcher being a man interviewing women, it has been argued by some early feminist writers to be problematic, based on the assertion that women are more able than men to access the experiences of women in interviews (Broom et. al, 2009). However, contemporary feminist researchers have criticised such assertions as simplistic, and it has been pointed out that little research
has been done on the effects of gender incongruence (Broom et. al, 2009), except for some studies focusing on women interviewing men (e.g Arendell, 1997). Given that all the participants were women, it was particularly necessary for an engagement with this issue of the influence of gender on the findings. This will be attempted through reflecting on its possible impact in an interview with one of the participants, as an example. One of the participants, Diane, spoke explicitly of power in supervision related to a male supervisor who had attempted to establish a dual relationship (i.e. romantic/sexual) with her and when she refused this had become unsupportive in the supervisory relationship. She then described how this had led to her not choosing men as supervisors, unless she perceived them to be homosexual, to avoid feeling threatened. I was conscious in this context about how my gender may have been affecting what and how this participant spoke, and raised this with her to acknowledge the potential power within this dynamic –

Diane: “I’m having a real problem with males and um yeah males in positions of power

INT: I guess I’m conscious of in this

Diane: Yeah

INT: in this role as well

Diane: Yeah that’s true. (App. G: L116-121)

INT: It does sound like a very difficult experience especially in your first year…so I’m aware of for me treating you with respect…and to tread carefully. (App. G: L282-287)
Listening to the recorded interview and reading the transcript it seemed that difficulties in communication occurred more with Diane than with other participants, shown through her frequently clarifying if she had understood my questions correctly. This may have shown the difficulties of talking about a sensitive topic with a male interviewer, but there was some indication that the interview situation offered a more powerful subject position to Diane in relation to discourses involving men as threatening:

INT: How are you feeling in talking about this?
Diane:…I think it’s good to talk about it. I think that’s one reason why I wanted to take part in the study because I felt like in some ways it could empower me, be more therapeutic. (App. G: L367-373).

It seemed that within Diane’s account were discourses around heterosexual men as threatening and homosexual men as non-threatening which affected her subjectivity (she described feeling more herself around supervisors who were women or men perceived as homosexual) and practice (she had avoided working with male supervisors).

Another important aspect of the data that requires consideration is the fact that all respondents volunteering to participate were women and that the topic discussed by them often oriented to power explicitly even before it had been introduced by the researcher. At the recruitment stage the researcher presumed that this skewed composition of the sample in relation to gender was simply representative of the demographic make up of counselling psychology trainees. However, it is possible that
the nature of the research, and specifically, female trainees’ experience of power, could be implicated in the sample composition. As Sankar and Gubrium (1994, xv; cited in Arendell, 1997, p.344) state, “participants agree to engage in an interview for their own reasons”. The title of the study was intended to reflect the study’s focus on how being labelled ‘trainee’ afforded participants certain rights to speak and act due to the discourses surrounding the notion of trainee and supervision.

However, the explicit naming of power in the title and in other materials (e.g. participant information form) appeared to orient participants to speak of their experiences of overt power (i.e. leading closely to power as domination) rather than speaking of their experiences of supervision generally, within which the discourses implicated in less visible, disciplinary power could be identified. The reason for such explicitness was twofold. Firstly, due to inexperience in carrying out discourse analytic research the researcher was uncertain whether instances of power would be present in the interviews and subsequent data if not explicitly enquired about. Secondly, there were concerns that not stating the focus of the study, i.e. an exploration of power in supervision as a critique of this institutional practice, would be misleading to participants and therefore ethically suspect. However, in relation to the first point, such uncertainty perhaps belied the researcher holding modernist assumptions about power in the early stages of the research process. In particular, that power is visible, is oppressive and is possessed by individuals. Despite this, it is felt that the data was not compromised as supervision discourses that shaped participants’ subjectivity and practice (i.e. power relations) were still able to be identified. The fact that all participants were women means that the shaping effects of the discourses
within supervision involved a complex relationship between participants being positioned both as trainees and as women.

**Methodological Critique:**

Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) outline that Foucauldian discourse analysis should include three dimensions of analysis of discursive practices - historical inquiry (genealogy), mechanisms of power and description of their functioning, and the material/signifying practices in which subjects are made up (subjectification). Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2008) go on to say that to adequately address the historical dimension of analysis, a text containing a sample of discourses should include discourses that are historically variable, to show how a subject, in this case, supervision, has been spoken about differently at different times and exposed to varied forms of regulation, punishment and reform. This study interviewed counselling psychology trainees over six months and did not include other forms of text relating to counselling psychology supervision from other time periods. Therefore, this may be considered a possible limitation of the current study for not theorising “fluctuations and transformations in discursive relations to ward off a reading of them as unchanging” (Parker & Burman, 1993, p.164). Future research could look at counselling psychology texts at different time periods, although the extent to which this could be achieved is limited given that counselling psychology is relatively young (Milton, 2010).

There has been much debate regarding the relativist/realist distinction within social constructionist thinking and research, with some authors vehemently defending their adopted position as better or more appropriate (e.g. Nightingale & Cromby, 1999;
Parker, 1998). In this study it was due to an understanding of discursive psychology to view power as little more than an effect of discourse during social interaction that FDA was chosen as more appropriate for the study’s interest in power relations in supervision. However, Burr (2003, p.174) states that a criticism made of FDA is that by “turning discourses into objects, which have an existence independent of the people who use them and the contexts in which they are used…neglects what the speaker is doing with their talk”. Furthermore, there are some who argue that the polarising effect of the relativist/realist debate is unhelpful and that there is some compatibility between these positions. Therefore, it is possible that researching the topic of power in supervision could have benefited from employing a research methodology, such as critical discursive psychology, that incorporates both positions. This would be in line with counselling psychology’s valuing of pluralism both in therapeutic approaches and research methodology. Equally, also exploring the topic from another approach such as interpretative phenomenological analysis would have added another view to the analysis. Combining FDA and IPA in research has been undertaken before (e.g. Johnson, Burrows & Williamson, 2004) based on suggested connections between them on pragmatic grounds (Smith, 1996; Yardley, 1997; cited in Johnson et. al 2004). Johnson (et. al, 2004) also argue that there are epistemological and ontological connections between the two that could support them both being used in the same study.

Another possible limitation is outlined by Willig and Drury (2004) who point out that when discourse analysis is used as a research methodology within the context of academic research, it can position the researcher as expert by presupposing a ‘division of labour’ whereby the ‘participant’ produces the data while the ‘researcher’ points to
the discursive constructions’ functions and contradictions. This can be an undermining experience for participants, leading to what these authors call ‘relational violence’ which they argue cannot be avoided within the academic framework. Willig (1999b) suggests collective discourse analysis, where participants are seen as co-researchers and are involved in each stage of the analysis, can address this, so that the research is not ‘about’ but rather ‘for’ its participants, a form of action research.

However, Georgaca and Avidi (2012, p.150) argue that because discourse analysis works from the assumption that individuals are both positioned by discourses (but are not fully aware of this) and use them (but not intentionally necessarily); it does not make sense to pursue participant validation. Giles (2002) points out that while it is held to be good practice in some forms of qualitative research for the researcher to allow the participants to inspect the data and the analysis (to promote reliability and empowerment respectively), doing so for some topics using discourse analysis can jeopardise the whole project.

Conclusions & Future Research:
The current study sought to question supervision in the counselling psychology context as a taken-for-granted institutional practice by identifying the discourses implicated in shaping women counselling psychology trainees’ subjectivity and practice. The current study found that expert, developmental and gender discourses were implicated in trainees’ constructions of supervision and power in supervision. These had both enabling and inhibiting effects, positioning women trainees as submissive and compliant within a hierarchical relationship with supervisors. It was also found that alternative discourses, such as professional and human relationship

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discourses, were contained within the accounts that offered resistance to the hierarchical supervisory relationship. This study also found that there were material conditions referred to in participants’ talk that reinforced and were reinforced by these discourses - particularly expert discourse - such as supervisor’s reports and the institutional practice of supervision taking place in certain physical spaces. This consideration of materiality in relation to discourses should be viewed as going further than Crockett’s (2007) study, which did not explicitly explore this. However, it must be said that this exploration of the extra-discursive is only tentative.

Considering the above, a number of possibilities for further research present themselves. This study explored constructions of power through the accounts of women counselling psychology trainees. Future research may wish to study the accounts of supervisors of trainee counselling psychologists, to bring in further voices. It may also be valuable to interview men counselling psychology trainees to explore the ways they construct their identity within supervision. Finally, future research would benefit from more confidently exploring the extra-discursive beyond references in participant accounts, although this is not an easy task.

This study can be seen as social critique through the deconstruction of the shaping effects of counselling psychology supervision. It is important to emphasise that ‘deconstructing’ as social critique does not mean turning away from or rejecting theoretical models over others in supervision or indeed from supervision itself - this would mean closing down possibilities, inadvertently adopting the polarised duality of modernism that deconstruction is attempting to move beyond (House, 1999). That is, not to wrongly interpret deconstructing as meaning that the supervisor should disown
any expertise or authority. Rather it highlights to the supervisor the need to be reflexive; to not abandon knowledge but question how knowledge they espouse can affect the meanings created within the supervisory relationship and technologies of the self that regulate supervisees. Equally, it is not being suggested from this study’s deconstruction of supervision that supervisees should reject the knowledge and advice of their supervisors, nor swallow whole everything that is offered from them. However, it does offer the opportunity for empowerment through enabling supervisees to be reflexive themselves and to bring their own contribution to the meanings created in supervision. Both supervisors and supervisees would benefit from being aware of Rose’s (1989, cited in Allwood, 1996, p.19) argument that “experts, as mediators between the State and the individual, use their expertise to educate the individual into a self-critical and self-regulatory mode of being…through the establishment of ‘facts’, [and] the inducement of personal anxiety about the deviation from social ‘norms’”. Philp, Guy & Lowe (2007, p.55) in their discussion of supervision as social construction stress the importance of stepping back from any particular discourse - social constructionist views included - in what they call ‘meta-positioning’ in order to be positioned in supervision as a “contributor to a conversation from which ideas from any and all models [and from both both supervisors and counselling psychology trainees] might have the potential to add richness to the dialogue”, so that there is an “emphasis on meaning that is co-constructed through dialogue, and a view of the supervisory relationship as collaborative rather than hierarchical” (Copeland, et.al, 2011, p.28). Such a view of supervision would fit well with counselling psychology, which increasingly values a two person psychology where the meaning created in therapy (and supervision!) is seen as an intersubjective, co-constructed process (Auerbach & Blatt, 2001; Rizq,
Exploring supervision from a social constructionist perspective has received little attention in counselling psychology and it is hoped that this study has stimulated interest in researching this area further.
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Participant information sheet

Title of Research Project:

An Exploration of Trainee Counselling Psychologists’ Accounts of Power in Clinical Supervision

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in this research. If you do decide to participate in this study the following information will inform you of what the process will involve. My name is Nick Dobson and I am conducting this research as part of my counselling psychology doctorate at Roehampton University. Should you have any further questions after reading the below do not hesitate to contact me.

Brief description of the Research:

Clinical supervision is viewed by many to be fundamentally important in ensuring professional development of counselling psychologists and the welfare of clients, while others dispute this. Power has been argued to exist in supervision for reasons such as a hierarchical quality of this relationship, and to have varied meanings. This study is designed to explore trainee counselling psychologists’ experience of power in clinical supervision, and how this may have informed, and been informed by, being a trainee counselling psychologist. Other than exploring and reflecting on your experiences of power in supervision, there may not be any direct or immediate benefits of taking part in this study. However, it is expected you would be contributing to the counselling psychology professions’ understanding of trainees’ experiences of power in supervision and potentially informing the development of supervision as a result.

To participate in this study you must be a trainee counselling psychologist in your penultimate or ultimate year of your course, and have experienced power in your clinical supervision, whether it is individual or group supervision. After you have been given the opportunity to assess what participation in this study will involve, i.e., by reading through this information sheet, you will be asked to sign a consent form if you choose to participate, but you will be free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. Should you withdraw you can do so by citing the ID number provided on the debriefing form. If you withdraw data in an aggregate form may still be used/published.

What will be expected from you as a research participant?

This is a qualitative study and participation in it will involve a face-to-face interview, which will last approximately 1.5 hours (which will include a brief introduction and time after the interview for discussing your experience of taking part in the study and
any questions you may have) at a location convenient to you (i.e. a private interview room at your training institution or that of the researcher). The interview will be audio-recorded, to be later transcribed and analysed using a qualitative research method, e.g. FDA, IPA.

**How will your confidentiality and anonymity be maintained and if difficulties from participating arise, how will they be handled?**

The interview is intended to take place in an appropriately private location minimising interruptions. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained through the following measures. Any identifying details (e.g. names) will be either changed or removed from both the audio recording and transcript, which will be kept separately from any identifiable information, such as your contact details and consent form and will be identified by an ID number. All audio recordings, transcripts and identifiable information will be stored securely, either on a password protected computer or lockable cabinet of the researcher, for a period of 10 years. Only the researcher, supervisors, assessors, and potentially publishers will have access to the audio recording and transcript. Anonymised quotes will be included in the thesis and any publications that arise from it.

Your anonymity and confidentiality will be upheld provided the information you provide falls within the British Psychological Society’s ethical guidelines. Please be advised that should details of unethical or unprofessional practice emerge during the interview the researcher has an ethical duty to report this to the BPS.

It is important for you to be aware that during and after the interview you may find that talking about your experiences of supervision raises uncomfortable or upsetting feelings and issues for you. There will be an opportunity at the end of the interview to talk briefly with me about this, and a debriefing sheet will be provided to you giving details of appropriate support should you like to discuss what has been raised for you in greater depth.

If you decide to participate in this study, or have any further questions, please contact me via email or telephone, as outlined below, to arrange where and when to meet for the interview. Before the interview commences you will be provided with a consent form to read and sign.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Best wishes,

Nick Dobson
Researcher contact details:
Nick Dobson
Trainee Counselling Psychologist
Department of Psychology
Roehampton University
Whitelands College
Holybourne Avenue
London
SW15 4JD
Email: dobsonn@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone number: 0778811 3933

This research has been approved by the Ethics Committee at Roehampton University.
If you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the researcher. However if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Department (of if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies).

Director of Studies:
Dr Janek Dubowski
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8392 3627

Head of Department:
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Holybourne Avenue
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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Research:

An Exploration of Trainee Counselling Psychologists’ Accounts of Power in Clinical Supervision

Description of project:

This study will explore trainee counselling psychologists’ experiences of power in clinical supervision, and what the impact of this may have had on their identity as counselling psychologists.

Eight to twelve participants will be sought to attend an interview to discuss a series of questions and this will last for 1.5 hours. Interviews will take place at a mutually agreed location (interview room of participant or researcher’s training institution) and convenient time.

It is required that you sign this form prior to the start of the interview; by signing this form you are confirming that the following procedures were undertaken to prepare you for the interview.

I confirm that the following information was provided by the Researcher:

• I have been given the information sheet which informs me what the research will involve.

• I am aware that I have the right to stop participating in the study at any point and to withdraw without giving a reason.

• I am aware that if I do decide to withdraw from the study that data may still be used or published as anonymised quotes.

• The only people who will be permitted to hear this recording are the Researcher, his supervisors and possibly examiners.

• I am aware that every effort will be made to ensure that anonymity is achieved in the transcript of this interview.
• I am aware that every effort will be made to ensure anonymity should this research be published.

• I have been informed of the British Psychological Society’s ethical guidelines and am aware of the limits of confidentiality.

Signed:________________________   Signed:________________________
Print name:_____________________   Researchers name:___________

Researchers details:
Nick Dobson
Trainee Counselling Psychologist
Department of Psychology
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Director of Studies:          Head of Department:
Dr Janek Dubowski          Dr Diane Bray
Department of Psychology   Department of Psychology
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Whitelands College         Whitelands College
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Email: j.dubowski@roehampton.ac.uk   Email: d.bray@roehampton.ac.uk
Telephone number: 020 8392 3214   Telephone number: 020 8392 3627
DEBRIEFING INFORMATION FORM

Title of Research:
An Exploration of Trainee Counselling Psychologists’ Accounts of Power in Clinical Supervision

Debrief:

Thank you for your time and participation in my research. This study aims to explore trainee counselling psychologists’ experience of power in clinical supervision in order to more fully understand supervision and the implications of power within it on the identities of trainee counselling psychologists. Such an exploration may contribute to and benefit counselling psychology.

I would like to invite you to ask any questions you may have about this project and your involvement in it. In particular, please feel free to talk about your experience of this interview, should you be aware of any difficulties this has raised for you. I would like to remind you that you have the right to withdraw from this study at any point, and you can inform me if this is the case on the details listed below. Should you do so, data in an aggregate form may still be used/published.

Should you wish to discuss in greater depth, and gain support for, any issues that arose for you, the following are suggestions to access this:

- Student Medical Centre, Froebel College, Roehampton University 0208 392 3679
- Samaritans (24 hours a day): 08457 909090
- For a list of accredited therapists, refer to the following:
  - www.bps.org.uk (T: 0116 254 9568)
  - www.bacp.co.uk (T: 01455 883316)

Researchers details:
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APPENDIX D
TRANSCRIPT – ‘ANDREA’
INT: ok, so to begin with can you describe for me how you have found your experiences of supervision, in your development as a counseling psychologist
P: Just generally um yeah its I think generally I’ve been quite lucky um I think I’ve um had good supervision with quite different people so I feel like I’ve got a good sort of experience of very different styles and very different perspectives of how to sort of conduct supervision so that’s something that um has been quite good I will say though that a sort of common thread and I( don’t know that other is I’ve never actually explored this with other people actually but i've found that the supervisors I've had have been a bit um a bit lax on boundaries so its all been a bit sort of messy whilst the supervision itself has been good the sort of organization structure has been I’ve found a bit messy and I think at times being in training I’ve found that a bit destabilising um coz I think very much and certainly thinking about this issue of power coz I think when you’re a trainee or I was at least your really clinging too any bits of supervision coz your sort of overwhelmed your with different clients and really kind of valuing that ability to kind of explore what’s really going on and um yeah I’ve found whilst the sort of quality of what I got was always really good and really varied I sometimes struggled with um sort of changing times changing boundaries sort of different people coming late and I found that a bit um destabilising at times I don’t know whether that’s just my experience or sort of supervisors and train I sometimes wondered that um a lot of the supervisors that I had were trained to a level below what I was aiming to achieve and I don’t know at times I felt there may have been awkwardness because of that um but yeah I don’t know I know I know whenever it got to about talking about well what's the right way to look at this client coz I never I’ve never had a counseling psychologist as a the supervisor um and
I’ve often wondered about that dynamic coz it always seemed yeah I don’t know that there was something underlying that wasn’t really being spoken about

INT: What do you mean?

P: Yeah I don’t know what I mean actually my mouths opening and words are coming out and I’m kind of realizing some things I haven’t really consciously thought about I guess but um what do I mean um I always felt some resistance I guess from supervisors to let me explore what it means as a counseling psychologist to be working with this client it was always made kind of clear like I’m a Jungian or I’m a psychosexual therapist or I’m a person centred or whatever it was um I kind of felt like I had to adopt whatever it was that they were I guess that kind of makes sense coz that’s what they’re doing but I guess I kind of in retrospect now felt you know there may have been more scope for them to kind of support me more as an individual um you know finding my own way and of course you know making a clear distinction if what they’re offering is really useful but its coming from sort of a quite narrow um perspective and I guess supporting my own process to kind of um I guess integrate the different things that we do learn as a counseling psychologist which I think um well everybody seems to be integrative these days I don’t know whether it meant or means the same thing from whatever experience they had to what I’m sort of doing and learning perhaps I should have found a counseling psychologist as a supervisor but that just never kind of just never worked out that way

INT: Mmm, so sort of it sounds like you’re wondering what impact it had or may have had to not have a counseling psychologist supervising you on your find your way

P: Yeah coz the other thing is I didn’t I’ve never had a counseling psychologist as a therapist either so I feel um yeah I feel it it is kind of a strange place the therapy world there’s so many different nooks and perspectives and um you know maybe sort of a free
for all what's the best way and you got the whole NHS you know pushing evidence based
practice and um yeah I feel generally I mean I think this is a topic that comes up and up
and up that counseling psychology is kind of having a bit of an identity crisis trying to
find its feet what are we what do we do and um definitely thinking about supervision I
think that’s a massive theme that I’m sort of left with
INT: mmm
Par: that I don’t I don’t really feel that that process of consolidating some of my training
really happened in supervision um that it was yeah and actually getting to the the power
issue which I had a really strange kind of experience in one supervision group where it
was almost like I felt like I was the the second supervisor that
INT: mmm
PAR: there were ah how many of us were there there were kind of four but there was
always one person there that was sort of never there um and there were man people were
kind of um much earlier on in their training and so I always felt that in that situation
maybe this is something I was giving myself but certainly I didn’t the dynamic set up
where I felt or perhaps it was actually just one person in the group who was very very
demanding of sort of time and attention and so in that sense perhaps I felt that I had to be
kind of more contained and support them in this group so it was sort of um and not
necessarily I mean I recall on numerous times um being left to the end and then having
like 10 minutes to you know of a two hour session I’d have five, ten minutes that was all
that was left for me um or um yeah this person just kind of sabotaging um what I was
talking about or from the beginning of the session and I guess in terms of thinking about
power um I guess I would have hoped that the supervisor would have kind of taken
control of that a bit more and made it equal rather than me feeling like there perspective
was oh you don’t really need this he obviously needs it more so we’ll sort of gear it that way. I felt I sort of coped with that as I do cope with everything but um yeah in retrospect I think there was a massive power issue going on that led to me kind of feeling like I had to be competent and not need supervision

INT: Hmm. And that you feeling you needed to be competent and not need supervision partly seemed to stem from this other supervisee requiring a lot of attention in the space of supervision and

PAR: Yeah that was it’s funny I hadn’t really thought about it but when this issue of power in supervision I thought god I probably do need to talk about this situation coz it was it was outrageous it was

INT: Outrageous?

PAR: it was actually I was I felt quite concerned about this persons ability to be with the clients because the way they conducted themself in the our supervision group was really really out there um in terms of certainly with issues of power because they used to just constantly challenge the supervisor like a petulant child just sort of um really kind of angry and I remember at one point um we’d know something had gone on in the personal life of our supervisor and we missed a week or something and he came in um when we were back and we were sort of you know bring our selves in the room you know doing the sort of um intro stuff and he just sort of exploded and said this is a farce I need to know how you’re feeling I need to know what’s going on I can’t I’m not prepared to sit here and not know everything about what’s been happening to you and I was like Jesus Christ um sorry it was just really like challenging my supervisor to tell all and to their credit they did handle it quite well sort of very diplomatically say you know shove off this is my personal life I’m fine to be back here there’s no problem
INT: Mmm
PAR: Um but yeah it was just constantly things like that
INT: Hmm
PAR: just really and then challenging because they thought the supervisor um what else did he used to say um that she was um not making enough space for him ironically enough in supervision where from my perspective it was all about him every single session
INT: Hmm
PAR: time was you know the him show so um it was quite difficult to be in um and and yeah I always felt kind of in a role of yeah I feel like it was sort of created like I was good cop supervisor was bad cop and he kind of the way he related to me was everything I said even if I was you know I wasn’t even sort of trying to do that but sort of trying to kind of support him a bit so that he would shut up basically everything I said was great and everything she said was awful and so it created a very strange dynamic
INT: Hmm
PAR: um that didn’t make me feel comfortable didn’t make me want to come to supervision coz it just felt like kind of baby sitting this other client withstanding his outbursts and um yeah left me feeling like I think over six months or something I talked about a client once or twice for one time for like five minutes and the other time for maybe a decent session but so it was kind of well it was interesting because I guess most of our supervision sessions were about our dynamic but then I was feeling like this whole dynamic is just being created by this one person and I’m not actually that it may be useful for him but. I’m not sure it’s useful for me I probably spend the time better talking about my clients INT: Hmm so this colleague in the supervision by his behaviour by the way he
spoke took a lot of space space away from you and so it seems that he had you attribute a
lot of power to him through that but I wondered also what ah you mentioned earlier about
the supervisor perhaps um should of done something in relation to that could you say
more about that?
PAR: Yeah um I mean it was it was kind of a complete power free for all because the
certainly the supervisor um was a powerful person um and kind of prone it it just seemed
like a lots of balancing so she used to say I know I can kind of fill a space um please
challenge me you know if you feel you’re not if we’re sort of going off or whatever and I
felt I felt quite comfortable with that because I’m I’m not someone who kind of um fears
speaking my mind or whatever and I actually quite liked just the the sort of boldness of it
and the complete sort of acknowledgement that she knows that that’s what she does and
so sort of opening the floor to kind of um say look we need I need to talk about this um
just the openness I found quite good because she could of just been controlling and um
not aware of it and denying it or whatever so
INT: So she was aware of herself and inviting, um…
PAR: Yes aware of how she could maybe take over the dynamic and um she was
therefore open to feedback on that
INT: Hmm
PAR: Um but I think that’s what this other person really struggled with and um so yeah it
was in a way I mean I think that’s probably some of my own stuff but it drew me in every
time to trying to manage the situation. Coz you know that’s what I’ve done that’s my sort
of history is sort of making negotiating between people you know mediating and um I’m
not sure if I’m answering your question I can’t quite remember what you were asking me
but um
INT: That’s ok

PAR: Um yeah I just felt like a mediator um and I don’t know whether that has something to do with the reason she didn’t kind of interfere and the reason why um well she did her best with this powerful other individual but I felt that you know rather than just addressing his behaviour some perhaps reflection on the impact he was then having on us could have been quite

INT: Mmm

PAR: coz it wasn’t just me it was certainly other people in the group who were completely kind of ignored um and I think that may I don’t know but I I sort of felt like you know with the counseling psychology training they know you know it’s very long its very intense we’re sort of doing all these different things that there’s somehow this feeling that we don’t need maybe as much support or something I don’t

INT: Mmm

PAR: But I sort of felt perhaps that’s just me trying to make sense of it but um certainly it felt that um yeah that there just wasn’t too much concern for the impact of this person on the other people in the group, she did her best to sort of manage him as an entity but the impact he was having on the group was kind of it was kind of touched on a little bit but I wonder I wonder whether it would’ve been way too much for this person to take if we’d said like do you realize every time you know it’s all about you and nobody else sort of gets to talk about what they want and you sort of direct everything so that probably would have resulted in a big blow out fight but um I don’t know. That was sort of my feeling on it

INT: Mmm. You seem to be you being in a position of having to mediate having to um put his needs ahead of your own in terms of what you wanted to use the supervision for
and um part of that is you talked about your own history of mediating um partly him his
um his way of being in the room of quite dominating and quite powerful perhaps
PAR: But also very childish
INT: Yeah. You spoke of um in this context of ah you wondered if there was a
presumption that because you were doing a Counselling Psychology course that that you
would be ok with it
PAR: Mmm
INT: Could you say more about that, maybe?
PAR: Um yeah I mean I don’t know whether that’s me just blowing my own trumpet but
um I think just generally um I don’t know there I’ve just always felt a sort of hesitancy
from other people with other trainings I guess because now the counseling psychology
training is doctoral and we becomes doctors um that I don’t know I just always sensed a
kind of um you know in centres and things you’ve got like Gestalt and psychodynamic
and all kinds of different things. I just always kind of felt separate from them um
whenever there was a larger group on training days or whatever um maybe again that’s
just just my sort of take on it but um
INT: Mmm
PAR: I’m just aware of a few times um when there were actually other counseling
psychology trainees and stuff we all sort of just gravitated together and then everybody
else was kind of more like free and easy but we were sort of like oohh you know this
something different something coz obviously everybody’s different but somehow it was
us and them. Um and I guess yes I think there’s something in this change too coz also
throughout my training we had lots of um lots of classes with the previous counseling
psychology trainees that were actually taking a longer course then us but were not going
to end up with a doctorate

INT: Mmm

PAR: and that was always really awkward because I mean I don’t know again if there
was nothing really expressed but I think all of us felt very kind of defensive that here we
were we were sort of a year behind them in essence but we were going to well we thought
we were going to finish at the same time as them but with this sort of higher achievement
or higher designation. Um and I think I think that sort of adds to this kind of I think again
that hits back on the identity of counseling psychology and now if things weren’t sort of
bad enough I think there’s this massive division almost between us and those you know
who don’t have a doctorate that will

INT: Mmm

PAR: and it’s just kind of um I feel like I’m a bit all over the place but I think that’s kind
of this concept is that it is a bit I kind of feel on one hand sometimes I’m being seen as
um you know some kind of authority because I’m working towards this doctor thing um
and other times I feel very uncertain about what my training means or who I’m going to
be and how I’m going to fit into the whole you know mental health arena um and yeah
maybe if I feel that I would assume that others are even more confused about what
counseling psychology means and who we are and um but I think you can’t get around
the fact that having a doctor before your name is you know its something

INT: Mmm

PAR: it’s not you’re not it is something different from being a Gestalt therapist who
practices you know I think a lot of the stuff that they’ve done I’m really interested in that
approach and I think its really amazing and quite different from what we’ve been doing
but there’s this kind of intrinsic hierarchy there that we’re the doctor we’re more aligned
with sort of traditional um you know the whole societal model where you put people and
anybody historically who’s a doctor is kind of you know a figure head in the community
you’re somebody you trust um and I think that is quite interesting coz I think counseling
psychology kind of straddles um you know all those other therapies are kind of thought
of as alternative kinds of medicines or they can be hippy dippy you can go and see a
counselor in like a a herbal hippy shop do you know what I mean but then we kind of you
know as counseling psychologists we’re kind of into that whole counseling world
obviously but then we’re doctors so its kind of a a contradiction

INT: Mmm

PAR: I think where as clinical psychologists you know they’re in hospitals they work
with psychiatrists for the most part it’s quite clear but we’re kind of half that half hippy
dippy kind of alternative side

INT: ah ha

PAR: I’m really going off on one

INT: So it seems like ah there’s a feeling for you of um us and them or a feeling of a little
bit defensive or different from other people by virtue of being a counseling psychologist
versus other kind of helping professions and you also speak though of um within your
counseling psychology training of um different levels of of attainment of qualification
and feeling of difference happening because of that

PAR: Hmm Yeah I think it really it really just leads to one big identity crisis because um
and you know certainly finding that now looking at different jobs and talking to
colleagues who are looking for jobs and you know I got an email from someone the other
day saying oh I need to start thinking about this private work because I’m becoming
really stubborn I just wanna work the way that we’ve been taught and that I’m interested
in and you know looking at the NHS there’s just no way that’s going to happen and its it is really strange that we kind of there’s lots of different directions we can go in and lots of different ways we can find employment but its it seems like you kind of have to choose you know we’re learned to work this certain way but you’re either going to have to just sort of go one way or the other or sort of mould yourself to sort of fir different things and there’s no at least I haven’t seen it an obvious example of a job where it’s like yes I’ll just walk in there and I’ll do what I’ve been doing for three years or four years and um that’s frustrating its frustrating

INT: Mmm

PAR: Coz it just doesn’t seem to make sense but who knows it may all be different in a couple of years again but um yeah I think my feeling is that it must impact on the dynamic certainly in supervision um and power because if are kind of uncertain of who we are and they’re uncertain of who we are and um

INT: But yet at the same time there’s um you feel they um feel like counseling psychologists should be ok within that context because of of what they know that we’re doing at least of doing a doctorate

PAR: yeah but I don’t know whether that’s more just because they don’t know what we’re doing so the unknown is kind of like we stay away from it lets just assume you’re fine because I don’t really know what your doing um yeah I don’t know and I find myself thinking about my other supervision group and I don’t know why um that yeah I don’t know if there’s anything else you want to ask me about what I was talking about but um sort of moving in another direction

INT: Um we can go with that

PAR: OK um yeah no just thinking about this other supervision group I had um where the
whole there was a clear bias from our quite a few of us were involved in this we didn’t all
have supervision together but quite a few of us had the same supervisor and he was quite
um anti [participants university] I wouldn’t necessarily say anti counseling psychology
but um just kind of dismissive like you know he’s Jungian I think in a lot of ways
extremely brilliant like really the best supervision I’ve ever had
INT: Mmm
PAR: Um but there was this kind of you’re sort of getting something good but then
constantly having the carpet pulled from under you like you know your whole training is
crap the people there are crap its just sort of bad um vibes about what I was actually
doing but then being told that I’m good um real kind of mixed messages I guess I’m
trying to say and I don’t again I mean I found that to be an incredible kind of power
dynamic and that here’s this sort of guru and you can’t sort of get away from it because
what you’re getting is really interesting and the way that you’re sort of picking apart your
clients and looking at it is like something just a completely different experience than I’ve
had really Um I found it really useful and really really helpful um but then at the same
time kind of feeling like its again trying to kind of fit with the supervisor’s idea of what
should be going on rather than having sort of freedom to explore you know what it means
to be a counseling psychologist again and you know maybe maybe shock horror using
some Cognitive kind of techniques in the work INT: um yeah just just kind of very clear
kind of um what’s the word I’m looking for like biases coming from the supervisor that
means that you kind of you play along because that’s the tone they’re setting you don’t
kind of explore maybe something further than you think maybe interesting
INT: I wonder um as part of that you talked about a particular supervisor as um you used
the word guru um whether it was um that sense of not being able to maybe assert more of
a counseling psychology position maybe within the context um was that based on him as a supervisor or um because a particular perspective he came from or

PAR: Maybe just the person he was

INT: the person he was right

PAR: Um

INT: as an individual

PAR: yeah he’s I’m actually still seeing him for my private clients bizarrely enough um he’s I find him incredibly difficult and stubborn and awkward and we went through a whole phase where his boundaries were horrific um ah he was going through personal things but um yeah it I don’t know if this is my masochistic side

INT: Mmm

PAR: because he he’s just so uncontained it amazes me every time that you know even if we only have five minutes and we just sit there and I just sort of blurt stuff mess out about my client that I don’t just I completely out of context it doesn’t make any sense but the insights that he comes up with a just incredible and I do think there is an intimidation factor there that um because you know God knows I haven’t I haven’t had enough time to sort of do all the reading especially into sort of psychodynamic theory that I’ve wanted to over the course of the last couple of years. It’s really challenging um you know here’s somebody who’s done Jungian training which is pretty extreme and practicing for like years and years and years um kind of really forcing you into um I don’t know just putting all your skills on the line really and not sort of just sort of working with the presumption that you should know what he’s talking about and um its yeah I mean I certainly um I I feel that again I sort of handle his um power in an alright way but I do know that there’s a lot of people who struggle with kind of um fighting against that intimidation factor
but um yeah its kind of funny I’m now thinking about my other supervisor that I had that um who I didn’t find intimidating at all um it was always kind of weird she was always she was just this real mumsy lady and I’d have supervision in her house she had like a little annex off the side and she’d always like make you a cup of tea and sit down it was like really cosy in this little room and it didn’t feel at all like supervision I’ve had at school or either of the really it was just so like cosy and nice and it was a chat but its funny because I actually think ok so she didn’t have these like brilliant interpretations or anything but um I always felt comfortable to bring anything and we would talk about everything and I always felt that I got exactly what I need which is something that I honestly haven’t had or maybe with the exception of another one other supervisor I had but I only had him for a very short time but it almost feels like I’ve had either kind of intimidating supervision where for one reason or another whether its well yeah in a couple of cases definitely been the supervisor who’s kind of an intimidating character for one reason or another then the dynamic created is intimidating for me for a reason or another

or I’ve had really cosy supervision which feels like its not really challenging me its not really making me feel uncomfortable its kind of nice and warm and cosy but I feel much more comfortable to share whatever it is that I want to and its always received well and its always received seriously and like lets think about this but its not it hasn’t led to me really you know challenging aspects of myself or really challenging like awful aspects of my clients but its I think I think that going back to what I said sort of right at the beginning is that I think I’ve valued having that kind of diversity because its been I
think you need to have both you need somewhere you feel comfortable and it’s not like all
a you know a terrifying or a hugely intimidating experience but then I do think
sometimes there’s ugly stuff in client work or in yourself and how you relate to clients or
whatever that you can’t kind of you know cosy away from

INT: Mmm, it seems though that there’s two or three different experiences but maybe
two more towards one end two quite separate separate experiences in a way of um cosy
or intimidating but both being of value in different ways is that how you describe it?
PAR: Yeah I mean um I haven’t had the cosy variety for quite some time um I guess that
was perhaps more suitable in like the beginning of the training you kind of feel that um
yeah I know I know some people had um very intimidating supervision right at the
beginning and it was like quite difficult to cope with I think at that time when you’re
trying to sort of um assimilate everything and all the different things that we had to cope
with at that time but um yeah I it does make me think actually I’ve been thinking about
that more sort of looking at requirements for jobs and things about what kind of
supervisor I would be because obviously um you know its most likely something that I’m
going to be doing at some point um I did actually have the experience before I even
started training working in the NHS I did supervise um a few junior staff um not quite I
obviously didn’t have any training or whatever but I supervised them there experience
with clients and we talked about it was I didn’t sort of know what we were doing at the
time but I guess what we were doing was you know proper supervision um and I think
yeah I I guess the answer is I don’t know

INT: Mmm
PAR: um I mean that in itself feels quite intimidating because I guess um I guess your
fear always is you’re going to get somebody who knows more about something than you
do it feels sort of out of your depth but um yeah and I guess that’s my sort of thinking about the two different things that I’ve experienced I’ve either experienced people that sort of know everything and there’s never anything you know you’re going to know more than them versus other people who don’t come across as um that sort of guru that knows everything but they show an openness to talk about anything that’s come up as meaningful to you and I think [sighs] um I don’t know I’m really torn on which I actually feel that I benefitted more from

INT: Mmm can I ask you talked just a bit earlier about a difference in maybe at the start of your training of um more caring and supportive supervision perhaps as helpful at the start. Can you say more about that?

PAR: Yeah um I just remember I mean at the start when we began it was all person centred and I found working solely in that method very challenging um and I think obviously to have supervision in that style of working is not going to be particularly challenging in not like psychodynamic work um and I think I found I think I found a real appreciation for that kind of working through my supervisor um I think she was I think she was very very good and very very good at kind of sticking within that framework but helping with me some psychodynamic kind of thinking or some cognitive ways of working um at that point which I think was really helpful because I think I don’t know whether its I know quite a few of us were sort of feeling quite you know forced into this person centred kind of excuse me approach um and feeling like its you know its the worst thing ever to try and accommodate or work anything else in or ask a question you cant do it you cant do it and she kind of made that she worked with me and who I was to sort of become a bit more human and I think at the beginning to kind of see that you know it was really important to learn individual techniques and stuff and to read the theory to
understand it but that um I had to be me and I think that kind of worked in a cosy setting
that would have been more difficult to kind of achieve in a more challenging kind of I
think especially being ??? in my own therapy I think if I’d had a really challenging
supervisor at that point I would’ve found it really deconstructing

INT: Mmm

PAR: I don’t think I would have done enough work in my therapy to kind of withstand
[laughs] probably um you know quite a challenge because you know I did as part of this
whole um mediator kind of protector kind of role that I have um fixer that’s what I am I
think I hadn’t unpicked that enough at that stage to kind of and I think she helped me
with that in a gentle kind of way but I think if I’d had a more challenging supervisor it
really would have been quite jarring at that stage but for my own development of my
training of everything yeah I think it would have been too much

INT: Mmm so the your ability to withstand a more intimidating style of supervision is
something that comes about in your personal development and that personal development
occurring across the training

PAR: Mmm yeah definitelly because then you know supervision at university I did really
struggle with that because um I kind of had a situation where the person who initially
interviewed me in quite some depth and really pulled apart my entire family background
and through it in my face and was a bit scary um then became my personal tutor and then
became my supervisor as well so this person had quite a lot of information about me
personally um and I did find that they weren’t shy about sort of making interpretations in
kind of out of context so if it was an academic matter or whatever sort of drawing in
personal information they had on me and ah I still have some questions about whether
that’s particularly ethical
PAR: but um yeah I do think when you’re kind of um truing to put someone together but also trying pull them all apart at the same time it was just I found it too much at some points I mean I was I feel confident that over the course of time you know I’d done an awful lot of work in therapy and that’s supported my work with clients and how I see things and how I see everything but um I don’t feel it’s necessary to to dismantle people in that stage to quite the degree which I felt like I experienced.Of trying to yeah um yeah I don’t know quite what I was saying but um does that make sense?

INT: I think so yeah

PAR: If it doesn’t just say and I’ll try and but I think its kind of um yeah kind of this sense that throughout this training you need to kind of you know strip yourself back to the bare bones and like you know be very sure of what’s there and um and I I think that’s fine but I think it’s a process that everybody needs to be in control of kind of themself and let them sort of take that at a pace that kind of works

INT: Mmm

PAR: I felt that sometimes especially within the university supervision that that was kind of pushed a little further than maybe it need be I mean we had a joke in our last year’s supervision that the supervisor was just taking us down one by one he wouldn’t stop until we were all crying basically he got us all to a point it was actually see here’s another power issue it was actually interesting because um we did as a group challenge him on it and say you know we don’t think what’s going on here is necessarily you know appropriate because it was it was really really like lets find everybody’s weak spots and then pummul it and drag it out and we have an hour and a half lets just put them in the shit you know pressure cooker and I think perhaps it would be appropriate you know
once we’ve finished training to have supervision and experiences where that does really
push you but I think when you’re when you’re in the midst of you know doing your
placements doing your assignments and working trying to just balance everything else
going to personal therapy as well I don’t think it’s the right time to kind of you know
really go for the gut um he’d go for the jugular um

INT: I guess I was that kind of leads me on to my next sort of question was about in what
ways if any has being a trainee influenced your experiences supervision experiences?
PAR:?????? Yeah I mean being a trainee is I’ve pondered it quite a bit and thought about
whether I would actually do this again if I had I mean knowing what it’s entailed would I
really really chose so again. Um some days I say yes but there’s a lot of days where I say
no um I think I think it’s taken a lot out of me and really impacted on my life just
generally um you know it was kind of bizarre my family they live far away and um when
I sort of submitted my thesis um or I’d taken a break over xmas and I’m not doing it for
two weeks nothing and the feedback from my family going you’re like a different person
on the phone you’re just kind of like relaxed and happy and we haven’t spoke to this
person for quite some years

INT: Mmm
PAR: and I think you know its its its massive what we have to do and I think I think its its
been really awful that you know I’ve had to work practically all the way through and I
think that’s you know in the first couple of years I was working like twenty hours which
was a lot to kind of balance with everything else that I had to do and um I think
supervision if it’s its obviously necessary but I do think at times I found that its just
too much like if you want to really really push me on you just don’t have enough brain
energy for everything I think. It’s just a matter of you know [laughs] you can only do so
much at once

INT: When you say too much then sort of on top of all the other things you are having to do of work and your course

PAR: of work and different assignments that are often quite involved but completely different um obviously managing all your client work just the personal therapy its you know it’s a huge amount and then of course attending lectures trying to process all that and do the reading and your brain is just constantly you know I just found that and I remember um I’m surprised I didn’t completely lose my mind in the first couple of years because I was literally like every day I’d sort of I’d go and I’d see clients and then I’d have to be in supervision mode and then I’d go and Nanny children and then I’d go it was like every day it was like three different things it was just constantly Like put my different hat on I’m with this person now and um I did find that kind of jarring sometimes be okay I’m in supervision now now I need to think where as I’d just spent you know some time with kids needing to kind of be fun and relaxed and not thinking and sometimes it did feel a bit forced and I think you know we’re only human we can only kind of yeah do so much hold so much um and I do think certain supervision environments were more accepting of that than others I think some supervisors there were really aware of that situation and knowing you know how to sort of manage that and support me um and to acknowledge you know me and where I was and perhaps and you know that would be different on different days on different sessions but I found some supervisors really not taking that into account that you should always be on you should always be able to tap into just the right literature and spout it out and make these connections and you know its like you some days its just not possible

INT: Mmm, so less accommodating or less understanding of the training
PAR: of the pressures
INT: process pressures
PAR: yeah definitely definitely definitely
INT: and the fact that there was differences between supervisors within that understanding what was the impact of that?
PAR: frustration um yeah I would get ah yeah I have a slight issue with injustice I will fight every time I’m learning I’m learning to sort of choose my battles but I did find it really really frustrating that in particular one supervisor that I had that seemed to just refuse to acknowledge that there’s stresses you know that I ca beyond there’s a product of the environment that I’m in or that we were in that can only sort of do so much I found it really frustrating just acknowledge it just seems to be like you can always do more you could always offer more you could always push yourself more um yeah and as an aside I mean certainly from the university um there’s always been this feedback that we coz I think as a trainee you kind of you do struggle to share with anyone that you’re kind of struggling or that you’re you know you’re not coping because I found on the whole there was a general kind of you know feeling coming back that ah suddenly the university’s saying well everybody else is managing you know if its you’re in trouble its just you and there was a sort of funny thing happening in the summer where quite a few people people were being told this and ah for some reason I chose to send an email to the whole group to say you know is anybody else how’s everybody else doing with this and actually there was quite a few people that were um struggling to do what we were supposed to be doing and um it was only because we sort of came together that we were able to kind of impact upon that because what we were being told that its just us its just you everybody else is submitting everything as they should and its just you and I guess that kind of steps away
from supervision but I do think the university as a whole is kind of our supervisor and um its funny how it actually echoes what I was saying at the beginning of feeling that um in that supervision group I had to I had to feel like I didn’t need anything that I was coping in that dynamic and whatever because it’s exactly the same um you gotta I think I’ve well I’ve been saying every where that I just found it hilarious when somebody from the university did say that you know they try and break us um because I did get that impression that like what are you trying to do like how um but ah yeah INT: Ok uh I my final question really is um if you can tell me about and you’ve talked about this in different ways anyway but um can you tell me about your notions of power in supervision what it brings up for you PAR: ah yeah I mean its funny I’m it was really funny because you kind of think about it and you think oh yeah that’s going to be interesting and then I suddenly kind of connected with what that was actually asking and thought well actually there’s all kinds of power um I don’t even kind of its not sort of a conscious kind of though but all I need to do is sort of tap into that idea a little bit and all of a sudden I’m like god yeah there was all kinds of power dynamics in every supervision group I had um um in varying degrees um but I think its um I think I think in many ways as a trainee um well at least in my experience that you are quite vulnerable you kind of its sort of this inbuilt you need first of all you need your clients to get your hours to get your whatever then you need your um you know you need your placements and supervision you get reports and um its all it is very much from a and often your offering your services for free and um there’s different degrees of where you’re working and what their benefits are from your free working and INT: Mmm PAR: but it does very much feel that you know whilst you’re offering all kinds of great
support to people ultimately you're the one whose needing the situation and I think um
that's that's quite a strange place to be in and I think at times you know I did feel a bit
resentful about that but then on the other hand you know I didn't I didn't really I
mean when you are actually with its funny how its interesting its funny how when you're
with a client I never resented being there and not getting paid but sometimes when you're
in supervision and you're kind of I guess being forced to sort of do things you don't want
to do or situations you don't want to be in or whatever and you're like you know why am
I doing I'm you know I'm doing good work and I'm now being forced to kind of catow to
the supervisor or whatever's going on um just because I need this placement and yeah I
think its

INT: So that's interesting perhaps of cotowing to the supervisor perhaps if you're having
difficulties in that context in that relationship because of of needing him of needing
PAR: Its definitely a bit different in different situations but I think I've been in at least a
couple of situations where um the work I'm doing with clients is kind of financially
benefitting the supervisor because they're ok they're in a position of you know bringing
me on board to provide a service but they're getting paid and um I do think that creates a
bit of um yeah a if you're not getting what you want from them then I think it it does kind
of create this weird kind of dynamic that you know they're kind of all powerful and
you're kind of without anything really, does that make sense?

INT: Hmm

PAR: yeah um because yeah because its frustrating sometimes but um yeah

INT: That um sense of frustration um yeah can you tell me more about that I wonder if
it's disempowered or

PAR: yeah um I think just thinking about two supervisors that I've sort of had that were
in that situation and I think um I don’t know if this is just but this is what I’m sort of thinking
is that there was a tendency for them to be a bit more disinterested um that and I guess that that brings to mind you know what what is their priority is their bottom line well as long as this person is here and seeing clients and making me money then yeah [laughs]. You know where as generally speaking I feel that if that dynamic wasn’t there that the supervisor seemed more interested in like it just wasn’t there so I felt like everything was about the clients and about you know what’s going on and there was no potential alterior something to gain or something to be um something in that that there was a client um it was just about the client and about me and about our relationship um I don’t know whether that’s me jumping to sort of an assumption but um if I do think about it there was very much this kind of sense potential sense of indifference about the client work in those situations where the supervisor was directly gaining financially from the fact that that client was there

INT: Mmm

PAR: um a sense of indifference that you know I just I never experienced with other supervisors again I don’t um I don’t know if there’s something in that or not I guess it would be interesting to see if other people have that feeling but um or whether that’s [laughs] my resentment bubbling away I don’t know but um I do feel there’s something in that yeah

INT: Ok well um we spent some time reflecting on supervision and notions of power um is there anything else that you would like to say?

PAR: Um yeah I think I mean I’ve said it but I think that my feeling is that there is a real um there is a real vulnerability to us as trainees at being very much um you know needing to play by the rules and needing to sort of jump through the hoops um and do what we’re
supposed to do and I do think that I do think there is I guess as someone whose um
worked at placements and now has a couple of private clients and is sort of out you know
I’m seeing clients not because I have to fill out time sheets and you know do all that the
difference and even actually with the same supervisors so having had the supervisor in a
placement context and in a private context there is something different in that you know I
don’t I’m in control these are my clients I’m coming to you because I need this but
there’s there is something different in the dynamic that I don’t I don’t need you if I don’t
come and see you I get another supervisor it doesn’t you know it doesn’t there is I feel
more in control generally speaking in supervision because um because I do I think there’s
so many hoops for us to jump through in training that inevitably you do become kind of
vulnerable and needing to do supervision I’m needing to do this and I’m needing to do
that and its

INT: Is there room for you to not jump through those hoops?
PAR: Yeah I don’t think so at all I think you know certainly even to the degree of you
know what I was talking about before that even if your even if like yeah ok I’ll jump
through those hoops but I might need a bit more time because this that or the other I
didn’t feel that was ever really an option or supported very consistently or you know um
appropriately so in a sense it does feel like you just have to keep jump jump jump jump if
you if you drop that pace um then its like you can’t do that [laughs] so it’s not even a
matter of um ok jump through the hoops within the confines of your you know life
circumstances and whatever else is going on um there’s more pressure than that and I
think whilst you’re in that kind of pressurized situation of obviously especially I think
you know there was certainly some people who got to a certain point and thought it’s
easier like we’ve lost a few people off our course along the way and I think they left at
various points where it made sense to them to leave um but I think you get to a certain
point and perhaps the more stubborn of us think well I’ve come far enough through I
can’t go back I’ve got like I’ve got to go forward and I think that does I think that does
make us vulnerable and I think it does definitely impact on every situation that we’re in
but certainly supervision that we’re kind of in need of something and I think that affects
well it definitely has for me affected you know how I’ve been in those supervision
sessions coz personally um you know there were sessions I remember going off some
days to supervision talking to my husband and saying you know I’m just not going to say
anything today I just can’t I don’t have the energy today to kind of go outside of myself I
just I don’t and you know that was the right decision at that time but if I had I not had all
of the you know the stuff going on then I would have used supervision quite differently
because you know these days I go to supervision not feeling overwhelmed kind of you
know I can go and kind of get out of it what I need when I need it rather than it being
more dictated by my current state and how I’m managing all of the demands and all of
that sort of thing so yeah I think there’s something about being in training and
consistently being kind of vulnerable
INT: Thanks very much
PAR: no worries
APPENDIX E
TRANSCRIPT – ‘BELLA’
1 INT: Ok so the first question is can you describe for me how you have found
2 your experience of supervision in your development as a counselling
3 psychologist?
4 P: yes um in general I think it is one of the most vital part of the training and
5 um especially last year because I perceived that I did have a quite good
6 supervision um it was one of the best it was I I felt that I learnt a lot through
7 the supervision session more than more than this years because there are some
8 problems some difficulties with the current supervisor but in general the way
9 that I perceive it it is quite a vital part of our training
10 INT: ahmm
11 P: because it’s a way of understanding how you work and being challenged
12 sensitively challenged and somebody who has experience and ah ideally you
13 trust their clinical opinion to help you to address some of your behaviours and
14 to understand more how you behave as a therapist so um the first time that I
15 had supervision in my life was on this training last year and um it was it was I
16 found it basic more than anything it was the most useful for me in that
17 regarding my clinical work
18 INT: mmm
19 P: so theory and all this things were not that that they are important but not
20 like as as the supervision. Even if it s just the supervisor at placement or
21 sometimes group supervision at the university
22 INT: mmm
23 P: or even peer supervision which sometimes we used to have with other of
24 my colleagues so in general I found it very very ah um important and a great
25 learning opportunity about learning about yourself as a therapist
26 INT: what did you find vital about it what made you feel that it’s more
important than other things?
P: it’s more because um I think it has to do with its important how you fit a well with the therapist so I think it has to do of course with the person that you have and if you fit together so um if you fit with the supervisor and you trust the supervisor in terms of you can bring difficult feelings that you might have with a client
INT: Mmm
P: And ah when the supervisor the way that they helps you to normalise somehow that yeah it can be its ok to have these negative feelings lets say for a client and actually this helped me to learn to learn to use my feelings in order to inform my work as well so in psychodynamic terms somehow to address my countertransference and ah learn um more about my clients so it was I think this again that mainly from supervision it couldn’t be you know theory or ah something like that and the fact that its in supervision or the other colleagues or your supervisor um they can observe things that you cannot observe about the pattern that you do have with the client lets say
INT: mmm
P: so that the way that you are as a therapist with particular client and um you know then you realise about yourself when somebody address that noticing something to you to your behaviour so this I find it very very useful in general
INT: Something about being or talking about your clients and your work with other people P: Yep INT: gave you something that you wouldn’t be aware of so much if you were just thinking about it by yourself
P: yes yes
INT: than when with another person
P: Yes its because there are some blind spots that you can’t really see for by
yourself so it’s ah yeah somebody else can notice something that you cannot at
the moment about some clients so it’s um it was um very its been very very a
great learning opportunity

INT: in general supervision INT: Can you tell me about that sense of um that
sense of fit

P: Yeah

INT: or trust that you talked about

P: yes and I do have to in my mind I have a little bit of splitting to my mind
with my last supervisor and the current supervisor because they are the
difference is very very big

INT: Mmm

P: Um so not in terms of the fit so much because I think even with my current
supervisor it’s ok our relationship is not its fine it’s the power thing that
bothers me a little bit but ah for example last year I felt that it was um I guess I
guess it has to do with how open is the person the supervisor as a supervisor
himself or herself

INT: Mmm

P: um to fit somehow trust that you can trust them that you don’t have to be to
trust them to open up more less not to trust them with something to disclose
something but more to bring your feelings and to help you to challenge you
but in a sensitive way in order to help you open up and about about the kind of
fit that I did say before I don’t know how to describe it its just um maybe it’s
the way you when you feel that somebody the way they challenge you the way
that try to address some things as supervisor

INT: Mmm

P: doesn’t make you defensive somehow and this I think has to do a lot with
their skills as supervisors but also if you fit as maybe because you know a
particular style doesn’t fit to some people

P: maybe a good example would be that here we do we did have a supervisor
in the group supervision in the university who tends to um to who tends to
bring up more of your personal stuff because he believes that um its important
with your in your work with your clients

INT: Mmm

P: Some of the trainees don’t like that because they feel thay have
characterised it as very intrusive and they cant they don’t feel that its relevant
so much as how they are as how they feel about particular issues in terms of
some clients

INT: Mmm

P: Me personally I love that

INT: love that

P: yeah it felt so it felt that it speaks to me it made sense for me it made sense
to when I would present a client to focus a lot to help me to focus more on my
reactions towards this client as a way of understanding what is going on in the
relationship with the client so for me it was very very relevant and it was very
helpful to understand where am I with some clients although other people
didn’t really um like that found found it very intrusive so maybe this is a more
characteristic example of how you fit if you fit with somebody or not with
their style

INT: Mmm So style of the supervisor their skills um but also something about
what you or the trainee what you bring

P: Yep

INT: to them as well
P: Yep. It's for me its important I always like in supervision when they push me to to challenge me to see my part in the relationship everything that um because I perceive it anyway the client work as ah relational it’s a relationship

INT: Mmm

P: its intersubjective experience so you cannot I’m not so much in I don’t believe that much that its more anything about the client and the transference lets say its about you as well and ah what you’re picking up from the client so that’s why it helps me that INT: I wondered when you you have liked that supervisors bringing out getting you to focus on your reactions and your feelings in relation to clients um is it particularly just focussed on your work with clients or is it something about how you feel in relation to what’s happening in supervision or towards your supervisor does that come up as well?

P: ah you mean usually its in relation with clients it hasn’t really happened to to address that in relation to the supervisor last year my supervisor in placement did tha. For example there was a period I’m not sure if this is what you're asking so tell me but um there was a period that I was very feeling very I didn’t feel confident about my work and somehow I had to um I was a bit more passive maybe in my role and I was a bit more um actually I was I I there was a period that I felt really de-skilled something like that so he there was a moment that there was a time that he addressed that in the relationship with us. So he did say ah he that he was wondering if it has to do with our relationship maybe he tended to be a very um to over feed me to give me a lot of feedback

INT: Mmm

P: and a lot of you know he would try to help me so much a lot so somehow I would feel a little bit de-skilled I would not feel so independent. Is this what
P: But usually it doesn’t happen that usually it’s always in relation with some clients. And at that particular time I found it quite uncomfortable to be honest because it’s in the relationship with a specific supervisor but also it was very useful because it made me think a little bit. Maybe sad um but also I liked that the supervisor could be so open to address that and to think of his part in the relationship with you.

P: and I think that not many supervisors do that

P: you know to think because it means that are you they need to reflect on their part as well and maybe take responsibility of if of take their responsibility as well. So I later found it quite ah useful that. And he helped me his thinking not so much what he did to me but his thinking his thinking about that everything is in relationship somehow he helped me to think more like that with my clients as well. Because its like modelling when you see somebody doing that in supervision as well that even as a supervisee how I have been feeling at a particular period he addressed that the possibility of being something in the relationship that he might maybe probably over feed me. This helped me to think more again in a more relational way about my clients as well.

P: Because I saw that he did that somehow that’s the modelling

INT: Ok. So this dynamic at that point in time it had a positive affect on your practice

P: Yes
INT: on your work with clients

P: And still sometimes it hasn’t it never happens with my current supervisor and no way to happen that because of the power dynamic as well

INT: Mmm

P: Ah this is the reason that I decided to participate here as well but with my current supervisor its its just she’s never going to she will never do it because as I said it means taking responsibility of your part and be open it means that you’re very open to explore

INT: Mmm

P: ah what’s happening in the relationship

INT: Can I ask you mentioned feeling uncomfortable at the time

P: yeah

INT: with that past supervisor

P: Mmm

INT: what did that mean for you?

P: I guess it was more the very intimate that suddenly the focus was ah very much in our relationships relationship and um and I had to think as well is it that he over feeds me maybe that you know and and if it was that I it would be uncomfortable to tell him and yes you do that somehow

INT: Mmm

P: um yes so maybe the intimate you know that it was more intimate made me feel uncomfortable but then feeling how open it was to explore the issue this it felt really nice

INT: So the closeness of at that moment with the supervisor

P: yeah

INT: was something uncomfortable about that

P: yeah yes yes
INT: but also helpful

P: yeah. It was helpful in general as a interaction

INT: Hmm

P: But yeah I think it was that feeling of very very close for a moment

INT: Mmm

P: that was the uncomfortable bit

INT: Hmm You mentioned that stemmed from a feeling of um what was the

word you used um feeling de-skilled

P: Yep

INT: um what was what was that about what were you feeling deskilled

about? Was that in the context of supervision or

P: No it was I don’t really remember about that but I remember feeling

because he um my supervisor last year he would offer me quite a lot of

supervision so and he was very supportive I tended to over rely on that So that

maybe I don’t remember feeling I don’t remember much why I felt de-skilled

and I guess its more that you some periods I do feel de-skilled um but there

was a maybe he realised that I tended to over rely on the supervision instead of

being more independent maybe it was that I don’t remember specifically to

give you some example. Maybe not maybe not to because its good as well to

you know when you don’t have um that sometimes you have decide how you

are going to some interventions that you’re going to do with some clients and

don’t have always the chance to talk to your supervisor becau before that. But

because there was always a chance in that placement it’s the setting as well

like that we’ve sat the same office so it was easy somehow to talk to to talk to

my supervisor so um I didn’t have the chance somehow to feel more now I

have to find to be totally independent so maybe he under maybe he felt that it

was something going on there I was the only trainee as well there so I didn’t
214 have other trainees and um yeah maybe that’s why he addressed that I don’t
215 remember exactly what was happening
216 INT: Ok well I guess in relation to you talked abit about your first or your last
217 supervisor last year and you’ve mentioned an element of power in your
218 supervisor this year
219 P: Yep
220 INT: Um can you tell me about your notions of power in supervision?
221 P: What is power?
222 INT: Mmm
223 P: I guess always there is a power dynamic a potential power dynamic there is
224 a power dynamic in terms of you have a supervisor and you’re the supervisee
225 and the supervisor assess you as well for the university
226 INT: Mmm
227 P: So the supervisor assesses you directly anyway for this university and ah
228 we have the meeting visit as well. I don’t know if you do have it. A tutor
229 comes to our placement they meet with the supervisor. We have a form to fill
230 in. I don’t know if you have the same procedure. So they assess you directly
231 and they assess you indirectly as well anyway because they comment on your
232 work its that is a kind of ah not assessment but they guide your work somehow
233 they help you with your work. Um I don’t know maybe when I saw your
234 research when I saw the theme of power to my mind it came when a
235 supervisor if we’ve had experience of a supervision this power dynamic in a
236 way that is ah that the person might use that somehow
237 INT: The superviso
238 P: Yeah because it is always there but ah I but it doesn’t mean that the
239 supervisor will use will get at that always although it potentially is there
240 INT: Mmm
Because they know that you are inexperienced at least less experienced than
them. You do, they’re going to assess you so there is, there will be a power
dynamic. But when I decided to participate is that I felt that it’s a kind of
divide that characteristic [laughs] in supervision

INT: Mmm

So that’s why not in supervision that much of my supervisor it’s a personal
issue I think os that’s why its what came to my mind in part when I read
power dynamic its what came to my mind so something with a negative um
meaning a little bit of negative meaning came to my mind

INT: Ok

P: If I yeah answered to what you said what is the power for me in supervision

INT: Yeah. And so when you think about your reactions to my research
question and um what is it for you? What has been your experience of it?
P: Yes Me ah Me personally I don’t I don’t have a big problem with that with
the power dynamic with the power in supervision ah so it hasn’t created
problems in my relationship with the supervisor but I do believe it is because I
consciously trying not to because I am aware of that ah the specific supervisor
of this year has the power dynamic complex maybe and uh does it make sense
in English ‘complex’ that ah its an issue

INT: For him, or her

P: Her Her si. So I have sensed that somehow from the beginning so I took a
position that I would not challenge that. Which is annoying for me at times
and unnecessary if I could choose supervisor I wouldn’t choose that. But on
the other hand I’m taking this position to actually to not create more problems
to me. So I adjusted somehow my behaviour in terms of not to become an
issue. So ok I know its very confusing. INT: Oh no. I guess how did you sense
they had a power complex?
Hmm. This is the thing now that if I go at the beginning of my placement this year and I’m trying to understand how did I sense that I cannot ex I do not know if I can describe it very clearly. It’s just a feeling that I got. For example, um we started this placement. Three trainees from the university here. From the same university so I I we are three I know the other two trainees. In that placement there are more trainees but there are three from [participants’ university]. So although the supervisor I liked her from the beginning that’s why I chose to go on that placement its also about it’s a placement it involves working with children. And it it involves working with children who have experienced domestic violence. And I am telling you that because I think its interesting [laughs] what in what happened in supervision

INT: Ok

Um but ah so it was the only placement with children. So from the beginning I ah did like her um. Actually I had two interviews. I liked more the supervisor in the interview I had in the other placement but I decided to choose this placement because I wanted to work with children. Also just to ell you that I was aware from other from comments from previous trainees that the supervision is a bit um the supervisor is a bit weird. I knew that. But I didn’t know of something more. So at the beginning of the placement she had something um although she was very polite and very supportive you could say she had something controlling in her behaviour. So whatever you I don’t know how to describe it but I remember coming here at the university and then having group supervision and our supervisor here it was the first group supervision session. So the supervisor here said ok asked each of us to talk about the placement and the supervisor in placement just so you know at the very beginning of the year. So the other trainees did say the supervisor is lovely and she’s very supportive and then I did say in the group actually its
very interesting because I’m scared of her. You are saying that she is very
supportive and lovely and I can understand why she’s very supportive because
she is very supportive but there’s something there that doesn’t really there was
something fake if it makes sense [laughs]. I don’t know how to say there’s
something really pretending more that is everything fine. There is but I could
sense that if you challenged her or if she feels that you’re challenging her she
can be very defensive and she can really use the power that she did has. It it
was there without knowing why. Later in the actually I think the reason that
the fact that I felt that from the beginning helped me to protect myself as well
because our relationship with the supervisor is very good. Because I don’t
challenge her

INT: Mmm

P: but then things came up in placement, not so much with me, but someone,
with another trainee

INT: Mmm

P: which is funny and I there was several situations that she did use her power.
So for example, um, she was late. Lets say it’s a very typical example. She
might be late in supervision

INT: Mmm

P: I feel a little bit worried [laughs] of disclosing all these things now to be
honest because I am still there. But anyway, she was late and um she’s she’s
always late, like ten minutes because she might ??? or might sit and chat with
other people it can be something like that. And then me I’ve never done her
anything but I’m trying to again I’m consciously trying to deal with the
situation in a very indirect way. So for example I would say hi you know I’m
going to the room and I’m waiting for you there. So she will come. But
another trainee challenged her and said well I’m quite annoyed because you’re
late and instead of taking her responsibility. She did say I’m sorry

P: but then of course she was very defensive she became very defensive from I learned and she was really and she started saying to the trainee that I realise I sense that you are passive aggressive towards me and the trainee said actually I’m not I’m annoyed because you were late ten fifteen minutes and this is happening often

P: and then she said yeah I’m sorry I had to do all these things and she start ah excusing herself somehow

P: yes but then but actually she didn’t because then she did say but I’m wondering why you are passive aggressive towards me and she put all the focus on the trainee

P: so its really using your power and this is really its its its for me its just really using your power because um you know its not so much what you say its how you say things

P: And how you behave in general

P: and um before you’re and [laughs] it’s a bit ridiculous this because another situation happened. It was actually two weeks before I saw your research so that’s why I thought ok I will participate. There was um the supervisor said that some of the trainees made some inappropriate comments about her in front of other people. But she didn’t want to address that with this particular trainee so she wanted to address that with everybody. So she sent an email to
all of us and then in supervision we had to talk about it. So She was ah in my supervision she was ok but she did say something along the lines [laughs] at the end of the day I’m five years qualified counselling psychologist. Which is a bit you know why are you saying that. Because I mean this is again a power thing as well

INT: Mmm

P: because you wouldn’t dare to say that if you didn’t know that I’m a trainee and its it was just so you know she just said that you know and me I didn’t care because she I I didn’t take it personally but I can see why another trainee might feel very intimidated me personally I didn’t feel intimidated because I feel ok quite ok with myself and I think with her we do have a balance with the supervisor but still her comment was quite ah

INT: How did you experience it? What um what did it mean for you her saying that? P: then its I’m more because I don’t have so much um me because I know how to how to adjust myself I don’t create I don’t make her defensive so she treats she behaves to me in ok way. But when I’m hearing stories about other comments that she does do with other trainees and the way in general that she behaves and from what I’m sensing as well its just its just everything about controlling power which I found particularly um. Its very interesting that its happening in this setting which is about domestic violence as well which is everything about controlling power

INT: Mmm

P: that’s why I said that its interesting its just very interesting that its happening in the setting where you work with people who have been in situations with power dynamic and with control you know about domestic violence. But ah the way that I experience her is that I just I’m just I need to be careful how I’m going to say things. So in supervision I need to say ah
good point good point I need to make her feel that she’s my supervisor that
she’s there and I;m there, I need to make her feel like that.

INT: Ok so

P: in a very subtle way

INT: yeah

P: Its very subtle. Its not something really a situation that you can see and its
subtle. INT: So you in a subtle way consciously try to make her feel higher up
or more important or more um within her position as a supervisor

P: Yep yep

INT: and you do that to um to maintain a good relationship with her to

P: yes and not to put any trouble on myself because I have seen somehow its
not my characteristic of not being able to challenge somebody because but
with her I don’t feel that challenging her is going to lead anywhere rather than
coming more trouble myself

INT: Mmm

P: You know

INT: And that’s quite a strong reaction for you to feeling scared

P: at the beginning now I’m not I’m not but ah because I know how to deal
how to behave spontaneously I do it I;m a bit. I just adjust a little bit myself.
But having a very good experience in supervision and having that I can see the
difference somehow INT: Mmm

P: and um it can be simple things like as I said I have to say I need to say good
point and um I will challenge her but I need to do it very carefully. So for
example if I disagree. No for example if she says um about the clinical work.
She gives you an advice  I cannot say well I don’t think ?? its hard to phrase
it. If I say no no I don’t think this can be useful I cannot say that but I might
say yes good idea but I’m thinking also that, you know. So it’s good as well
somehow because it helps me it helps me being more diplomatic as well. Dip
dip
INT: Diplomatic yeah
P: Yeah it helps me be more diplomatic. But sometimes sometimes its tiring I
just feel a little bit annoyed and I think ok why it would be great if you had a
very open person that you could really um be even more yourself somehow if
it makes sense
INT: I guess you talk about your first supervisor
P: Yep
INT: you describe a sense of trust which
P: Yep
INT: enabled you to talk about you’re your own feelings and
P: Mmm
INT: is that does that happen with this supervisor or is that less so or?
P: No I don’t really feel that much trust and I don’t trust her clinical opinion as
well because I can’t believe that if a person its obvious for me ah because she
has great strengths she has some she has strengths as well and I can’t I’m
trying to take from that she’s very good in some things more practical things
about give a situation about therapy in assessments she’s brilliant some very
good things. But when a person for me according to my opinion when
somebody particularly the supervisor who has been a therapist has so big thing
has so the issue of power is so important to them and un its something
unresolved their problem its an issue for her. It cannot for me this cannot be
totally separated from the therapist as well. So I would imagine this particular
supervisor as a therapist if has a very challenging client and aggressive client I
would imagine her being annoyed and somehow not reflecting that much on
her part I can imagine that. Because its like an open wound its like its so much
an issue for her that if you trigger this issue she just doesn’t really see she just
doesn’t she becomes very defensive. So for example I had a very challenging
child who his behaviour was quite abusive towards me which is quite actually
you you you um given that they have been ah he grew up in a very abusive
environment you expect that. So there was um he would shout at me he would
ah be very very abusive towards me very a very young child. Which was very
difficult for me. So the supervisor in general she was good in her she gave me
very good ah advice but there was a point that she got ah she got upset she got
annoyed with this child’s behaviour towards me. So she did advise me to for
example tell him I think that your um she told me this child told me once um
you are a dummy and I felt of course awful because imagined that the whole
session was very really telling me that I’m stupid all these things I’m trying to
keep my stance and reflect on that. With the supervisor this supervisor also
suggest that but there was a moment in supervision that she somehow reacted
more spontaneously the supervisor and she did tell me well if it was me I
would say you called me dummy because you feel dummy and actually that
moment and the way that she did say that it was it it felt to me that is just
again this thing about power and about the issue of um nobody’s going to
control me nobody’s going to have the power of me so it was a bit defensive.
Ok I might say that but how useful is this going to be for the child if it will be
helpful to call him dummy. Can say maybe you feel you know it depends. And
again its not so much what she suggest to say it was her her way of saying
that. So what I’m trying to say now is that I do believe that when the
supervisor uses the power this doesn’t this made me trust her less in her
clinical opinion as well. If it makes sense?

INT: Yes because she’s using the power it makes you question

P: Yep
INT: her ability as a clinician

P: yeah and it’s like so so an issue for the supervisor about the power thing

that she’s using it.

INT: And power when you say power how she her use of power its about her

having control or being expert or?

P: Having control I think. If she thinks you challenge that if she doesn’t feel

challenged she can be wonderful. But the point is that she you know you need

to be careful not to be seen anyway that she will feel challenged. Or a she

might have forgotten to have called parent to say that therapy is ending a

specific day

INT: Mmm

P: And instead of saying you forgot to do that or she you need to say we need

to you need to put it express it in a way that she will not feel defensive

INT: Mmm

P: And and ah she has said herself with other trainees that ah I have a thing

with power she has admitted that [laughs] she has said she has an issue with

power but in a way that I know it and I don’t do anything about it so so you

know its just interesting for me to see that in this placement

INT: Mmm

P: to happen

INT: Mmm I guess I wondered um sort of leads onto my next question is in

what ways if any has being a Counselling Psychologist trainee influenced or

been influenced by these experiences?

P: Of power? Of power dynamics?

INT: Mmm

P: um also just to say that this power dynamic I have seen it in the university

as well its not just something with ???? I think it’s a human characteristic
using the power but I wished that in this profession people need to be more aware but even here sometimes they might um I for example am going to a tutor’s office and um its not supervision but he’s going to be our supervisor next year as well so it’s kind of. And the way that he tried to make you open up it’s a bit patronizing it feels like it feels that they like so much to be in this position of having of you being there as a trainee that they are going to support you but they are going to support you because they have the power [laughs]they are they are higher than you

INT: Mmm

P: so its not they support you because its not the support that we are I’m going to support you in a more genuine way its I’m going to support you because you need me to support you its this dynamic its sometimes um its more unspoken obviously these things its how you feel with some people not with everybody and some others no. My experience as a counselling as a trainee

INT: Mmm

P: is um that I believe I’m thinking about my future and I’m thinking when I’m going to be a supervisor or when I’m going to if I’m going to be a supervisor and I’m thinking its something that easily you can get in because its easy its easier not to reflect on your part than to reflect on your part and I guess its very easy the more experience you have its easier to get in that trap of feeling that now of stopping reflecting that much and my my experience of all these things is that I hope that I hope that I will use that as an example of not becoming like that

INT: Mmm

P: me personally and um I don’t if I’m becoming like that even with my clients because the power dynamic is with our clients as well

INT: Mmm
P: or at least of trying to reflect on that because as I said I don’t believe that if
you are like that as a supervisor to an extent you are going to be like that as a
therapist. You can not realease its part of yourself somehow
INT: Mmm
P: so that means that when you don’t have to reflect and when you can’t skip
for that you just do it um and ah so I guess that I’m trying to use it all these
experiences in a positive way for me to be a good lesson for me to not to do it
as a therapist or as a potential supervisor with clients
INT: So its um a learning opportunity for you for how you want to conduct
yourself in the future
P: Yeah
INT: I wondered um about your position now as a trainee how that affects you
P: It affects sometimes um there is this some people say if if when you have
difficult supervisors you learn more. Me personally I don’t believe that I
believe that when you have a supportive supervisor I personally open up more
and I I challenge myself even more then because I feel there is somehow safer
base to do it and then you explore more yourself and you open up more. So
there are times/styles that I feel that I’m loosing as well from that
INT: Mmm
P: that if I had if I didn’t that supervision if I had something better I would
gain more things. But again even now I’m trying to use it positively and think
trying to protect myself from that and um to trust more myself because also
um the sense that I got from the supervisor from the beginning eventually con
it was confirmed through associations and others trainees, not so much with
me
INT: Mmm
P: but so I so I I’m learning to trust more myself. I’m learning a lot of myself
I’m learning that I can adjust myself easily with people which is good and bad, because on the other end it left me feeling and what about my anger about this things happening

INT: Mmm mmm

P: so there are you know there is anxiety provoking at times. When there was this situation happening although it didn’t influence me personally in supervision when I learn that other particular trainee has a huge problem with his supervisor because of the power dynamic

INT: Mmm

P: and yes um and although it not has to do it doesn’t have to do with me still it has an impact on me as well.

INT: You witness it

P: Yeah definite anxious very anxious about how can I trust this supervisor maybe one day she might feel challenged by me as well you know so which yeah so its anxiety provoking as well

INT: Mmm

P: And then I’m trying to find other kind of support peer supervision is very supportive as well so I’m trying somehow to um use to deal with that somehow to handle with that and it has good things

INT: Mmm

P: because there are good things

INT: Mmm

P: and I cannot be always like him maybe last year it happened to have very good supervision. Many trainees didn’t have last year, Last year many trainees use to say other problems that I didn’t have with supervision and I couldn’t understand it

INT: Mmm
P: because for me I didn’t have a bad experience. Now it’s not bad but its its it has both elements um so yeah I’m kind of um more yeah its its I’m trying to see it as an experience and ah deal with my anxiety and take the good things because as I said she has some she has some very good skills as a person as a supervisor which is good to see and um take them. I was a bit worried at the beginning because I was reading some articles about supervision being internalised in your work with clients [laughs] and I was thinking oh my god if this power thing internalised to me so I was trying constantly to think ok lets keep the good things and leave the bad things something like that

INT: Mmm

P: I’m trying to do that

INT: Ok Would you say, do you have any power in supervision?

P: I do have yeah I don’t fit totally and actually the finer I adjust myself and eventually I don’t have any problem is a powerful thing there is power because somehow um because me I would say what I want to say I would never step back I wouldn’t protect myself maybe that’s why with me she’s also so good because there is a balance coz I don’t challenge her in a bad way but I will challenge her I would put my boundaries I will say for example she tried to organise the clients and she she wanted to put many clients in a day this is another thing which I found me personally not very good and it didn’t happen it didn’t really it felt that I was not it wouldn’t be a collaborative decision. And it made me feel angry but so I knew I couldn’t express the anger because then we could clash how you say

INT: Clash

P: have an argument clash and I could feel that this will not lead anywhere with this supervisor because some supervisors I think maybe if you express your anger they can take it and you can move on with her I didn’t feel it would
happen that so I would challenge I would put my boundaries but I would put it
another way so for example using again the power thing [laughs] I would say
it was true actually but I didn’t express the other I expressed the half thing

INT: Mmm

P: My anxiety about that so I put her in a position of having to support me
[laughs] somehow

INT: Mmm

P: this is a powerful thing is a manipulative thing but it’s a protect to protect
myself as well

INT: Protect yourself from?

P: Because she wanted to do something that I felt I couldn’t handle to have so
many clients in a day lets for example. And so this made me feel very angry
because um the way that it happened it was like that she will decide for me
let’s say how many clients I’m going to have so I had to put in the boundaries
I had to do that to respect my limits and also to protect myself in ah with my
you know how much I can handle. What did you ask me sorry?

INT: I guess I what protection made so protecting yourself from not doing too
much or not being overwhelmed

P: Yeah yeah yeah like for example having three clients plus supervision in a
day I think its enough I don’t want to have four clients plus supervision in
seven hours

INT: Mmm

P: and write some notes and everything you know. So it was to have a fourth
client plus supervision in a day um because she couldn’t organise to start to
put them in my second day because she’s very good very bad in organising
things so she was um I didn’t I she was still trying to find there was some
problems I hadn’t started the second day and I was pushing and my tutors was
pushing that she had to put some clients for me on second day and it took her ages to do that and then she wanted to put them in the same day which it felt for me too much having all these things because that means that I will have again to write my notes at home many things

INT: Mmm

P: and also very difficult to work with children who have these behaviours I found it extremely emotionally overwhelming so I it was I felt it was ok three clients plus supervision so when it happened that I was angry because she knew that I was already fully packed that day

INT: Mmm

P: um so I had to if I was totally honest I would express my anger and my anxiety but somehow I couldn’t be totally honest so I expressed my anxiety and then immediately she got in that position of having to support me so admittedly at the end it happened what I want to happened because I put my boundaries and I expressed that I cannot handle that but in a way that she didn’t feel defensive if it makes sense

INT: So for in order for you to receive support from her of regarding your anxiety

P: Yep

INT: um you didn’t express your feelings of anger

P: Yes

INT: Right ok

P: Exactly so it was again protecting myself yeah to but as you say there is power you asked me before if I do have power

INT: Mmm

P: I perceive that as of having power as well because in another way not because I don’t want to have power but its I want to just have my boundaries
just this for myself its more its not so much to have power to use the power
but its having the power for myself not ah not you know not to use it in terms
of somebody else

INT: Mmm

P: So yeah

INT: Ok. Um we’ve been reflecting on supervision and notions of power I
asked you a few questions before um I was wondering if there was any other
elements that you’d like to talk about. Um being a woman, or your age, or
your ethnicity or um coming from this institution. If anything like that um is
has a relevance to what we’ve been talking about?

P: I though ah there was there is a dynamic that is relevant the age and gender
I think INT: Mmm

P: No I’m not sure but I thought about that. Because I um the supervisor is
relatively young so and she’s a woman. We are all trainees woman and in
almost its we’re not all the same age but its not that big difference so I was
wondering if this has to do with all this dynamic in general. Um I don’t know
if it’s I thought about although last year my supervisor was a man and was
older which still many people would say this can be for many people from
what I know there is this power dynamic as well between man and a woman
me I didn’t experience that so I I just said many things together what what I if
I put them in order I just want to say although last year it was not another man
and ah maybe he was more mature I don’t know and then because he was my
supervisor now he she’s 30 he was 60 so of course he has more experience and
maybe that’s why. But then I thought on the other hand many people and
especially woman have commented on the power dynamic between make and
female so its not what I’m saying that for its my experience

INT: Mmm
P: Um so yeah I don’t know maybe maybe many people would say that ah
usually its between the male and femal dynamic although me I thought that
maybe the fact that she’s female and she’s young
INT: Mmm
P: maybe there’s more competition there I thought about it its not I haven’t felt
something like that. But when I was trying when I you know when I had all
this thinking about when this situation happened with the misunderstanding
and some comments that she the supervisor was annoyed and she said she
talked with all of us
INT: Mmm
P: it felt a little bit like we are now all young here young woman who are
arguing [laughs] a little bit it felt a little bit like yeah who said that for me and
all those things it felt a little bit like that. Which maybe has to do more with
the age though then the then the gender maybe it feels like we are very close in
the age .
INT: And what do you think about that? What is it about that?
P: Its when you are very close in the age, maybe. Maybe things feel. this
competition. Me personally I don’t feel like that. The only thing I can take
from this is to learn more. Umm, and I wish that I would feel more
competition, that meant that I would have more idea in my mind than I have
here. Umm, its just one of the thoughts that I do have, without having anything
to indicate that. That because we are this close to our age, it feels more
competitive, more, that there is use of power. Although maybe if she was 50,
is the age as well that, maybe its my assumption. (laughs) I am using a lot of
maybe’s now.
INT: Would there be a difference for you? If um, she was older or…
P: Its this assumption that when someone is older, they have more experience.
Because of the age, and more mature usually. But then on the other hand, if I think of Greek tutors or something like that, because in Greece there is this, the age difference, more important than in the UK, the older they are the more they use the power. You have to respect them because they’re old. So… it doesn’t mean that if she wasn’t older she wouldn’t use that, I don’t know I don’t know.

INT: That experience, are you talking in terms of clinical experience? Or life experience, or something else?

P: It’s about Greece, its more in general, in the whole culture.

INT: Ok.

P: So you never say… um, it depends on the language as well. So if you say, about this courses. The way that you talk, you never say, never call a Greek older person by the first name, you just never do that. You might know the person for years, if its your tutor, you would say ‘Mr’ and the first name, or ‘Mr’ and the surname. If you want to call them with the first name, again you say Mr or Mrs or Miss, we have a word for everything in Greek. So you never say the first name, for me this indicates a power dynamic as well. So it’s a, there is this general assumption in our culture that the older they are, the people, you have to respect them anyway cos they’re old, and show your respect for them.

INT: Mmm, and in the UK context, in terms of your clinical work, would that be…

P: An issue you mean?

INT: Yeah. How would you relate that, talking about Greek culture and UK Counselling Psychology, sort of culture, for you?

P: In relation to the clients, or with..

INT: Or with supervisors?
P: With the age you mean?

INT: Mmm.

P: Given that I’m Greek, I carry that with me, and so that’s, when I used to come here, and there was a (can’t hear what she says here), I used to call him Mr Ricardo because, and he did say to me ‘We don’t say…’ because he’s Italian and they have this in Italy too. So he did say to me ‘We don’t say here, Mr Ricardo, we say Ricardo’ and I couldn’t even say it, it felt disrespectful to me. This is other names. But its like, um, in the essence I have this assumption that maybe, the older the person, the more experience there be, I guess not that much, but, in some ways I would respect them in terms of having more experience.

INT: Mmm

P: Not that I would respect less somebody but a a good example is that I didn’t want to have a young therapist because I didn’t feel that I would be able to trust them somehow. Because I wouldn’t [laughs] this is interesting because I just wanting my therapist I wanted to be more than fortyfive

INT: Mmm

P: Just to feel me to feel that I that they would have experience

INT: Mmm

P: Which they might not. My therapist might maybe she had her training when she was forty

INT: Mmm

P: But that I I remember going to meet a therapist some therapists at the beginning and I met a therapist and from the first moment I thought well I’m not going to come again with this therapist because she’s very young

INT: Mmm

P: So its ah maybe its ah I’m carrying that as well.
INT: How does that translate into your supervision experience? Has that been important in that context?

P: It's a good question because I have never felt it about that. But I guess it is because um even from the beginning when I had to choose which placement I was going to take. I was going to choose between this one that I am now and another one. The fact that she was 30 years old which is a realistic as well it made feel a little bit well the most experience that she might have is just five years. Although somebody as a supervisor I thought a supervisor who has 50 or 20 years experience probably is going to be more experienced at least

INT: Mmm

P: so there was a thought about it. But in practice its not something that I’m aware of happening although that we are talking about it I’m thinking that maybe there is there as well that. If she was wonderful if I didn’t have the whole things I think I wouldn’t think ah she’s wonderful but she’s too young

INT: Mmm

P: But given all the things and that she’s young and yeah at the end of the day its not that she has very many years experience. It’s feels a little bit um you know that I don’t know maybe that um probably if someone was more experienced I would ah trust more.

INT: Mmm. Ok. Um is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

P: Not really. No not really. I think it’s fine, I don’t know if you want to ask if it was enough what I did say?

INT: Yeah that’s that’s all I have to ask so

P: Ah because I can talk about many things but I don’t know I don’t want to go to ah to say I’m trying to remain on the topic somehow

INT: Mmm, yep.
INT: Ok so first question I would like to ask is can you describe for me how you've found your experience of supervision in your development as a counselling psychologist?

P: Um helpful?

INT: Helpful or unhelpful, challenging or beneficial

P: Helpful and challenging and sometimes daunting um for me um it takes a lot of thinking and reflecting to to be able to use the sessions in a beneficial. So the way the sessions are conducted um its not you cant see how it’s beneficial you cant see its value straight away sometimes because there difficult feelings so sometimes I needed to go to give myself some time at home or wherever to reflect and then think yeah there was a point there I should improve here or you know because at times they were kind of daunting

INT: What do you mean by daunting?

P: um I mean um it didn’t I didn’t feel that we were equal me and the supervisor. It felt um that the supervisor um has more knowledge than me and the way things were said or communicated had an element of this of this lack of equality.

INT: Can you tell me more?

P: Um yeah. For example, its when the supervisor says um mmm when the supervisor is testing you. So what theory and asks what theory are you following, what is approach, how do you do this approach, um so by this questions I find this questions daunting sometimes because when I I try to bring the client in my mind and reflect and I feel like a restriction and like a test and a challenge. And also even sometimes saying this is not right, commenting on my work and judging it, this is not right what you did, you are
taking sides I remember the supervisor said or sometimes she even said its
untherapeutic what you do. So I found these words very daunting, and I was
thinking this is the opposite of you know, maybe that person is trying to help
but the way that she does it is not um the way it should be I think so that we
feel equal and we have a sort of um warm and um you know relax a warmed
and relaxed atmosphere in which you can reflect other than feeling judged. So
these are experiences that I found um daunting and unfair and kind of
opposite to the goals of therapy in supervision

INT: What do you see as the goal of supervision?
P: I see I see supervision as um a similar setting to therapy um because
confidentiality has to be kept and there has to be mutual respect and
understanding. And I feel the client is disclosing themselves to me and I try
and do my best so that they feel comfortable enough and not judged by me and
I feel the supervisors provide the same um qualities should try with me or with
the supervisee to kind of achieve this way of being in the supervision. Because
what my client brings to me with so much effort I bring to the supervisor in
order to help the client. So if I’m not if I’m judged if I feel judged them I’m
not free to communicate all that I feel the client wont be helped. I wont be that
damaged because I’m not in a very vulnerable position there I’m just
communicating the client’s stuff mostly. But the client wont be helped out of
all that. So that’s how I see I see it should work. I mean if it would work like
that I think it would be beneficial um but not when ah the difference in when
the difference you know is evidenced, when they’re saying to you we’re on a
different level I feel that not helps in the same if doesn’t help the clients when
you take the role of the expert and say well tell me but you know I know more.
In that way because it doesn’t foster warm um yeah environment and there’s
no like free association
INT: Mmm

P: So I felt many times I felt after different supervisors um for the one of them I never prepare um and when I go in the supervision um everything comes to my mind. Because I’m free and I’m feeling accepted there and comfortable and everything comes to my mind then I feel very much in touch with my real self and what’s going on with the client

INT: Mmm

P: In the other supervision shs um session the other type I my mind doesn’t work so I go in I’m blank

INT: Mmm

P: I can’t say anything about the client because I feel this kind of resistance from the supervisors part. It's not really resistance its like I don’t really know what it is I feel she’s going to judge me

INT: Mmm

P: So I started preparing and writing things down so I remember them and that helps me

INT: Mmm

P: But it’s a completely different experience and in terms of my development I definitely appreciate the first one

INT: Mmm. What is the impact on you when um you feel judged in supervision?

P: Um it has quite a strong impact on me. I feel a lot of different things. I feel afraid, intimidated, ah I feel I’m judging myself and kind of beating myself up, feeling not competent enough, feeling a bit stupid as well

INT: Mmm

P: Um there is this anxiety I have this anxiety that you know what I’m saying is not going to make sense and when the person that is in front of me is sort of
gazing at me in a kind of puzzled not puzzled like I cant describe it its like ok
get on with it or I’m not even listening this when I have the lack of um respect
I guess because its my issue my anxiety becomes very high that I wont make
sense and that my client you know what I do with the client doesn’t make
sense and all that
INT: Mmm
P: So that’s why I said it’s the opposite of ther of, it doesn’t serve its goal in a
way this kind of supervision because I feel the way my clients shouldn’t feel. I
feel judged and I can’t articulate what I want to say
INT: Mmm
P: But I try to see it in a more wide way um. Recently I started thinking well
you will say what you have to say and then you can’t really control the other
person’s reaction or its fine its just um its just an opinion you will still go on
and say what you want to say and I find recently that its not that bad and
sometimes I go home and reflect and find some good parts um in the critique
of the supervisor. But yeah it needs I guess extra effort and it needs and you
need to be stronger and to accept that you know this person will judge you you
wont like their manner but but ah I do feel that we shouldn’t be through that
anyway
INT: Mmm. So its ah an experience that happens and its um it seems to not
enable you to talk about your clients
P: Mmm
INT: And to not feel open to talk about
P: Yeah. I feel um the opposite of open I feel stuck like um and when I didn’t
write things down in the beginning I really didn’t have I didn’t know what to
say and I focussed on some details I felt I said relevant stuff. They may not
have been relevant but they were treated as irrelevant anyway. But yeah it
helps now that I see its different things on paper. And its amazing how in the
other supervision, first when I enter the room I think oh god I don’t remember,
it’s been a while and I didn’t take notes and when I sit down it all comes to
mind like a movie

INT: Mmm

P: And I remember every aspect not every but a lot of the moments

INT: Mmm

P: with a client

INT: Mmm. What do you make of that difference between those two different
experiences of supervision, what is it, why..

P: Yeah I think one supervisor is ah quite intimidated by different opinions
and the supervisor that doesn’t facilitate the openness I mean um quite
judgemental, quite fixed in her ways and in her opinions and quite feels the
power and the difference between us. So the other one feels more equal feels
more like a person to person thing where we both explore and we try to help
the client and ourselves to develop you know

INT: Mmm

P: and with the other I don’t this block between us um the block is when
people are to obsessed with their power and their um status that this is when
they can’t be open and human because they kind of see their image and where
they are and for them that plays an important role or they try to prove it
because the yare unsure

INT: Mmm

P: of themselves so they try to prove their power

INT: Mmm

P: And it’s sometimes yeah its helping actually to reflect on that because some
that person that I say that she I don’t feel open with her she. She doesn’t do
anything in particular apart from the um times that she said what I do is 
untherapeutic and that I take sides but this were a few times. I guess it’s more 
an attitude um that she has. She sits quite low in the chair she’s very relaxed 
and sometimes she eats and she looks at you like you say something 
unimportant. And even though she’s psychodynamic she actually stops you so 
you start talking and within one or two minutes she stops you and says ok lets 
make it clear this is a defense so she feels this need to put labels on everything 
you do when you go on more than she would want you to she kind of looks 
bored and she says ok sometimes she even says that’s a bit irrelevant let’s 
focus now. I don’t know how to describe it she wants she wants to label things 
and have the power to say this is this this is that and deoesn’t um allow you to 
go on and on and describe your experience 
INT: Mmm. When you say doesn’t allow 
P: Because um she can show you with her attitude that you you ramble now 
it’s enough its so she actually stops you um through actual language or body 
language but she does stop you and um it feels like she can’t see the whole 
picture um because I believe the experience is very unique of every person and 
of the interaction in therapy 
INT: Mmm 
P: So sometimes she describes something as ok this is acting out the client is 
messing around is messing about ok what are you going to do about that. And 
I’m thinking I don’t know what I’m going to do I don’t want to do anything. I 
just want to share it you know and see all the aspects ok the acting out is one 
aspect but what else is there so that’s what I mean that she actually stops and 
doesn’t allow. Its, I guess it’s the opposite of what Rogers describes as you 
know the acceptance and that you are there to listen to the other person and 
not interrupt them at least at the very least I don’t know
INT: Mmm That sense of being accepted and trusting that’s important for you in order to to free associate to formulate your ideas

P: Yes its very important. Yeah now that I say that I realise but um yeah it actually shouldn’t be like that I mean um we should be able to not for clients for counsellors but we should be able I guess to say what we want to say regardless of the other person’s reactions um but still you um you reveal a vulnerable side of yourself in a way you expose yourself and your work and you have to see you all this has to happen in a quite safe environment otherwise I don’t know

INT: Mmm

P: I experience it like that

INT: Mmm

P: Yeah

INT: And these two different supervisors the differences between them are as two individuals it seems or

P: What are the differences as individuals?

INT: Yeah I guess I wondered how you understood what would make their way of being have a certain reaction for you and other’s way of being has a

P: Mmm

INT: different reaction for you?

P: Um yes the one that I am more happy about is she’s doing a lot of active listening she’s giving a lot of space she never she rarely interrupts um she’s actually looking in a um her eye contact is quite um close and I mean there is eye contact first of all and it feels warm and it feels like it feels like you wont be judged even if you did the worst mistake. And it feels like that because she doesn’t bomba bombard you with comments all the time so she’s not very
keen um on proving her power all the time by throwing intellectual comments
she will let you say what you have to say and then she will say but I think for
example or another way you could see that or so everything is like an
alternative so she first she values what you’re saying and she presents what
she says as an alternative she doesn’t present it as a correction whereas the
other one can say ah this is wrong she can actually say this is wrong and for
example the client will take the power if you do that or the client will use you
so you have to show this and this and so it feels more like an not an order um
prescription
INT: Mmm
P: about what to do and sometimes it it is quite hard on you its like I expected
you to do this whereas the other is yes a suggestion or an alternative ands it
can be a challenge but she will let you I guess its very humanistic that’s what
it is but it’s the best I mean the best humanistic example I’ve ever seen um and
its not like they say about humanistic that she doesn’t talk or she nods ah she
can actually help you challenge yourself in a very subtle way um I did think
oh yeah actually that was my stuff and I was for example. And I was putting
that on the client through her comments. A lot of times I had an insight and
feeling very safe and very calm about the way its it was being done
INT: Mmm
P: in the other one I managed to have some insight in the other case but after I
was very angry and very um upset first
INT: Mmm
P: So I don’t know maybe there are different personalities um but for me the
difference is that one is more accepting to herself the other one is struggling
with some power and um kind of issues of sense of self or even narcissism or I
don’t know
INT: I’d like to move onto the next question which is um can you tell me about notions of power in supervision?

P: Um I associate power with proving one’s worth proving one’s abilities with the um need with a need and the yeah and sometimes it can become an obsession to prove one’s abilities and worth um I don’t believe in power in general I believe we don’t have power over our lives and I believe some things are luck pure luck or destiny or I don’t know or God or whatever um um and I and I think in supervision and in other um situations when we feel sure not really sure but when we feel ok with ourselves then the element of power is less there. I guess I’m going around and I can’t really um. If I was to give a definition of power I couldn’t. It’s really I have to think

INT: Yeah

P: Um its like I have an image in my mind more than I associate it with something bad mm with man kind of with manipulation yeah when a person is powerful um I feel people who have others things in their lives don’t care about power that much about being able yeah so everything of power is able to control things and define certain situations and manipulate it’s the ability to have a say that counts you know all that which um I guess people need that but the people who need it more are the people who are less developed for me and in supervision um I think supervisors who haven’t worked with themselves as much and as therapists they need to impose this kind of power on you so they feel important so that they feel they control situations they control what is being said um they have the last word they say the last word their way of seeing things is better all that I associate with power in supervision. And I feel its when they’re more narcissitic then average and they feel that they are not good enough as what they are so they have to prove that they are good by you know through um not making others but through kind of seeing others in a
lower position then they are

INT: Mmm

P: So I guess power is about um feeling superior and better and being able to control and in supervision um yeah I think what I described that um not giving the space to talk and express the supervisee’s emotions um and all that for me is associated with power because it its control its like saying to you I decide I kind of decide when you start talking when you stop talking and I have the last word and I’m the experienced one my view my view’s what counts not yours

INT: Mmm

P: So the opposite of intersubjectivity [laughs]

INT: Mmm, and would it be right to say if I summarise what you’ve said is that um part of why supervisors may do that be because of some sort of insecurity in themselves

P: Yeah

INT: on not working on themselves in a way to

P: Definitely

INT: Yep

P: I don’t know if I can um I mean I haven’t studied much on that it’s a personal view that um yeah their need for power comes from this um because it’s not like strength where you want to be strong to cope in your life you know to be strong enough to cope. Power is something different, it’s the ability to control so yeah I think it comes from a deep insecurity

INT: Mmm. Ultimately a negative thing? If you’re on the receiving end?

P: Mmm I would say yes but I don’t know I might be very dogmatic or moral here or even religious but I I would see that this should be the ultimate goal in life for one to have power. I would see other things as more you know fulfilling things to achieve.
INT: Mmm. I wondered whether um in the context of supervision whether power is something that um is only possessed by supervisors?
P: Is it sorry?

INT: Is it only possessed by supervisors?
P: um in some supervision sessions yeah its only possessed by supervisors. And for me that that inequality constructs the word power whereas if you are equal so you have the strength to have your say and to communicate meanings and construct meanings together then no none of these people have the power. They might put both strong and you know secure or good enough but then for me power power has to do with the inequality so if I have the power you don’t and supervision supervisors will use power or who um yeah who strive for power that’s how they try to get it I guess by um removing it from someone else

INT: Mmm

P: Yeah that’s the way I see it.

INT: What makes a sense of inequality in your experience of supervision?
P: Um its an attitude for me. Its arrogance. Lack of interest in other people’s opinions. Lack of active listening um its like when you let the person talk you don’t really look interested giving them the message that ok stop now and then as soon as they stop you start talking in a very authoritative way implying what you say is true and what the other person said was just um something unimportant. Yes I guess it’s a kind of authoritarian attitude and style and of course comments that can make the other person doubt what they say is for me is the opposite of a dialogue. Of a proper dialogue where you are thirsty and curious to hear what the other person says it’s the opposite of that it’s a dismissing attitude. And its always and I think power is always implied is never um is never managed um not never I don’t know sometimes it can
happen in ah with in on a verbal level as well. So by saying what you said is not relevant or by judging the other person. But I think most of the times it happens in an unspoken level. But yeah I’ve heard other people saying that you know their supervisors told them you should you are supposed to do that and this is how we work. So I can guess it can be about diminishing the other make the other person feel um useless sometimes if no matter what they say you say to them that’s not good enough that’s crap or you know it can so it can be on a verbal level too

INT: Mmm

P: But I found it more difficult I found it more difficult when its on an unspoken level. Because I don’t know how to react to that because you can’t confront the other person then you can’t say well what you said doesn’t really help me its it makes it more complicated for me

INT: Less able to as you said confront it or to

P: Yeah

INT: challenge it.

P: And I don’t know maybe its because it makes me more angry I don’t know. Yeah its difficult. But um I hate the attitude in my life in general I mean people who have attitude and arrogance so um yeah [laughs]

INT: So we began talking about a sense of inequality and um you descrivbed a sense of power residing in the individual in terms of their attitude or

P: Yeah, yeah. And I believe that the power cannot be shared if a person who has the power they don’t want to share it and this is the meaning of power. Its not like I have some knowledge and I want to share it for if I have some knowledge but I’m looking for power then I wont share this knowledge so for me it’s the opposite of sharing and giving is just keeping for myself for my image you know. Ego satisfaction or something
INT: Can I ask um in what ways if any has being a trainee counselling psychologist influenced or been influenced by your experiences of supervision?

P: So how being a trainee psychologist is

INT: Has um ah influenced these experiences you’ve been talking about?

P: In supervision?

INT: Yeah, or perhaps the other way round how have those experiences shaped you as a trainee

P: Um yeah it works both ways for me, I mean it happens both ways. Being a trainee is very anxiety provoking um and there is a lot of power because when you go to the university it feels that you are powerless because there are people who have the knowledge and the expertise and basically you are there to be taught, so that has an element of powerlessness um so it can add up to the feeling of powerlessness from the supervision it makes it and make it even worse. Um yeah because they are said uncertainties more you know I guess if you are in supervision as um qualified person its different because you feel um yeah you are a more complete professional

INT: Mmm, in what sense?

P: Yeah that’s a good question [laughs] um because you are not in training anymore and there’s something about training its not its not that you don’t know anything and after three years you know everything that wouldn’t that would be ridiculous but um yeah even the word training like somebody trains you so you are um incomplete

INT: Mmm

P: Um yeah because there are people who know and teach you and you don’t know yet that’s how it feels its not really its not real but I guess it’s the
institution not a particular institution but the educational institutions that inspire this kind of um feeling

P: Because there’s not a dialogue where both people can construct their meanings it’s the teacher and the pupil so it feels the role of ah student is it has a powerlessness

INT: Mmm. And in the context of supervision what is it like?

P: Yeah so you go to supervision as a student and that mmm its like you’re not on a you’re not on a steady ground and your ground can be easily shaken because you carry the uncertainty from the fact that you’re still a trainee. And if the supervisor kind of imposes things on you or uses or abuses power then it feels even more um scary I guess

INT: Mmm. It makes me thinking about think about um when you talk about that supervisor who you experienced as having having power um cutting you short and not feeling you could open up things with that person and um I wondered how you reacted to that situation? And I wonder how being a trainee

P: Yeah

INT: affected how you reacted?

P: Yeah it played I think the biggest role being a trainee

INT: Mmm

P: I reacted um I became quite submissive and quiet and I was left with a lot of anger

INT: Mmm

P: but then I sort of confronted her latter on um yes and I I think if I wasn’t a trainee she wouldn’t have spoken in the same way and I wouldn’t have to stop I mean to shut up and listen to her. If I was a professional like her I would say
376 well you are wrong you know I find what you I don’t agree with what you say.
377 So there is this inequality that they can say if they agree or if they don’t but
378 you can’t because you’re a trainee um
379 INT: Because you are a trainee you can’t can’t cant take a position or can’t
380 um?
381 P: Not really because they can tell you well you don’t you are you are here to
382 learn and you know I know more it’s basically this I know more underlying
383 um under implied all the time and yeah
384 INT: No more about?
385 P: Theory or yeah experience but its not that there will still be a gap in the
386 experience but I guess when you finish your training um it is it is like it is
387 implied that now you’re prepared now you are ready you are still in the
388 process of knowledge but of um knowing but you are more ready
389 INT: Mmm
390 P: So yeah
391 INT: That’s the impression you’ve you’ve got
392 P: Yeah
393 INT: What do you think?
394 P: What’s the impression I’ve got?
395 INT: or um is that your opinion or?
396 P: No it isn’t but it is um like a social kind of stereotype or I don’t know yes
397 and it’s a role as well so sometimes in life you are not who you are but you are
398 your role this is how I think society functions and so you step into a role of
399 trainee. Yeah I guess you could say you opinion and you can put your position
400 you can position yourself but um maybe it’s the uncertainty then I don’t know
401 it can be like a a bo a two ways thing
402 INT: Mmm two ways what do you mean?
P: The role stepping into the role of a trainee um lead to certain behaviour I
lost it I had it but then I lost it. I guess its like you don’t know um is it the
uncertainty that you feel anyway that leads you to act as a trainee or is it
because you take that role because you are in training and then by playing that
role you are in an uncertain position. I don’t know which causes the other I
guess

INT: Mmm

P: but I guess it can go both ways

INT: I see

P: Bec I guess the uncertainty will be there even when a person finishes their
training but maybe you feel more empowered [laughs]

INT: Mmm

P: after you finish the training you know you complete you you are not a
student

INT: Mmm I guess I was thinking about so in those contexts with um a
supervisor that you feel has power you can react in a submissive or withdrawn
or feel angry

P: Mmm yeah yeah that’s true

INT: And what impact does that have an impact on your practice?

P: I try to forget all about it and not um I feel when its me and the client in the
room its like a different world and I try to keep it like that. When I’m not
satisfied and I’m not helped through supervision I try and remove from my
mind all the influence that that had

INT: Mmm

P: Um yeah so I try not to let it play any role at all because if I let it it will
make me I will feel you know not so good about myself and this will affect the
work. And it does affect it in a sense when sometimes if I feel quite not so
confident I don’t talk as much and I don’t come out in the session so um the client does more talking and it sort of becomes very humanistic in a bad way um you know I listen and I’m there

INT: Mmm

P: But I don’t offer as much I don’t give as much. That’s how I react when I’m not confident.

INT: Ok

P: Or I might react um but this more rare for me by saying by trying to rationalise things with a client rather than helping them experience what they say

INT: Mmm

P: but trying to give answers in a way to save the client and things like that

INT: Ok. Um I guess the last thing is I asked you earlier about just a few things um and I wondered whether things such as your age or your gender or ethnicity um or training institution have had any impact or any influences on your experiences of supervision?

P: Mmm. Um My gender yeah I feel they all play a role um I feel being younger um then my supervisor and being training to have a doctorate whereas she is a therapist and being a woman as she is can create a certain um can inspire a competitive competitiveness I guess, competition

INT: For you or for her or?

P: Um for both but I guess the way she handles with that the way she deals with that is to try to prove her power or to try and get and have power

INT: Mmm

P: Um for me yeah maybe when I feel so angry and intimidated its its because I compare myself maybe its because I have underneath there is this competition element
P: But I wouldn’t um but I can but I feel I can handle it
in different ways. In better ways then her. But I’m not sure if it plays a
definite role but um several times she has when we talk about the client and
we are 28 she says young people they are acting out or something like that so
in her eyes maybe I’m a bit young so she has to be the expert. And she has got
quite a few problems with the training. She believes psychodynamic training is
the best. She believes in that. She’s not so open to other things to other you
know because as a counselling psychologist you are open to a lot of theories
but for her its mostly that the psychodynamic

P: yeah

INT: It sounds like a difference between the two of you then is
P: Yeah. Yes there is. And she is um from a I don’t know she is not white sort
of Europe, she’s white but she’s not of European or American. I don’t know
what role that might play. I think she’s from Middle east or something.
INT: Is there anything else that you would like to um after reflecting on power
and supervision?

P: Mmm I would like to say that it can be tricky and

INT: To talk about it or?

P: [laughs]

INT: Or the experience of it?

P: Both

INT: Mmm

P: Um and what I said that you know ok there are certain people that I defined
before that have a need for power I can’t be excluded from that um. It does
feel nice. But for me, I mean the power

INT: Mmm

P: Yeah and I guess it’s tricky because when you’re angry um with somebody

imposing their power its easy to say um I don’t want the power but they do so

therefore I’m angry but there is something more than that. It’s maybe um

unexpressed need for power or unconscious

INT: Mmm

P: Yeah

P: In the people that become angry I mean like me

INT: Mmm

P: or frustrated

INT: Mmm. Um, well if there is nothing else you would like to say that’s all I

have to ask so

P: Ok

INT: Thanks very much

P: You’re welcome
INT: Ok so first question I would like to ask is can you describe for me how you have found your experience of supervision in your development as a Counselling Psychologist?
P: Um you know I’ve had mixed experiences but I suppose if I start from my first year um as a trainee I think my experience wasn’t that great of a supervisor um and that kind of made me a lot more cautious in terms of dealing with with other supervisors um. I guess I’ve had some very good supervisors and some who who were less good I could say in terms of keeping boundaries um I suppose abusing their power
INT: Mmm
P: Um I guess I don’t know if it would be helpful if I explained to you that sort of things that went on
INT: Yeah
P: in the first year and why I didn’t find it particularly helpful. Um this was a clinical psychologist that I had um. And it was a male supervisor who I guess had years of experience in the field that I was working um and when I first started the placement everything was fine um I guess the weirdness of the whole relationship started when I went for an interview and he asked me a few personal questions which I was a bit taken a back by but I just decided not to I guess it was such a grey area I wasn’t really sure what you know maybe he just has to ask it. Um but then I guess I was quite you know not very experienced and didn’t know and I really wanted the placement so I went for it
INT: Mmm
P: And after a while after a couple of months everything was fine but there were moments in supervision when I could sense that something weird was going on um in terms of um him perhaps saying things that were a bit
P: Um by that I mean not sexual I mean in a sexual way but not explicitly but I could just sense something um until one day when he I suppose called my house from his own from his house and invited me out for a suppose to go out on a theatre. And I basically said no um and I came up with an excuse as to why I wouldn’t. But I guess I didn’t really have the courage to say to him that actually this is not very appropriate um If I mean just yeah I’m trying to think what would have happened if I had went out with him

P: and the stuff that would come up and the way that he would relate to me in supervision and I wouldn’t really see him as my supervisor. I would just see him as a friend or I don’t know and so after that experience I would say that that’s when yeah difficulties came up in the relationship more and in terms of the way that he acted around me and also I suppose to some extent impacted upon the way I you know I was quite not scared but I was quite intimidated by him because again you know he was my supervisor, he was going to give me an evaluation

P: He had to pass my placement so it was a bit of a difficult situation and that was my very first experience of um supervision also with a male supervisor so I guess yeah and then till after this experience I um I was quite cautious around him. And he was just come up. And I made a few mistakes in terms of administration stuff um you know to either typing attendance or nn attendance on the clients on RIO making mistakes like that. And it used to piss him off um you know people do make mistakes but I think
I understand that I went maybe I was getting really stressed around the whole situation. So he um he actually started getting really um in some ways he just switched like form being a very nice person to well I thought he was very friendly to this really um mean um person who um would just dismiss things I would say in supervision. He would just be very cold and and not very pleasant to be around in supervision. And at various points he said that um he was thinking whether I would even be suitable um for this placement and

INT: Mmm

P: That was because I had by accident um I suppose these were a few mistakes that I did but I I guess if I want to go really sort of psychodynamic um it may’ve been I was so bloody anxious around him

INT: Mmm

P: the whole time [sigh] that I kept making these mistakes and and I think I don’t on his part whether he felt rejected and wanted somehow to get back. So the whole dynamic changed and that’s when I felt that actually he you know first of all I thought he abused his power by the first you know place when he asked such an inappropriate question. On the other hand when coz I did disclose this to my tutor at [participants university]

INT: Mmm

P: And she said that you know its such a grey area even that because even if you go further with it then he’s going to say but you know I just asked you a question it was it wasn’t anything I couldn’t really prove it in any way either

INT: Mmm

P: So um after that he just said I had by accident yeah this is what I was trying to get at I did on um two occasions um misplaced clients. So I I think I said to a client at 12 and I remember I was away for an interview that day and the
client had turned up and I just had for some really again reason just mixed up
the hours and that was then day when he just completely went bezerk and said
actually you know um I was thinking of not giving you your hours and um
INT: Mmm
P: you know just just I suppose playing I knew somewhere deep down that he
wouldn’t do it but it was just the dynamics and the supervision and and the
way that yeah he threatened me not to he did in the end but the whole thing
turned out to be just a nightmare
INT: Mmm. What was that like for you I mean you talked about um it
affecting you how you would you would forget things and feel nervous and
P: Yeah
INT: um and attempting talking to a tutor at uni for advice about it
P: Yeah
INT: How did you feel in that whole process?
P: You mean throughout the process of
INT: Mmm
P: I felt very vulnerable and it made me feel so shit about myself and my
clinical work as well I guess he never had any problems but he did say that he
didn’t have any problems with my clinical work but its just I felt like um I felt
quite just he treated me with no respect basically
INT: Mmm
P: um and I mean today now that I can kind of reflect back and think about it I
realise you know in some ways amusing to picture the whole situation and um
think well ok maybe that was a sign that ok maybe he did feel rejected after all
and that’s probably what happened um but then he did as I say I guess there
was a real power imbalance in the relationship and to overstep your
boundaries I think is he did that
P: And this has let me I suppose to be very cautious with male supervisors in general

P: Um if they ask me a question I don’t disclose about myself I mean if it’s inappropriate then I say look I just I don’t think that’s relevant to to what I’m going to do here at this placement

P: So its I guess made me a lot more cautious and I try to be assertive if a male so I suppose when yeah I’m having a real problem with males and um yeah males in positions of power

P: Yes yeah definitely um yeah very um and I just I don’t know I mean it depends but on the person too but I’m especially if I suppose this may sound a bit weird but yes heterosexual men that’s when I feel really intimidated um because then I just automatically think that something you know that they may do something or say something that may be inappropriate

INT: Mmm. I wonder how that’s how this experience has affected your work as a counselling psychologist? Say for example you talked about not disclosing anything about yourself and um

P: Mmm
INT: has that had any impact on the way that supervision has unfolded or how you

P: You mean with supervisors or? Oh not with clients you mean?

INT: Well I guess um your experiences with a supervisor not disclosing has
that impacted on the way that supervision has unfolded which may have then
impacted your work? Or your sense of self I suppose

P: Yeah the thing is I right now at the moment I only have one male supervisor
but with him it’s a different dynamic like I don’t I don’t sense that he would I
guess I don’t know if its I can say that he isn’t interested in women so he’s I
guess a homosexual male so with him there is I can just be myself I don’t feel
any kind of tension or anything like that so I just feel very free in the
relationship. I think it was a conscious decision to even choose him as my
supervisor. First because I thought he was very good and second because I just
I felt I??? Who may potentially be and I I realised that I there’s that fear within
me that I realised that its um I’m generalising as well because not all males
will be that way um and then the rest of my supervisors are females and that
was a conscious decision as well. My personal therapist is a woman I just yeah
INT: Mmm

P: For me its kind of dangerous I guess maybe I’m taking it too extreme but I
think that that experience just

INT: Mmm

P: And my first year was enough not to do anything about it.

INT: So how did that unfold um you’ve talked about seeking advice about it
and how it impacted on you

P: Mmhmm

INT: um feeling like its made you more nervous impacted on you with
remembering things sometimes and um a sense of a shift in him after that of
um switching and being quite quite punitive maybe at times

P: Mmm very that’s the word I suppose. He was very punishing. I guess
he was trying to punish me. Um you know very he was a very narisiisitec person
so it was he just couldn’t take the fact that I said no now that I think about it.
Um yeah sorry what was your

INT: Um well I guess I wondered how you managed that but I Sppose you’ve
already said that in a way in terms of you um sort of almost acted in a
protective way of yourself um until the end of that relationship until the end of
that placement or?
P: You mean how I was in supervision sessions with him

INT: Mmm

P: Yeah I was very protective of myself I tried to yeah be very protected and
just when I went in would discuss clients and I mean not that I ever discussed
anything else with him but it was I guess my mistake I have to say though that
part of this whole dynamic maybe I mean not that I should in some ways I’m
thinking perhaps I sent some maybe he just got my communication in a wrong
way I was quite I was very sort of relational and I wanted to kind of use
myself in supervision and I wonder whether that could of just because he was
a clinical psychologist very CBT I mean he was not into the he wasn’t very
much into the relationship um I mean he was but not saying that clinical
psychologists aren’t but it was I don’t know whether on some unconscious
level I was sending cues and which led him to think that maybe I was
interested or um but yeah after that I was not trying to be relational at all so
that was just yeah you know just very go over my notes and discuss the clients
and and came out. I had my personal therapist as well so I did have people that
supported me through this process

INT: Mmm
P: but it was kind of it was a real damaging experience I would say

INT: Mmm. That um attempts at a way of being or a way of working as a
relational style which you initially had with him

P: Mmm Mmm

INT: um what made you sense that he that he didn’t sort of gel with that or
that he wasn’t able to work in that way?

P: Because he said it himself that he’s not very you know he’s not into this
touchy feeliness or or yeah it wasn’t just his statement. He said that this is a
CBT placement and very clinically focussed and I was I suppose in my first
year and I wasn’t very much into CBT I was more into the humanistic um
model and I mean yeah he didn’t have any problems with it but I think we
were just very different as well. Um

INT: As two individuals or in terms of different backgrounds

P: Definitely well different backgrounds, different individuals and favouring
different models I suppose.

INT: You talked about being in the first year um which leads into my question
which was in terms of in what ways has training as a counselling psychologist

P: Sorry?

INT: In what ways has being a trainee counselling psychologist um influenced
or been influenced by experiences such as that um?

P: You mean how has this experience shaped me into the way in as a
counselling psychologist? Um I suppose it’s made me also reflect on the way
that on myself and how I um can improve this um I suppose to look more at
myself and see how I can make myself come across I suppose in a to be more
assertive but I suppose it’s also made me reflect on the way that I relate to my
male clients um and I’m very aware of that

INT: Could you say more?
P: Yeah I guess the way that I suppose my but you see its very different
because in that relationship these men are not in a position of power you know
its kind of reversed role so I guess I don’t necessarily feel the same fear um
but I guess I’m still aware of my own prejudices and yeah um being with a
male in the room who may you know its never really happened it may have
happened unconsciously in their heads but not I haven’t been able to deal with
any of that. I think I would be able to work with that
INT: Mmm
P: in the room but yeah I guess I’m not sure whether I answered your question
in terms of how this experience has shaped me. I mean I guess its made me
more conscious
INT: Mmm
P: um yeah could you I don’t know what specific..
INT: Um I guess um as a trainee being a trainee how that has either influenced
those experiences and vise versa in terms of, say for example, you talked
about it being your first placement in your first year and um would have things
been different if it was your third year or
P: Mmm mmm
INT: you had been qualified
P: Mmm. Oh definitely. I think so. I think in my first year I was very
vulnerable very um inexperienced I didn’t have that much maybe knowledge
that I have today. And I think I would deal with it in a different way definitely
I would have a bit more confidence to to approach him differently. And maybe
this would have never happened, maybe this dynamic wouldn’t have
happened.
INT: Mmm
P: um but you know in some ways I remember when this happened it sort of in
some ways shattered my whole idea of, because I I guess and this is a very naïve view to have that because you’re a psychologist or a counselling or clinical psychologist you would never do something like that. So when I was in my first year I thought, I was just devastated because I

P: I thought how could someone do that because well the other thing was that he had quite a lot of information about me well I suppose he knew that I’m a foreign student so my family’s not here and I’m here on my own so he he knew that as well so you know I suppose useful information for him

P: Um and I just I found that quite I felt betrayed

P: Um yeah very betrayed. And also I couldn’t believe that someone who is in this profession would would be able to abuse their power like that but this has just completely changed my view of

P: You know actually its opened up my eyes and I think that in every traumatic experience or in every bad situation you can find something good in it good positive experience And I’ve definitely learnt a lot

P: from this one experience just in itself

P: but yeah

P: No

INT: I guess I wondered you talked about um you have more knowledge if it would make it more different ???
Um I guess I was referring to theoretical models perhaps of um yeah theoretical knowledge in terms of um understanding the relationship in terms of you know when when he reacted the way he did I didn’t understand that was a sign of rejection but I suppose being able to be more analytic about what’s the relationship and understanding why he why he did the things that he did.

P: Because at the time I took it so personal and I couldn’t understand why he did that there must be something wrong with me. I maybe yeah quite I suppose I was an easy target and. But now that I look back I just I think if it was today I would really handle it differently

INT: Mmm…I guess I feel quite moved by it really

P: Mmm

INT: Um because it does sound like a very difficult experience especially in your first year

P: Mmm mmm

INT: So I’m aware of for me treating you with respect

P: Mmm

INT: and to tread carefully um but as you say you’ve as time’s gone on you’ve gained some perspective on it and sort of thought about it in different ways and

P: Yeah I guess you know the other thing was yes I did but it was it was very hard and I remember in my very last I suppose yeah final year in my first year when I finished you know everything was done I was going to start my second year and they were going to allocate supervisors research supervisors

INT: Mmm

P: And they sent me an email um it was a male supervisor [laughs] and I was
not very happy about that um I wanted I just it was like I cannot why did they
do this like I really don’t need it I want a female supervisor. So that was just
although it was a research supervisor its still I just I couldn’t
INT: Mmm
P: although yeah he’s still my research supervisor but then again I’m always
on guard
INT: Mmm
P: Um and so
INT: And did that they did change it for you or?
P: No well I didn’t say anything I was just but my tutor who knew about my
circumstances said look if you feel that you’re not you know finding??? You
can always change. But I felt that he was good and as long as I go in there and
I’m very you know professional and just do what I have to do and but it’s still
hard I can’t relax, its, I’m very guarded.
INT: Mmm. So yeah I guess you’ve talked about that experience and you
initially started out with saying you’ve had some mixed experiences. What’ve
your other experiences of supervision been like?
P: Yeah I was going to go onto that. Um I did have another horrific experience
with another female supervisor that I feel very strongly about
INT: Mmm
P: But yeah I can tell you about my my other supervisors that I’ve had um one
two three supervisors who have been amazing they’ve just been phenomenal.
One is the male supervisor and the other two were um I had one of them last
year an external supervisor a counselling psychologist. And then I have an
analytic psychotherapist at the moment which is their all three amazing . Um
the only bad experience is that I would say I had was with this male supervisor
and with another female supervisor. Do you want me to tell you about them?
INT: Before we talk about that other bad experience I wondered if we could
explore your supervision experiences more generally
P: Ok
INT: Um in um when you talked about that first supervisor how that's affected
you’re your way of being in supervision and um
P: Mmm
INT: practice to?? an extent and how have you you know you use the words
phenomenal for those others supervisors. Could you explain what that
phenomenal experience is?
P: I just felt the supervisor that I had last year which was an external
counselling psychologist was she was just very um I liked her humanity um
and she I could just I could be myself in there um and she was quite relational
and I wasn’t threatened by her um well I think partly because of the dynamic
she was a female but
INT: Something to do with her being a counselling psychologist have an
influence do you think or?
P: Possibly I mean she was a counselling but her history was also clinical so
she had both um could yeah I think her way of practising was different from
him and also she was quite psychodynamic and they were very different so it
was and and the way that she kind of created this nourished um yeah nurturing
environment um and she was very you know I suppose congruent in the
relationship very honest
INT: Mmm
P: Yeah. But I think that a lot of it had to do well the fact I mean I explicitly
went for a female supervisor I wasn’t working with males
INT: Mmm
P: Um but then again yeah then my other analytic supervisor is she’s also very
nurturing and I don’t feel like she’s out there to get me or

INT: Mmm

P: Um but then maybe in my world phenomenal [laugh] means you know

maybe because I have been through quite a bit and if someone is nice or there

just

INT: Not not attacking you

P: Yeah not attacking them that is great. But maybe they’re just you know
decent human beings [laughs]

INT: Mmm

P: Um so’ve had one two three supervisors yeah

INT: Can I ask that um that experience of being nurtured and um being able to

be yourself and relax a bit more I wondered if that had any impact on your on

supervision and on your practice?

P: It did because in some strange way it made me be less attacking of myself

or less punishing of myself um. And I suppose it made me I guess it had I
could see the way that they were in supervision and in some ways I could

internalise them as a good object

INT: Mmm How are you feeling?

P: Um

INT: In talking about this?

P: I feel fine talking about it. It doesn’t I don’t really I mean it makes me

realise what what I’ve been through but um I think its good to talk about it I

think that’s one reason why I wanted to take part in this study because I felt

like in some ways it could empower me be more therapeutic

INT: Mmm, ok. Um maybe you would like to talk about that other experience

then

P: Yeah [laugh] that one is a more recent well that was in my second um that
one I have really strong feelings um about this was a supervisor that I had as at an older adult placement and I I started that placement thinking that it was an existential um kind of humanistic placement and that’s when she said that you know that these were a lot of older adults um and you know they deal with a lot of loss and bereavements and you know you could do a lot of well you could do existential work with them. Sometimes psychodynamic um I wasn’t very much into CBT so that’s why I went for the placement but she did say that you know at times you would be able to do some CBT as well

INT: Mmm

P: So I thought ok its more of a kind if integrative so I’ll go for that um and so after I suppose I started I realised that actually it’s not very existential its not very humanistic and I was fine doing the CBT um but it was it wasn’t really what I had expected and it was a 6 month contract on that placement. Now this was a I suppose she was quite young well I mean I would say she was in her probably mid thirties or something she has recently well she or maybe a bit older she had graduated not very long ago um so she was quite new in the field and and I guess she hadn’t done the doctorate it was the independent route or something like that ah which I now when I reflect I don’t know if that had a play in it but um she basically so yeah I started working with clients and at first I had two case loads and then three and then throughout the middle of of the kind of term I said to her that when he hit summer when we came close to summer I said to her I’m going to go back to my home country for the summer but I will be finishing obviously I had my I had only contracted twelve sessions with these clients so obviously I would have ended with them

INT: Mmm

P: and then came back taken another case load and then finished and then I would not come back to the placement. So she I guess for her that wasn’t um
she she said you know I remember in supervision she said yeah that’s fine.

However, a month later when I went to go in to hand in my supervisor evaluation form um she said that she wasn’t able to coz [her university] has these forms where you put satisfactory or unsatisfactory and then you don’t I mean obviously no-one ever gets unsatisfactory I haven’t heard of that unless you’re a completely just don’t know what you’re doing um but anyways and then obviously have to explain why you’re putting unsatisfactory so um yeah so I handed that to her and she um she said that she wasn’t able to comment on some of these because I haven’t been at the placement for very long oh and I forgot I once had a client who who I was quite psychodynamic for the first initial session and apparently I mean she never said that to me um the client she was a a person who had worked in the NHS herself she’s an old lady in her like late sixties and apparently she had called I don’t know if it was my supervisor or my supervisors colleague saying that she didn’t really find the initial session helpful hopeful I suppose.

INT: Mmm

P: and I mean I I didn’t take that as a complaint I just thought thought ok well this could be you know something that we could work I mean definitelly we can address this in in the relationship we can talk about this and a lot of the times clients don’t feel very good after the initial session um there’s a lot of ambivalence um and also I you know I reflected on my own intervention and I thought well ok and that’s what supervision is for to be able for the supervisor to advise me and supervise me on on things where places where I go wrong

INT: Mmm

P: And she said to me that you know this was in the this was when my first kind of experience with her started um she was saying how um I’ve had a complaint I remember one morning I went into supervision and she was very
sneaky about it she was like how did you feel with this client and I said as I I was very honest I said you it was a difficult session and this is how I felt I felt quite uncomfortable um and she was like ok well that’s interesting that you say because this client has complained. I mean she didn’t say that to me before and she just tried to get information from me and then say this is what and I said complain I mean what complaint and she basically said well she hasn’t found it helpful or hopeful and I said well that’s something that we could I thought that we could discuss this in supervision like

INT: Mmm

P: lets look at that and um so she kept that in the back of her mind I suppose and um when the client came obviously I guess to cut a long story short I I was managed to we had a very good relationship in the end

INT: Mmm

P: And um and and that I suppose sorry my mind um so she didn’t say anything after that and I realised that all these clients that I’ve taken on board I’m not really doing any kind of its more CBT work which I wasn’t very happy about but then I did and at times I would you know in my way of working I was quite psychodynamic

INT: Mmm

P: and she had a problem with that she said you you’re not very CBT and um you know you need to be able to work on that

INT: Mmm

P: You have a difficulty in switching and we did talk about that in supervision. So when I um handed in my evaluation form she said that she wasn’t able to comment on on a few things and that she wouldn’t be able to because I hadn’t been I was at the placement for three months basically and I I had about twenty hours but that was my second placement I had another placement as
well. And so she wasn’t able to comment anything on that and she called up
the university and and said that told the university a different account to what I
had said to her about my terminating
INT: Mmm
P: saying that [participant’s name] wants to prematurely end the placement. So
my tutor at the university just called me in I mean this whole experience and
said that apparently I’ve had a serious client complaint and that I want to end
the placement prematurely and I was just shocked I said
INT: Mmm
P: what was this complaint it was in my world that wasn’t a complaint that
was just and you know
INT: and it was earlier as well
P: Sorry
INT: this had happened a few months earlier they didn’t express that
P: yeah a few weeks I mean wasn’t even nothing press and then so she’s and
the tutor’s just I felt attacked by the tutor as well and she wasn’t willingly to
hear my side of the story at all so what happened was that they she kept
communicating with my tutor and another time I received an email form my
tutor saying that I’ve had another complaint! I wasjust you know at that stage I
just didn’t know what to do what I was psychologically not in a very good
place. So I said I went in and she said you’ve apparently a client has
complained about your dress code. And that just that made it I mean I’d had
enough at that stage I said ok so a client complained about my dress I just have
a hard time believing that because I felt that this supervisor may have either
made it up I know it sounds crazy but it was just and even if that was the case
that could have been worked through in therapy. I was never I never dress
inappropriately never dress provocative or I just wouldn’t do that. And and she
was just so I went back to her and I said I feel very strongly about what you’ve done you’ve called up the university without my consent you don’t even tell me and tell them what is this like

INT: Mmm

P: She said you and I said if you ever had any diff problems with my dress code why did you not say anything and she said well you need to be professional enough to realise that yourself. So the whole thing and I suppose I’m not from this country and I I don’t know I think a lot of the times dress code is quite important here. I think one time I wore jeans in the NHS I didn’t know you were susp you weren’t supposed to do that

INT: Mmm

P: I guess what she had a problem with was I had I wear stockings and I had a dress and I had a whole in my stocking and that happens you know when you wear stock [laugh] so up and apparently the client and I was working at an older adult placement so its you know it’s a different generation

INT: Mmm

P: she probably thought I was young girl who I don’t know it was just her own prejudice as well but

INT: Mmm

P: I I don’t see any you know I could have worked with that in therapy and this whole thing was just these two things were turned against me and she called up the university and basically she ended up failing my hours, she didn’t give me my hours and um I remember at the time I just I can’t really explain to you how how angry I was

INT: Mmm

P: because I felt that I don’t deserve that I I hadn’t you know I hadn’t done anything unethical
INT: Mmm

P: um and and I sometimes wonder whether and I remember in the very last
day when I said to her do you realise how hard I worked here I travelled three
hours to get here to this placement. I’ve worked my clients always turn up
which is not a bad sign

INT: Mmm

P: Um and I have a good enough relationship with them. I don’t understand
why you want to fail my hours. And I’ll never forget that minute when she
laughed literally

INT: She laughed

P: She literally she laughed in my face and she said um she said you have
travelled so far but you just haven’t fulfilled um what I expected of you. Um
you know that to me is an abuse of power because at that point and you see the
thing is I couldn’t stand up for myself because I felt so victimised and
cornered both by her and by my other tutor at the university who had no I
suppose no realisation of she was a new tutor as well

INT: Mmm

P: so she didn’t know what was going on and and I just two people in such
position of power that would just throw me back and forth as a little you know
just and get such I felt really worthless I was like this this is I felt so shit about
myself, about my work. This impacted my coursework and it it has it’s left its
scars and I don’t trust people in the position of authority anymore

INT: Mmm

P: Um now its not about male supervisors [laughs] anymore its actually about
young female supervisors who may not be I mean I don’t know if there was
any kind of female rivalry going on in that relationship

INT: Mmm
P: The fact that she wasn’t doing a doctorate I don’t know whether that

INT: Mmm

P: You know I don’t want to sound too cocky but these things could have

INT: Mmm

P: had a play in this whole um relationship

INT: What do you think about that um her being younger or not doing or not
done a doctorate? I mean when you say it may have had an impact what do
you mean?

P: In that I suppose she that she doesn’t I mean it sounds that she doesn’t have
a doctorate basically and maybe that in some ways was pissing off I don’t
know

INT: Mmm

P: I’m just trying to think she was young um I and it may have been a
personality clash as well because when I I mean I did I was I felt I talked to
the head of department about this and she said sometimes you know there can
be a personality clash between supervisee and supervisors. Um and I think
that’s what was going on there as well you know to call up the university and
talk about my dress code I’m probably one of the least people who would ever
dress in an inappropriate way. I just don’t do that um it was just unfortunate
that on that specific day I happened to have a whole in my [laughs]

INT: Mmm

P: It wasn’t a big hole anyways but

INT: Mmm

P: But um so when you know it was just because this experience let me it
completely ruined my whole summer because my tutor basically said you have
a failed placement we’re going to have to take do further investigation! I mean
I just [laughs]
P: You know it was like this is really what are you guys doing this is completely mad

P: Um further investigation into what you know that she was going to talk to my supervisor and one thing that just was its beyond belief was that she when she had no legitimate justification for why she wanted to fail me so when she filled out the supervisory evaluation form she only put unsatisfactory on two areas and the rest were left blank and my argument was why don’t you confidently just circle around unsatisfactory on all of them because apparently you think I’m just shit so you have the audacity to fail my hours for stupid reasons yet you can’t even comment on the form and say that this person is rubbish then go ahead and do it um and she never did

INT: It sounds like you um you did make a few attempts to fight your corner in a way to confront her, am I perceiving it right did..?

P: No I didn’t I was scared I was so scared because she called up the university and I thought I just don’t want to make a big deal out of this which was a very big mistake. Again if it was today I would just take that evaluation form and give it to her manager. I mean like can she please circle unsatisfactory because you you know that fact that she that to me is is is wrong its she was clearly abusing her power by Oh I’ll I’m just going to decide not to give you your hours I’m going to play games with you in the supervision sessions. And bare in mind that she never explicitly had any problems she would Ok I may have difficulty in switching from psychodynamic to CBT that doesn’t mean I’m shit at CBT and

INT: Mmm
She always she would always nod her head in sessions I remember she’d be like oh good excellent you’re doing some work and then in the last day just go that beszerk and mental that to me was just it kind of made me think that sometimes there are people in this profession who shouldn’t really be practising to be honest And I was quite concerned I was like she, and the the way that she laughed at me and um and then this whole experience led me to so I went home for the summer um I left for Sweden and that basically meant that I was short of hours and I had to fly the university was going to make me so you see no-one really believed the university believed her so they thought it was utter crap. And I mean I had other my other supervisors were on my side and obviously coz I filed a formal complaint against this whole situation. And that was me being very assertive I suppose I’d just had enough like it was not reflective of who I was and they never gave me back my hours but they gave me an extension. Now what happened was that I went when I went to Sweden um um basically they said we don’t care you have to come here once a week to get your clients from your other placement and that was just like I couldn’t [laughs] I can’t tell you how angry that I was because ok do you realise how much it’s going to cost me and even if I come I don’t know if you know my clients may fell sick and I may have one client and fly all the way from Sw
P: yes its not ten it doesn’t take ten hours but yes it does take all day to fly back and forth

INT: Mmm

P: So I was basically and a lot of things throughout that stage I I failed one of my coursework because of all these you know I wasn’t myself um and I also think that all these things that happened to me were a consequence of the first year. My bad experience with whatever happened.

INT: How do you mean?

P: You know the experience I had with my supervisor in the first year um because that it was throughout the end of my first year and I’d just started the second year so I was desperate to find a placement and I got this one um with this horrific supervisor so it just and the university even had decided to give an extension after the compliant I’d filed because I think maybe they saw a different side to what was really what went on

INT: Mmm

P: and they couldn’t really they didn’t give me my hours but that you know I was under so much pressure for a whole to get my twenty hours that she basically failed the hours that I needed

INT: Mmm

P: and um I think this last experience made me I guess it doesn’t really matter anymore if its yes I’ll be very careful I’m not going to explicitly go after male supervisors but actually I will be really careful about I’ll check you know I’ll check there backgrounds and how old they are [laughs] how much experience are they doctors or are they I mean its pathetic but that’s just Its not pathetic but it that’s..

INT: So seeking those things to as a way of trying to prevent any future difficulties future problems?
P: Yes yep but I think you know this experience has shaped me um into a very
I suppose I can’t deny it the scars are still there and I do talk about it a lot in
therapy and um my therapist actually did we’re going to do some EMDR in
therapy because but that wasn’t just because of this supervision but for a lot of
other stuff that went on as a result of the courseworks and um it clearly had a
real impact on me and again you know I just its made me even this year I
wasn’t able to open up with my supervisors because I would think and this led
me to be very harsh on myself you know in my work with clients and in terms
of my interventions sometimes I think they’re utter crap and and my
supervisor now he’s just yeah he’s very nurturing and and my other female
supervisor they’re both older as well so that I think that is important to me
INT: Mmm. I was going to ask I asked a few sort of demographic questions
earlier
P: Yeah
INT: Um and yeah we talked about the sex of the supervisor or the gender of
the supervisor ??? but age would be another important one for you?
P: Mmm Yeah I seek out people who are a bit older I suppose you have been
in the profession for a very long time because none of these people seem to
have you know I mean this whole experience has made me doubt myself
seriously
INT: Mmm
P: And I think someone who can abuse their power in such a damaging way
towards a trainee they don’t realise what an impact in can have really
INT: Mmm. What is power for you?
P: power?
INT: yeah notions of power in supervision?
P: Um I guess overstepping your boundaries without overstepping your
boundaries knowing acknowledging you are doing it and I guess do whatever
that you want to do um knowing that you can you mean what this word power
means to me?

INT: Mmm

P: Yeah, um

INT: in the context of supervision

P: Yeah overstepping your boundaries, playing psychological games because
you know what you’re doing you have the knowledge or um yeah

INT: have the knowledge because of

P: Because of you know I guess the number of you have the experience you
have the knowledge you’re an expert in the relationship so you know exactly
what to do to manipulate the person or you know you can find ways to to
damage them

INT: Mmm

P: And I guess again I don’t want to be a victim in this whole situation
because I think I’ve learnt a lot from it and one thing I’ve learnt is is that you
know qualifying soon I think its important to recognise your own power but
but to use it in a suitable and good way

INT: Mmm

P: and I would never ever in my life do what they did to me to the trainee to
any human being. That to me does not ah that’s one thing I’ve basically been
able to I’ve been able to see it and and realise that that’s the worst thing I
mean it can be so damaging

INT: Mmm

P: it really can

INT: You talk about um coming up to qualification soon um being mindful of
your own power I wonder if if you feel believe that trainees have power or is it
something more that you acquire once you’ve qualified or?

P: I think I think trainees do have power in the sense that we see clients so then we are in a position of power when we conduct research we’re in a position of power

INT: Mmm

P: because um then you know a lot of the times yeah I think as a trainee you are but then it’s different because once you’ve qualified then you know especially if you’re doing I suppose a doctorate or a any kind of qualification when you get your then that’s a different kind of a I suppose the title that you get is quite puts you in a powerful position

INT: Within the profession or?

P: Within your profession yeah

INT: Mmm

P: and also within the wider society I would think so being mindful of not of always retaining that sense of humanity and to think that just because I suppose you’re a psychologist you can yes you probably do have a lot of power in terms of even the knowledge that you have I know the word knowledge keeps coming up [laughs]

INT: Mmm

P: But to be able to use it in a useful way.

INT: Um with spent some time talking about power and supervision, is there anything else that you would like to talk about or raise?

P: I guess I wanted to say that this experience has also sometimes I think I said it before but um made me yeah not trust authority but also be very closed and so sometimes you know but I’m starting to open up now but I wouldn’t be myself in supervision I would just constantly be on guard

INT: Mmm
P: and look for a look out for cues [laughs] or nything that would potentially
you know I would have this I suppose thought that oh my god what if he calls
up the university you know like on what grounds why would he call you know
its not even going to cross his mind but what if he thinks I’m completely you
know crap um
INT: Who who are you talking about?
P: My supervisor you know in supervision
INT: Ok sorry yeah
P: um so this is these are the scars basically that’s left you know I’m working
on it in therapy
INT: Mmm. Well I appreciate you participating in this and the opening up that
it involves so um thanks very much
P: Yeah we’re done great.
INT: Ok so the first question I wanted to ask was can you describe for me how you have found your experience of supervision in your development as a counselling psychologist?

P: Mmm Um I’ve had a lot quite a few different placements so different experiences of working with supervisors um my first experience was wasn’t great to be honest it was a group supervision um at a um university student counselling sort of placement um and I’ve had and if I was sort of to run through the different types of placements I’ve had

INT: Mmm

P: go back to the beginning would that be ok?

INT: Yeah that’s fine yeah

P: um so that was a group supervision with a counsellor a senior counsellor there and um then I ran a second placement at a hospital at an end stage renal unit with a clinical psychologist as a supervisor um and I’ve worked for a couple of years in an NHS PCT counselling service providing counselling to the whole of a geographic area

INT: Mmm

P: where I have an external counsellor um qualified as a counsellor supervisor

[laughs]

INT: Right

P: And um I’ve also worked in a learning disability unit with a counselling psychologist so I would firstly have to say that they were all different experiences INT: Mmm

P: to each other um and how its affected my um identity I guess when I’ve my first two years I had um the group supervision at the UWE you know counselling service
P: And you know I was really quite excited about the idea of group supervision. I thought it would really fit with you know out there sitting with other people supporting each other and big ideas about it um but and really looking back I was really very affected as I think most people are by the fact that it was my very first year of training I didn’t know what to expect and um I was in that position of looking for an expert to help me and um and everyone I was the only counselling psychology trainee there

P: Um and you know initially that didn’t make a difference but ultimately I think it did and I was sort of differently trained or um had a um the training is quite intense so I felt like I learnt a lot

P: and then in my second year when I began to try and share in the group what I learnt I found my supervisor had I had changed I think and my supervisor had she wasn’t particularly good in the first year now that I look back but in the second year

P: She would actively put me down in the group say you know she didn’t agree with what I was saying and um and I mean the power dynamic of that was you know I was I mean I guess what helped and didn’t help was that I’m a mature student so I had a woman not much older than me um being very bullying and I really didn’t like that at all but I was I didn’t feel I was in a position to do anything about it. So I suffered quite a lot actually and I spoke to my tutors here um so it also didn’t help that it was at UWE so it was you know it became difficult to complain about um

INT: Because of um within the same organisation in a way
P: yeah I think so you know it was um I mean I was encouraged by my tutors
to stand up for myself and actually what I found was um that her bullying was
so great for people in this group and she was very she became very off hand
and she would we were in her room and her computer she left her computer on
so that the binging if the emails came in and in the middle of things she would
go check and come back um and you know be paying any attention to the
group

INT: Mmm

P: and some of the, in the second year we had two first years in our group
different counselling training would be crying and highly anxious and she
would say we can’t bring that stuff here

INT: Mmm

P: And I found that you know I found the whole thing you know could be
pretty traumatising actually for people and um I became quite angry about it
and what would happen with these people who looked to me in the group was
they would talk to me about it outside of the room but not speak up in the
room so I found that in the end I couldn’t really tolerate it but when I tried to
complain she sort of manipulated very cleverly manipulated the situation into
something else and like you know there was something wrong with me and I
was new in my training and I didn’t know what I was talking about

INT: Mmm

P: that there was a um clash of personalities and ah which you know is a very
poor thing for a counsellor to say and not explain [laughs]

INT: Mmm

P: But she didn’t actually manage to um whats the word you know by me
getting angry so I was pathologised by being angry

INT: Mmm
so and and the other people in the group didn’t feel they could stand up

INT: Mmm

to her and

INT: You felt you could or?

Well I didn’t actually at the end I don’t if I had any choice whatsoever because it was a completely intolerable

INT: Mmm

situation and and in in that being new and in training and stuff also that wasn’t supporting my client work nobody had their client work supported that is why I complained in the end was that though it was intolerable for me um you know ultimately it was entirely unethical situation where we weren’t being our clients weren’t being supervised

INT: Mmm

So I went to her boss um [laughs] and um you know I’ve I we suggested different ways that we could work and in the end um they decided that I could choose to have a different supervisor but on my own and the group were told that I’d abandoned them and I was told by this woman that you know I was doing a terrible thing

INT: Mmm

to them so um

INT: So it was put on you you in a way

Yeah it was all sort of turned back on me

INT: Mmm

and she didn’t and she didn’t like that um what didn’t also help was I was doing a project my third year project using their the counselling service

INT: Mmm

um so she was supposed to be helping me with that so there was some dual
role going on um that you know I to be you know she she brought that up and I’m not sure I think that’s another distraction from you know ultimately she would talk a lot about herself in the hour sessions. We have two hours four of us um you know I had at that time I had six clients and people have between four and six clients so and it was every other week so you know that’s not a great deal of time

INT: Mmm

P: to be bringing, it might have been every week actually now that I think about it, but still not a great deal of time to you know do that. And she would spend great deals of time talking about her terrible life

INT: Mmm

P: and how somebody became pregnant in our group and she spent a great deal of time saying how she couldn’t have children and how sad she was about it she couldn’t talk about her pregnancy it the group it was

INT: Mmm, lots of no no talking zones in a way yeah?

P: Yeah yeah and you could easily be tripped up by those as well so you know my my sort my sort of style I suppose is I sort of through myself into this group um and then you know ultimately people felt like they can talk about anything and if they did they were told um that she expertly told them how to do it differently and better there was no support at all and I you know when I went I mean the group still would come to me afterwards but they wouldn’t complain um because of the power and being on a training course you know is adds a huge element I think you know if we were I don’t think it would be there at all if you I think ethical issues would be allowed to be sorted out but I think that interfered with um people feeling like they could speak up

INT: in what way what do you mean by that?

P: Um sort of like a school way I think um maybe the power of that maybe
there was two lots of you know power in the relationship that you know you
have to get to the end of have to get your hours its not easy to get placements,
if you get black, in your mind if you get black marked in a placement early on
which is what I felt like was going to happen to me and you know it sort of did
[laughs] in some ways, then um you know what did that mean for the rest of
your training, how would your tutors react to that as well
INT: Mmm
P: so you had you know you had had management in one camp and maybe
you know a part from my personal history would lead me to believe that I
would get punished everywhere you know for then I might get punished but
my tutors were actually quite supportive to be fair
INT: Mmm
P: ah but maybe other people’s in that room maybe they weren’t so supported,
I don’t know but I did feel like you know supervision wouldn’t be the same if
you were out of training I think perhaps you might feel you have more
personal I do feel that now
INT: Mmm
P: in my supervisions because I’ve had some awful experiences and now I
think you know from that and having done that I feel I’ve put the clients first
and that’s what I’m going to continue to do and if that um you know upsets
supervisors then I’m not sure that’s about me necessarily you know
INT: Mmm
P: I would just have to fight to have that you know I would want somebody to
have probably be there for me so that I can be there for them you know its not
possible to do the work without it I don’t think
P: its just such a key element an impossible to sort of ethically have anything
without that so um
INT: So that must have made it quite difficult for you then to, you said you
had six clients and um didn’t feel like enough time within which to sort of get
support for that
P: Absolutely
INT: And within that time you felt that it wasn’t enough support being given
by her it was a lot of focus was on her rather than on your clients
P: Yeah there was a lot of focus on her and there was her as the expert and it
was it was sort of it it is very difficult to build up the confidence in yourself
I think initially its very deconstructing process counselling training and you
know you need a bit of help to keep the reconstruction bit of it and she was
just completely dismissive of you know she she what she was doing was right
and you know so a few of us suggested something and I mean I once
suggested ah people were saying well you know I can’t get my head around
this client and I’m not sure where to go or what clinical work to do whatever
INT: Mmm
P: Um and I’d had been I had done some formulation training and its its done
quite relationally its sort of here and my you know I’m there I knew there was
some feelings in the in some parts of the counselling world that it wasn’t a
good you know the word formulation I think scares people but anyway I
brought in the um wers caresers sort of in a way looking at things and um you
know I never thought I thought she was going to have a fit in the room you
know she went sort of bright red and said of course you don’t have to do and
people would go other people that you know were saying oh it was a bit like
actually they look to me and they’d stopped looking to her and you know that
had a kind of annoying for her and it wasn’t right at all but I think they trusted
me and they didn’t trust her
INT: Mmm
P: Because of how she treated them and I think they thought even though I was early on in my training I was a better bet and um you know it was pretty uncomfortable for me being in that position but you know I’d felt like I didn’t want to let people down in my group either but um

INT: Mmm

P: Some of then you know that sounds really useful and I wasn’t saying it was right or wrong or whatever I just suggested it um you know really

INT: So you were bringing in um bringing in some of your previous experience in to to offer it to your colleagues

P: Yeah that’s what I thought. Group supervision was about people sharing fears feelings and experiences and clinical um you know something that worked for them because we used to present clients you know and then sometimes you could present a client and actually be very humiliated by the response from the supervisor and um

INT: Could you give an example?

P: Um well there were quite a few incidences but um I don’t know because it was a little while ago now but there was um she would quite often bring in transference sort of stuff that you know it is a part of she was quite psychodynamic I think psychoanalytic

INT: Hmm

P: Um and we were all different, people had different somebody was humanistic I who you know had a broader range of um stuff and at that time I suppose you know I hadn’t really decided where I was going with my identity but you know I was trying things on and trying things out and

INT: Mmm

P: Um so you know I was happy to take it all in um but I you know distinctly
remember people breaking down in tears after you know sort of maybe being
told what they were doing was wrong or it had been you know could that have
possibly have harmed the client I mean that’s a really devastating thought
when you’re new I remember that distinctly you know that I didn’t want to do
any harm I mean I possibly when you’re starting out you may not do a huge
[laughs] deal of good well not good um clinically your very new in that so
that’s something that you build up

INT: Mmm

P: but I’m pretty sure nobody did any harm you know but that was the
suggestion you know that we might of, she was very perhaps she was very
hard and her style was just really destructive you know

INT: But that description of doing harm is that felt quite extreme for you or?
P: Mmm yeah yeah I think you know I distinctly perhaps that is where I
distinctly remember it sort of thinking you know just not being sure of really I
wasn’t supported in I wasn’t wholly sure whether what I was doing was
actually I do remember one I had a client um quite early on who had been a
victim of she’s a mature student who had been a victim of domestic violence
and um you know I was quite new on and I mean maybe I shouldn’t have been
allocated her because you were you know there was a process gone through
before you got the client to make sure they were you were of the right level of
training um to have this sort of person but um so but you know I did my best
with that client and um you know I remember many suggestions that perhaps I
should have her and ah you know perhaps she would have been better off with
some one more experienced but that wasn’t my doing

INT: Mmm

P: um and I had to I had a bereavement in the middle of one year and um an
unexpected sort of bereavement so I had another client at that time who was he
was quite he it was short term therapy so um he was he was a bit odd and I was struggling with him um and he was sort of alluding to stuff and not talking about it, anyway he um she said I’ll give him the choice if he wants to wait coz I was only going to be away a week or so um or allocate him to someone else. And she took him on as a client and then kept insinuating to me that he was doing much better with her and I mean this was highly unethical anyway even talking about a client with me when I’m not her supervisor

INT: Mmm

P: I didn’t ask her what was happening I didn’t even know she had taken on this client until she had told me about it and it was sort of like well you know well don’t allocate me the client if you don’t think I’m capable that’s fine so lots of instances like that. The one time that I did really need help was I had a client who I felt had a psychotic break and um she was talking to me about it and I was feeling about of my depth so you know it’s a highly ethical sort of issue so I looked for some emergency supervisory support and I um they eventually got round to talking to me about a week later

INT: Mmm

P: Um and we just very it was even her it was someone else and they said oh you know that moments passed now it will be alright carry on so I carried on with this client but at at that point I really don’t feel I had the level of training to um understand how to work with somebody with a who either had or might have with me a psychotic break so

INT: Mmm. When you say level of training do you mean um learning different theories or experiences with clients or?

P: Both I think really I mean by that point I’d had very little experience with clients. Also hadn’t had any training on um on that sort of type of um you know there’s a lot of fear involved when people talk about that and which I
don’t feel so much now because I have much more understanding of it and
I’ve worked with people with it but you know at that point that was when I
perhaps thought I might be doing harm because I didn’t I really really didn’t
feel like I had the level of training for that but nobody would listen to me so I
carried on with her. Fortunately she didn’t have anymore psychotic breaks and
I did as much research as I could into supporting me being with her but um I I
don’t think I did any harm ultimately now but you know it didn’t seem right to
me at all at the time

INT: Mmm

P: So that’s my first experience of supervision [laughs]
INT: yeah ok. What other experiences would you like to talk about?
P: Um I guess from my first experience I sort of I mean I did stood up to this
woman in the end but still what I was left with from that was um that you
know what happened actually after that was they decided not to take
counselling psychology trainees so you know for me there can’t be any
coincidence that perhaps they don’t feel ready to have a counselling psycho
coz I was different to other trainees who’d had different counselling trainings
um I was much more you know I was sort of maybe I was trained and I was
more you have to be a more mature student as well to even enter the course
although I’m a little bit more mature than most [laughs] but um certainly you
know there were lots of people my age and younger so you know maybe I was
much less likely to take any crap and that sort of thing

INT: Mmm

P: I just felt I was too long in the tooth to be bullied by anyone um and I didn’t
expect to find it in that environment um but it it drew me to wonder a bit about
who you’re supervised by and how your training you know how are we
training which is a bit mysterious to some other people or other areas perhaps
and how that influences you know and the year of course the year that you are
in of training you know influences how you might experience power in my
you know when I look back

INT: Mmm

P: um but I’d had to make a stand at a very early stage in my you know in my
second year I thin after that well if I have to make a stand I hope that I don’t
[laughs] in the future but um

INT: So you felt that there was something about that your counselling
psychology training you are undertaking which was difficult for them in some
way mysterious for them and in your in your trying handling the situation your
age was something that came into it of not wanting to put up with that?

P: Yeah I do think that

INT: Mmm

P: um I’d also had something that came into my mind just then um that I feel
you know rightly or wrongly I don’t know about this but I think um that she
was her training was threatened by my with my level of training was going to
be end up in a higher position perhaps then hers and you know that’s not
anything I don’t think I was demonstrating and was very new and was looking
for help um but ultimately I wonder if her um you know there was some
professional jealousy about the fact that I was going to because she did
introduce me as once to someone when I was out in the coffee shop so I don’t
even know who this person was oh this is {participant name} she’s one of the
new kids on the block you know a trainee in counselling psychology and that
but she didn’t say it [laughs] in a very nice way

INT: Mmm

P: It was sort of like she thinks she’s better than me sort of a way [laughs] and
um I thought why would somebody do that you don’t even have to introduce
me she could have just said hello or this is {participant's name} she works in
the counselling service um so you know these things you know added up for
me and my you know at the end of the you know what I had to learn to survive
in that placement was um that and you know I was helped by the course here
and my own counselling which was mandatory fortunately um was that um
you know I can only ever be fifty percent part of that relationship you know
that it it because I think there’s a tendency to take it all on

P: And she was certainly setting up that scenario that it was somehow all me
and refusing to acknowledge her part and she wrote me an awful end of report
she had to do a report for me and it was at best mediocre. I was pretty sure I
was trying really hard but you know I didn’t get any points for trying hard I
just sort of got pathologised in this report

P: through stuff in there she’d brought up um that we’d had in our confidential
discussions sometimes stuff comes up like if you’ve suffered a bereavement
yourself how you managed it. So I’d you know been talking about it and she
anecdotally taken bits out and said this is why she has a problem with this so
this was confidential stuff and when I questioned her she said nothing is
confidential in supervision

P: So its like you know being able to create your own stick to beat someone up
with I didn’t feel like that was a particularly clever and I I really made me
think I don’t like the behind closed doors aspect of supervision or counselling
you know I um you know I like the counselling psychology perspective of um
you know things being not hidden

INT: Mmm
P: um and out there and being able to account perhaps for the stuff based in research and keeping yourself up to date so that you can’t become you know so you won’t make a megalomanic in your department sort of thing so it’s all quite helpful [laughs] in hindsight but you know not at the time but um

INT: I wondered in terms of you talking about counselling psychology that um you feeling like it being training as a counselling psychologist being something mysterious for her and for them

P: Yep

INT: and you referred to as well about sort of the training you’re doing ending up being higher in a way and sort of professional jealousy

P: Yep

INT: What do you see counselling psychology as being or as being as they perceived it as being?

P: What do I think they perceived it as being?

INT: Mmm

P: Um I don’t know I felt slightly confused by it I knew that something was going on but I’d had been other people had who as psychologists said that they’d experienced um professional what they thought was a professional jealousy about the fact that um you know it’s a higher level of training perhaps a doctorate level of training INT: Aha

P: Which you know it is the highest I suppose level of training that is true um but it’s a training you have to go through to become a counselling psychologist um so I really hate power you know I’m sort of quite passionately you know its one of the things I like about the counselling psychology is that they pay a lot of attention to power and its influence

INT: Mmm
but you know I don’t know I don’t know if I can answer that can I what I personally think is that she was um thinking actually I remember now something she said to me was that um there’s a woman who got promoted as a senior in the department we were in and this woman who’s a was my supervisor was also a senior counsellor and she said to me one day see that woman over there who I’d never met her before who just got promoted she said um I supervised her so there’s hope for you you know you might over take me and so I don’t think I was imagining it really I think there was a fear in her that um and a reality in some ways that I would overtake her

INT: Mmm

Um or perhaps I perhaps she thought that I thought I was better than her um and you know she might have thought that ultimately because I was so annoyed with her that I couldn’t I didn’t take her crap and I don’t think she liked that either

INT: Mmm

So but I didn’t I never at no point did I think I was better than her um I think um you know quite honestly I could have run a supervision session better than her with no training whatsoever so um you know in some ways perhaps [laughs] perhaps I was holding ideas like that

INT: Mmm

You know that’s just out of sort of disgust really with what was going on but I think there was with her in particular that going on and you know I have sometimes I haven’t I didn’t find that in my current, well I’m just finishing with a supervisor actually and starting with a new one um but I had two psychology, psychologist supervisors who I experience very differently to her

INT: Yeah

Um it was like they understood perhaps [laughs] the training I was going
INT: Yep, so do you feel that makes a difference for the supervisors to to be aware of what the training involves as a counselling psychologist or?
P: Yeah I think probably its quite crucial to be honest that and I don’t that it its happening um I mean counselling psychology is not it’s a sort of hybrid really in a lot of ways, you have a counselling training and then um you know that can be a bit confusing initially I think because you think you’re becoming a counsellor when you’re becoming a psychologist, so the latter years of your training seem to be much more about being a psychologist and the early years are about um learning the counselling side of it um. So you know it probably would have been difficult for me to explain you know and I did try in some places to explain what a counselling psychologist was but I think really probably had an idea myself, and I think it’s different for everyone, you know everyone that I’ve met has a different idea and a different identity that they’re you know still forming usually

INT: Mmm

P: um so yeah I think it would be much more helpful. And the fact that they’ve decided to just not have counselling psychologists um makes me more suspicious about what’s going on behind closed doors if they don’t want to be accounted for and they don’t want to have people question them then um you know I don’t think that sounds like a very safe place. It was a very unsafe place. I recently met up with the people who were in this group that I was in who feel exactly the same now as they did then

INT: Mmm

P: And one of them stopped counselling training. I think it’s through this woman’s treatment of her. Told her not to bring her anxiety to the counselling you know to the supervision. Where else are you going to bring your
counselling anxiety I mean that’s, anyway

INT: So what did you what you say is, how has that experience shaped you do you think?

P: Um well would it be helpful to talk about my my other experiences in terms of power in how its shaped me now or you know I know that I was affected by that ah but in my second year I also had a second placement at an [particular ward] in a hospital with a Clinical psychologist who you know he was having lots of personal problems actually and um so I didn’t get as much supervision as I would have liked, in order, because it was an entirely new placement and I’d never experienced anything like that before. And what I would be doing is um going to hospital beds with people who were on dialysis. I did very little actual counselling you know with all of the boundaries in place, in fact I had two clients I could counsel like that everyone else either in a hospital bed for a half hour or so you know it was useful in its own right but it was it was a very sort of unique sort of specific to that particular ailment. So this guy wasn’t there um and people would regularly die actually and so you know there were some pretty traumatic aspects of, and at one point I asked if I could have I think it had been in a moment of desperation I asked him if I could have proper supervision and from that point he started pencilling in times and made sure and he gave me his home details and said you know if he ever wasn’t there and I needed to talk through something and so it was a bit more supported after that

INT: Proper in the sense of being available and actually having times allocated or?

P: Yeah you know that sort of came out when I was talking to him and I through I had a lot of anxiety about you know there were so many procedures in hospital that have to be gone through um I was so new I just needed, I was
only in one day a week as well, and he’d chosen that day so he could be there and he wasn’t often wasn’t there. So I think it was anxiety about everything I just felt I’ve got to hang onto him so he wouldn’t go away and I could ask him what I needed to ask him and if he wasn’t there I needed to know you know something drastic drastic things were all that happened [laughs] so you know where could I find him and I think that was probably what I was asking and I think he did hear that to be honest. Just before I started there his father died and it was a difficult personal time for him but instead of cancelling the placement he allowed it to go on. In hindsight it possibly would have been easier on him as well as me to have not gone with the placement. In the end it did give me good experience but it was another um you know it was a more traumatic experience on your second year of your course I thought you I know generally thought I would like to give that a go and then when I got there oh my god I don’t have the first idea about any of this and I could do something really wrong in this hospital

INT: So something about the uniqueness of that placement, of the boundary difficulties or issues and the hospital context but people dying as well

P: As well yeah I mean I knew it was end stage renal failure so um but he hadn’t really told me that people would be dying all the time and I would go in one week see someone and the next week they would be dead and I would sometimes find out by accident so it was sort of you know I actually managed I don’t know if I got used to it but I got used to the idea of it and that helped me manage um things and these people were very ill and they were very entitled to have counselling just because they were a year or so from death, you know what better time to try and have someone help them through that period of time so you know it is something I would think about doing in the future but supervision wise there was a strange, power ways if I think about
that relationship there was um it would be difficult to, I mean maybe at one
point I took the power in saying I want proper supervision. I didn’t feel like
um he had a really good understanding of what the training was and he had a
really good view of counselling psychologists actually he asked for one
INT: Mmm
P: And ultimately he left clinical psychology after I left and I think he was
becoming very disillusioned with aspects of it perhaps so he wasn’t really
wholly available so I just had to take from him what I needed in order to do
that placement so I don’t even, you know although there is, there’s always
power in those relationships its just hard work trying to have an audience with
him. So it was like I was chasing him [laughs] in that respect um and you
know he’s a nice guy um but I felt a bit maternal towards him which is a
weird, he’s the same age as me, but I thought you know maybe its something
to do with his losing his dad you know how someone that might have felt a bit
I don’t know. So that was a bit of an odd one
INT: What was the affect of that of those maternal feelings?
P: Did it affect the relationship? Yeah. I think it I think it I didn’t act
maternally towards him I don’t think um I didn’t see him much and he didn’t
seem to be you know psychologically available much um he was very sort of
flippant and jokey sort of quite quirky. I often thought about these things when
I wasn’t with him When I thought about it and I thought [laughs] he’s going
through a hard time I think I forgave him for actually not being a particularly
good supervisor you know in terms of had I of been able to write a script of
what I needed you know he almost certainly didn’t provide that but um it
wasn’t the same type of client work in the same way um people were very ill
and um you know a lot of the depressive symptoms were to do with the illness
rather than depression per se so I had a lot of learning there was a lot of
learning in that and then I relatively quickly got known by walking around the
hospital in the wrong direction quite often [laughs] and attending meetings
that he wasn’t going to and that sort of thing so you know that was ok I quite
liked that actually part of my part of why I kept in the programme if you like
when I think back to that people were looking to me as a psychologist um and
you know a hospital setting and I think that power that gave me a sort of
power with other or it gave me um credence

INT: You were seen seen in a way

P: Yeah I was seen you know who I was and my advice was asked and
respected for the level I was at sort of thing and I was taken seriously. That
was a very different experience to you know the one here where I was not
taken seriously at all so you know there have been at at that time I was
thinking I think I would prefer a psychology placement because I think
somebody would take me a bit more seriously

INT: Mmm

P: Um and that was only that was a six month placement and then I took on
another six month placement at a learning disability organisation NHS um
trust was in [particular location] with a counselling psychologist um and they
also had one of the only bug bares about that it was all very new to me
although I had have people in my family with learning disabilities but I learnt
that people are as unique in that arena as they are anywhere else and I think I
held a bit of an idea about that but they had a clinical psychologist who they
get paid to look after if you like in the same placement and things were set up
for her but I had to try and set things up myself so I was treated differently

INT: Mmm

P: But you know somehow I had a much better rapport with the counselling
psychologist supervisor um you know she was like I got on really
INT: Better than um the other supervisee or do you mean in terms of other supervisors or?

P: Yeah I think I did this is the um this is I mean probably not very ethically but she would sometimes talk to me about this, my supervisor, would talk to me about how clinical psychologists have it easy and it’s a day off and they still moan about it they don’t have it as hard as us so there’s some sort of weird solidarity going on which I don’t think I was really creating um but in the same way she was ignoring the fact that she wasn’t treating me as well as um you this other who they’re being paid to look after so she had a lot of sympathy for my counselling psychology trainee status but not being very aware that um you know she wasn’t giving me as much at this placement as she could um but and she was I never felt I never felt put down by her she was very supportive and um but she was also very finicky and reports were I didn’t have very much time or supervision over doing reports so I would try them and send them back to her and they would get sent back to me so I often felt like a bit stupid because I didn’t really know how to, I hadn’t been trained how to write a psychology report and um I did eventually by the end of that placement I had written a few that were she’d passed and I think probably that was you know I felt quite pleased [laughs] about that

INT: Mmm

P: yeah so that was you know I didn’t overly I felt less I did feel some power in that but I didn’t feel like it was abused um

INT: I guess that um I mean we’ve talked about power at different points but um maybe its we could more specifically address it. I wondered what notions of power in supervision you have, what that means for you?

P: Um well there’s no getting away from power in supervisory relationships. I think they I think that needs to be understood in the relationship um and that
hour you know my personal sort of um feelings about power in relationships
you know I think you have to be really quite mindful about what those things
mean to you in order to be aware of you might be what that might be doing to
the relationship and its really a very important relationship I think so important
for me to be able to be honest um and you know I think sometimes the power
element stops you being entirely honest about what’s maybe what’s happening
with a client. I feel like that is the mechanism that is somehow fouled up in
terms of you know if something is honestly is happening with your client but
you’re a feeling there’s some professional problem you know I can’t be seen
to be having this sort of problem at my stage or I might be thrown off my
course if I say something
INT: Mmm
P: um so the the dynamics of the power um you know acknowledging that
they’re especially if you’re meeting somebody for the first time you know a
new supervisor you sort of have a notion of breaking a supervisor in so
personally to you know to be able to get to a point where I do feel safe enough
to disclose whatever [laughs] I need to disclose about own work I mean for
example recently I’ve been feeling like I’ve been a bit interpretative with a
particular client and I came away from a session oh I told her exactly you
know what my thought was going on
INT: That caught you by surprise or?
P: It did it did and I you know and I actually didn’t like that and so I’m
finishing with one supervisor and starting with another and with the supervisor
that’s broken in I probably would have brought that that would have been a
place to sort of talk that over sort of thing maybe its to do with this client or
maybe its to do with me and is that how I want my identity to be and um so
with my supervisor I’m not sure if I’m going to be I might lose that
P: You know I might just be you know I have thought about it myself and I tried something different with this particular client and I haven’t been watching you know I don’t think there’s anything wrong with being interpretative at times but um you know not I didn’t think I was a wholly interpretative person you know so those are the sort of things I think you need to have the trust in the relationship in order to feel like um you know you are not going to be maybe going back to this earlier supervision being told that you’re wrong or punished or something for um just trying to get an honest sort of discussion you know so I think I’m probably a bit fearful um about what a new supervisors going to be like now

P: Having broken my old one [laughs] you know but um

INT: So power’s something that’s always it’s always present and its potentially can interfere with the honesty you feel you need to talk about your clients

P: yeah yeah

INT: And it’s something you talk about breaking them in so sort of over time a trust can develop where that power diminishes or?

P: I think it’s sort of you know building up the relationship with someone because its not a lot of time either to do that in I realised I’d had this supervisor who’s leaving I’d had for two years and I’d only in the past 6 months felt like I’d built up you know a level of trust that I needed with him um you know I had sort of been honest with her in the past and felt a bit punished and I think that’s do with the fact that we didn’t know enough about each other or our relationship wasn’t examined enough because you know you’re just discussing clients all the time um there’s there isn’t any there’s
very little other time to build up relationship with your supervisors my
experience I suppose. I think more attention should be paid to that
INT: Yeah I guess coz you um ah I guess one of those earlier experiences
talking about how you felt like time to talk about clients was sort of pushed
out the way and supervisors not being there for you to get the support with
clients for um but there’s also it seems for you as well having time to spend on
the relationship
P: Mmm
INT: Having time to talk about clients so to get to know each other
P: Yeah yeah I think
INT: Not that that’s a contradiction but a sort of a
P: No no to some degree I mean the longer you spend with each other when
you’re talking about the clients aspects of yourself come out so you do get to
know each other a bit through that but mostly but you know that’s
professionally getting to know each other its not I mean not that you should go
round to people’s houses and have parties and stuff [laughs] but I just really
sort of you know and I I guess I do have issues with trust um I worked in um a
big organisation I had to leave very drastically because um I whistle blew on
somebody who was doing something awful to a child and then I was ostracised
so I you know have a lot of I’m likely to carry on if I see something like that
but I mean the consequences for me have been quite huge so um you know I
think perhaps maybe I personally worry about that I mean I think about these
things more and I know that there in um and I’ve had it with my new
supervisor I’ve had an hour meeting with her where we just disgust us um and
how we’re going to work together and she asked me about my background
INT: Mmm
P: Um so you know I’m I think she has a little sense of me um but we are
likely now to spend all our time talking about clients you know quite rightly
sort of thing um yeah but there’s something in that something so crucial in
that exchange for me about um you know if you can’t be honest because you
know you lack the trust or you fear the retribution there’s this particular
supervisor who’s external to the organisation the NHS I’m working for they
are paid by the NHS but so they are not as external as they think they are um
so they don’t really answer to anyone it took me a long time to believe I
suppose that she wasn’t one going to head back to the organisation and say
you know [participant’s name] is a bit of a head case I’m a bit worried about
her or whatever she talked to her supervisors also nothing to do with the you
know if she had some concerns I guess um so you know supervisors are there
or should be there to support you in doing your work but I guess part of me
doesn’t believe has had experiences that have led me to believe that is not
always the case so you know I just really seek out being able to have this
honest sort of place where clients can be safe in um so I want somebody to tell
me you know I might go off the boil about you know that sort of Jahari
window sort of thing what I want from the supervisor is just to tell me what
I’m not seeing you know that’s that’s quite hard sometimes but for me that’s
entirely what safety is about in terms of safety for clients um so if you hide
that coz you’re considering or they don’t give you that because you don’t have
the relationship enough to to do that or I can’t accept it coz there’s not enough
trust and then I feel it’s something punishing

INT: Mmm

P: Then that’s how that’s co crucial I think in the relationship but um then
there are different styles of supervision as well I’ve recently been doing some
training on that but ah I don’t know perhaps it’s very individual as well for me
this is what I want um
INT: You’ve alluded to differences in terms of um between supervisors in terms of being a counsellor or a counselling psychologist or clinical psychologist um have there been have you experienced any differences in terms of approaches or?

P: Well um I Guess I’ve experienced group and individual supervision so that would be the majority you know I haven’t really experienced any great mostly it’s been me who’s set the agenda um which you know in some ways is a bit dangerous because I not dangerous sorry that’s a bit of a drastic word but with this supervisor I’ve just left with I went in and after my experience of having a supervisor who wouldn’t give me any time I went in and said um this is I had an agenda written of what I wanted to go through um and she went okay we’ll go along with that sort of thing so you know I haven’t I haven’t been um presented with would you like to have supervision this way I’ve tended to go in and say I need to talk about these clients and that was my anxiety I think so wondering now in talking about it if that took away time from what might have been time for the relationship building

INT: Mmm

P: but I think it’s a difficult sort of balance really very little time um you know and in the PCT very needy clients as well they’re primary care and you know I would say fifty percent of our clients are suicidal and I’ve had to very high sort of level of risk so you know finding out about each other seems far less important than making sure that clients are safe while doing the right thing with them um and mostly I find I’m being supported in doing I have a much better idea these days of what um or I have a much better sense my internal supervisor if you like so I don’t look to an external supervisor as an expert anymore that has changed

INT: Mmm
P: and so that’s bound to have an impact as well I think

INT: Mmm I was going to ask in terms of um I wondered in what ways if any
has being a trainee influenced or been influenced by those experiences

P: Massively I think

INT: Yeah

P: Really massively. It’s only now that you know in my fourth after the end of
my third year we’re sort of qualified as counsellors so we’ve our own
university will issue us something to say what training we are equivalent to
um so I’ve felt since then perhaps I’ve um you know in my counselling
placements in particular that um I’m um qualified to be there [laughs] or
something or taken a bit seriously because I’m qualified to be there because
it’s quite a strange position as a trainee I think where you are training for so
long um well in ours actually you’re training for five years and you’ve sort of
exceeded levels of training and levels of hours that other counsellors they are
they can apply for jobs that you can’t. I think that the view there’s just some
suspicion about you know what really are you at that level is it very different
training and I think for jobs you know as a counsellor and explained my
position as a trainee counselling psychologist you know its been but I’m not
sure I haven’t gone for any jobs actually [laughs] but I wonder if I do wonder
about that

INT: Mmm because you haven’t been awarded a the qualifications your
equivalent of but haven’t actually received a

P: Yeah yeah you see most people are still operating as um um for free in
placements because its there is quite a high um hours sort of I’m trying to
think of the word, because you need to have you know you have up to get four
hundred and fifty hours in in those years and in other psychology in the
clinical psychology you don’t there’s much more emphasis on different types
of aspects of being a psychologist um which even now when I qualify as a
psychologist I would really I would really like to have another psychology
placement but it doesn’t give the hours that you need so most people have a
counselling placement but that’s not really giving you any an idea about the
psychology side of the job um anyway as a trainee definitely definitely when
you first start off I don’t think you can get away from the new trainee
experience of um supervision you know the hanging onto the expert of the
some people on our course were already counselling, it possibly would be
different for them I think but just starting counselling training is a bit of a
roller coaster ride and um you know so I would have just accepted what this
woman was offering and thought it was right and um you know I didn’t
question it until the second year when I thought well you know hang on a
minute I’m not sure and it was something about her it wasn’t it wasn’t all then
to do with um you know I still needed some of those things but I just felt like
as a human being she was acting appallingly and abusing her power and her
position of trust and nobody knew and nobody would believe or do anything
about it so I’m still to this day disturbed by that
INT: Mmm
P: um and that she’s still in that position um but that definitely the trainee
status in every even now I mean I my supervisor who was just I’m just
 finishing with after two years in PCT she um made some offhand sort of
comment that I hadn’t really been aware of before about just being a trainee or
um you know what was I moaning about because I don’t do very many I don’t
see very many clients a week through choice at the moment I don’t need to to
get the hours and I have other commitments and so I don’t know why I’m
justifying it here really but um so it was you know your seeing four clients
what you making a fuss about you’re only a trainee and that was quite late into
our relationship where I didn’t think she’d or maybe I’d stopped viewing
myself so much as a trainee but it is also somewhere where it’s okay to make a
mistake I think and I made a few mistakes and got through those and I was
glad of my trainee status

INT: Mmm

P: Because you know its I think it’s a very privileged position to be
counselling and in that position of trust and also I would like to think that
when I am a supervisor I will be thinking the same about you know I think it
would be even more privileged position to be a supervisor supervising
someone with a client um and that I was sincerely have paid more attention
than this woman did you know yeah definitely so just recently I was reminded
of my trainee status by a supervisor [laughs] whether I needed it or not I don’t
know but ah I did feel it was a bit of a

INT: But trainee status has a positive and negative um influence on you in a
way

P: Mmm

INT: It allows you being a trainee you can make mistakes and its forgivable
or?

P: Mmm. Not so much now I don’t think in towards the 5th year but definitely
earlier on um I think probably you know I would hope now but I think that’s
sometimes more about um being in a placement for a period of time because
quite often even now I’ve had friends who’ve gone to a new placement as a
relatively experienced trainee counselling psychologist um and they’ve made a
few mistakes and they’re very hard on themselves because um at this level you
shouldn’t be doing that but I think that its probably more about learning about
the new placement and that can happen at anytime you know if I get a job
somewhere or a new placement somewhere else there’s a whole new learning
about that to be done um

INT: So in post qualifications you’ll come across being new for a period of
time or?

P: I think so yeah well each new job it’s the same I don’t psychologists are any
different to anyone else um in that respect but I think perhaps there’s a bigger
um feeling of responsibility to not be like that to somehow you are the expert
now as a trained psychologist people are looking to you but in my experience
of the counselling psychologists that I’ve met they are much more forgiving of
themselves it seems to be something you need to have um you know and I
think I’ve developed a bit in myself in order to withstand the work actually um
so I hope I manage to keep hold of that you know it doesn’t matter if you’re
training or not people make mistakes and you know your level of you’ll meet
something new and and that’s that

INT: Mmm. Um ok I guess there’s um I asked you a few questions at the start
P: Mmm

INT: and um I wondered if any of those you feel had an impact in terms of in
terms of your experiences of power be it age or being a woman or?

P: Oh like demographic type stuff? Um age yes and no I think well I think age
has been a positive and a negative sort of aspect um I think in some ways it
feels quite difficult to be this age and you know re-training um learning new
things and having to having counselling and going through you know there’s
something perhaps a little bit um I was going to say humiliating but that’s not
I mean I guess at times it can its I’ve experienced it personal counselling quite
drastically if you like and so you know a part of me didn’t expect to do that
this sort of time in my life I’m not terribly old but um I didn’t expect that from
the training so they’ve been parts of it that I’ve felt like my age has not gone
for me, are you meaning in the training or in the supervision relationship?
P: Ok well I think it must have had an impact on the clinical psychology guy and I’m pretty sure I wouldn’t be feeling maternal towards him if I was you know a lot younger actually and this this particular guy was very sort of flirty with people and stuff and I felt like I was a bit safer [laughs] if you like because I was older and he didn’t see me in that category so I think there were there were aspects of my age that helped me in maintaining a um enough of a supervisory relationship you know it personally helped me when I was thinking about these things I think um I think age has been my age has with my counselling psychology thing she felt like we were she was a bit younger than me that it might help with rapport actually because this clinical trainee was a lot younger and I think she felt she had much more in common with me INT: Mmm

P: And you know I did feel like it was a little bit unethical at times of her um it put me in a position I found but um so you know that would have impacted on that but this particular woman at the beginning I think it was hugely helpful in me being because no-one else in my group felt able to stand up to her and but in all honesty I had a very bullying mother and you know I felt like I could chew her up and spit her out really in terms of bullying [laughs] but it did make me very angry about um you know I have a lot of feelings about people bullying other people and I um I think that sort of helped me when I say helped me it didn’t feel great um but in retrospect you know I managed to maintain some ethical stance within a very unethical situation I thought you know I felt that taught me that I was really looking out for the clients um if I had been looking out for myself I would probably have just let it all go and moaned about it behind her back so maybe if I’d been a lot younger and not had the experiences I’d had I wouldn’t have done that so I think probably that
has I don’t know about being if I was a bloke would it have made any
difference um there aren’t very many blokes in the counselling you know in
any of the places that I’ve been so um it may have in terms of dynamics
whether this woman didn’t like me particularly and part of me being a woman
was part of that or I threatened her and I was the same sex as her sort of thing I
don’t know. So I think its bound all these things have an impact I think for
definite there’s no getting away from it um and in my ultimate sort of thing
I’m around about the same age as the supervisors and there’s just not ordinary
I think around about the same age and they’ve experienced twenty thirty years
of practice um so you know I sometimes feel then that they are trying to
separate out the affinity that we might have through being the same age and
being the same you know being grandparents and that sort of thing um and
then sometimes feel there’s a bit of separation well you know I’m really the
boss here sort of thing

INT: Mmm

P: um that relationship is you know because ultimately you know you do I’m
reporting to them I suppose

INT: Mmm. Ok

P: Any of the other dynamics you were?

INT: Um I guess the ethnicity your cultural background

P: Mmm well they’ve all been white middle class everyone that I’ve met that
impacts on me um in everywhere actually in that it’s a part of you know I
don’t really like but I don’t think this is very representative of the whole
population but I think you have to be realistic about that and um you know the
style of counselling that’s offered in a lot of places um is not going to fit every
cultural background so sometimes I’m presented with things where I’m sort of
glaringly aware that I’m an example of white middle class and lots of people
go into counselling [laughs] from that sort of background so um you know I’m part of the club in that way but I’m not terribly comfortable about that and um you know in the counselling psychology sort of in the training and stuff a lot of attention is paid to that type of thing you know and um what was I thinking of I can’t think of the word? The context that somebody was in and you know just because if somebody doesn’t want to come to your what you’re offering then perhaps you need to offer something different and as a you know once I’m trained I’m hoping that I can offer what’s needed rather than what’s always been

INT: Mmm challenge that in a way

P: on offer yeah yeah I don’t really like the sort of you know but you know we are who we are really aren’t we so I don’t think that’s born in mind as much as it could be but um yeah yeah so probably not in the relationships I’ve had I think it’s I think it’s been ignored or of the same

INT: It hasn’t been as different as to

P: Yeah to challenge her

INT: Ok well that’s sort of my main questions I need to ask I wondered is there anything else that you in talking about power and supervision that you want to feel you need to add?

P: Um I guess I just want to ask has that been what you were looking for [laugh] in your research and that I know I’ve sort of read that but is there anything else that’s in you know I haven’t really answered?

INT: Yeah well I guess um you know being qualitative research its something that I will go back and listen over and

P: Mmm yeah sure

INT: Um but yeah I guess I’ve got your sense of your experiences of supervision and where you feel power is coming into play
P: Yeah I think it’s with power I have some quite strong feelings about it really but I you know you can’t take it out of any situation and my son’s very perceptive actually and he interestingly quite recently he’s joined the 6th form in the same school he was in and he doesn’t think that the teacher that’s our um dealing with the shift in power that being a sixth former as to mandatory school cover if you see what I mean [laughs] it’s there as well it’s just everywhere I think he’s absolutely right actually but um you know I’ve a couple of times thought about storming up there and giving them the benefit of my psychological know-how but um that probably wouldn’t help but um so I like that it’s paid attention to but it’s I think its particularly I’m really quite concerned about it in terms of trainee counselling psychologists and supervision because it’s like there’s a double power problem with and you might also find people work in the university like I did you know that your course is in so there’s an organisational power problem there so anything that get’s in the way of direct honest sort of um contact really um

INT: Is a power

P: Yeah and a potential problem in terms of clients needs so um you know how that’s handled is just so sort of I think if you’re a supervisor and you know you have first year trainees um you know there’s a whole skill set that comes with managing that you know each stage is like you know how important is it to know what stage your supervisee is at in terms of their training and what that training is about so I think probably there’s more that can be done in relation to that

INT: I wondered you talked you said earlier about um you know in each relationship there’s a shared responsibility or a shared aspect to it and I wondered if you feel you have power or what your power is if you feel you have it?
P: In the supervision?
INT: In the supervision yeah
P: I feel it a bit more now well I think I did feel it when I was breaking out if you like [laughs] um don’t know actually that’s a bit of a strange question um I guess I’d feel maybe its something else as well I wonder because I guess I feel like I have a personal power of um voice and um that I would be prepared to speak up if something was you know I may need an opportunity to do that but um so you know its there are probably aspects other aspects of personality and like self esteem and that sort of thing but um are important in terms of feeling your feeling power in relationships I did you know I do feel like we the responsibility of you know there’s only fifty percent in the relationship but sometimes the power shifts over one way I think and um I’ve not felt anymore than half [laughs] the power in relationship with supervisor um you know with a client I think I probably have that’s different and with other people and other relationships but um
INT: What determines that you think then? Who gets the greater percentage?
P: Percentage what in all relationships or in the supervisory one?
INT: The supervisory one
P: Um well I think level of training for one sort of you know its almost like you would encourage for me encouraged the power because then you you lack the responsibility in some ways of um so you know if your supervisor has all the answers when you’re very new um you know have a great of personal anything really at that point and the deconstructive nature of counselling sort of training um you know in that first year I think that’s a really that’s a time where your supervisor can really abuse that power and you would let them and you may not even know it was happening um so
INT: So your greater vulnerability or?
P: Yeah I think yeah I think so and you know some supervisors may feel that
you have to be robust enough to do it but whilst you’re going through that
process I think you know a supervisor would be much better off being mindful
of that process um and being supportive
INT: Mmm what’s in that first year deconstruction do you think? What’s is
that because of therapy or? You’ve started this new thing or?
P: I think all of it I think mostly therapy probably um and because you know
seeing it’s a massive responsibility seeing clients and you know helping them
you know its not the same as I guess a lot of us probably came into it thinking
we were quite good with interpersonal skills and that we had helped a lot of
people um and you know really what I realised is that I’d advised a lot of
people and pushed my own thoughts onto a lot of people it was entirely
different to you know being there and thinking about what that you know or I
know I might have had some intuition but that’s not that wasn’t the whole
thing so I’d had very the skills I already had were very small
INT: Mmm
P: um and with the personal counselling um you know I was very resistant to
that to start off with I was being forced upon me and very quickly I realised
that without it I wouldn’t have been able to survive the first year or so of um
worrying about the first client whether I was harming them or you know
funnily enough I didn’t think about whether I was helping them much [laughs]
I just thought I didn’t want to harm them that was my first sort of instinct so
yeah so much anxiety happens in that initially sort of training in particular for
people who are starting the whole process um some people like I said on our
course were already counsellors and came in you know I would imagine in a
different place had the rigours of the course on top of what they were doing
but they were already comfortable enough to be doing the counselling because
you know you were scrutinised constantly so that ah you know there’s quite a lot of dynamics working at any one time so um so I think that defines it probably quite a lot the level of training um I think your personal um level of personal power would come into that as well which is usually has been a bit stripped away to start with and um that comes back and hopefully I mean I think with this lady that left the course I think she was pretty harmed by the whole supervision process and left and whether that was but then how that was interpreted was that that was some sort of test on her and she wasn’t good enough for it would be my belief was she was traumatised unnecessarily she may have left anyway but then she would have thought she left because she wanted to leave not because she was rubbish at it anyway um with power no I don’t even like it thinking about it power relationship. With my new supervisor I’ve been to see once and I think you know she was like a nice woman that’s as much as I know about her um and I’ve almost taken the power or perhaps I do feel like I have more power now like I am going in trying to get more what I want out of the supervision session um and initially I think I’m a bit be damned about it um but I think it will take a while to sort of settle where the power is you know when I my supervisor who I just finished with managed to exert her power at the very end of our relationship in a not particularly nice way um and I you know I guess I know it is always there but power how you manage it is the important part really but ah and then we all have different moods as well we’re all a bit up and down so a bit like client sessions I think when it works well then one you come away from feeling it hasn’t worked so well or so INT: In any given moment P: Yeah yeah so quite a moveable sort of feast but INT: Ok well thanks very much for everything you’ve shared today
INT: Ok so the first question that I would like to ask is um can you describe for me how you have found your experience of supervision in your development as a counselling psychologist?

P: Um I enjoy it more now than I did when I first started with it and at first I was intimidated by it um because I felt that I really didn’t know anything and um um I think that’s when the power came into it more because um you know it was like a teacher student rela well it is a student teacher relationship and um and I felt my own lack of knowledge um and lack of experience was a real hinderance and and contributed to that power imbalance

INT: A hinderence to?

P: To um to getting the most out of it to to um that feeling of um being able to ask questions, being comfortable, being able to be myself, all that kind of thing. And having said that I’ve found that each supervision group is very very different obviously because its different dynamics and different people so the power will come more in some situations then in others um

INT: Ok

P: I’m reminded of one supervision group where a power balance came from one of the colleagues, one of the supervisory colleagues who um was making a big fuss of the fact that she had been in supervision for years and I was a novice supervisee and and it got kind of unpleasant really, it sort of made me feel um a bit pathetic

INT: Aha

P: Um yeah

INT: So that feeling of being pathetic and um that power imbalance that was imposed from her

P: yeah yep not the supervisor um but um and so my my confidence in
supervision has changed enormously. I would not say very much and I would
just observe a lot whereas now I take part more um in another supervisory
group there were a lot of issues, so much so that the supervisor stopped
supervision for a while because the issues had of the group had overtaken the
supervision and we weren’t working in a productive way and that was very
interesting
INT: Mmm
P: And I don’t know if that was a facet of how this particular supervisor
worked because she’s a Kleinian but I don’t want to say well all Kleinian
supervisors are like that um but um she did have a way of making every new
supervisee to the group um fill very very uncomfortable and it wasn’t just my
experience it was others as well
INT: Mmm. Did you feel that it was just your experience at one point?
P: At one point but then you know we talked and there were others that felt
like that as well so it wasn’t mine alone and um she seemed to pick on me
particularly when we had this rupture in supervision and said she wanted me
to do a verbatim transcript of a one session I’d had that was over a month ago
and there was no way I could do a verbatim transcript. Obviously I couldn’t
even begin to do that
INT: Mmm
P: Coz I hadn’t written it down verbatim. If I’d known before the session that I
was to have to produce a verbatim transcript I could have done it um but there
was no way that I could do that so I I was set up for failure and I felt quite
persecuted
INT: Mmm
P: Um and in the end the supervisees spoke to the management and said we
were unhappy with the emails that we’d received from from her that felt quite
persecutory um and we had a talk about it in supervision, and she in turn felt quite persecuted because we had gone to the management but we felt we had no option um and the way that the balance of power sorted itself out was by very honest communication and there was a in a real shift after that and we’d all been able to say how we felt and how we experienced each other and I found that a very interesting ah process that happened really and in the end I I I got to quite like her and understand her a bit more and um I’ve recently gone back to get some things signed by her and she said that she liked and respected me and made a point of saying that so it was interesting to see that shift from ah it was a real learning curve for me.

INT: Mmm. Was that important for you that she respected you and recognised you and

P: Um yeah yes I think it was yes yeah. I think the lesson in it for me was about dissolving those projections that everyone in the room had um by the honest communication um and that sort of equalised everything and it was just, at that time it was only three of us the supervisor and two two of us supervises because people had left. And it um we were just three human beings in a room trying to sort out issues we had.

INT: Aha. Was that different to you said earlier about you were quite quiet initially because of the difference in knowledge, difference in experience

P: Yeah

INT: And just being three human beings

P: Yeah

INT: was that somehow a different experience or?

P: It was a very different experience because um suddenly it it wasn’t this tyrannical supervisor um and us underperforming supervisees and it just became three people who were having difficulties getting along, and getting
the work done.

INT: You make um you emphasised supervisor and supervisees

P: Yeah yeah

INT: Do you think those words do they have, are they powerful in some way?

P: Um that that depends very much on the supervisor and the supervisor’s style because some will be very authoritative and some will be cosy and chatty and um that just totally depends on their style um I had another supervisor who was great fun and you could sit and chat with her and it was a much cosier atmosphere um and I got another supervisor who’s bark is much worse than his bite, that’s my perception. And he’ll kind of I felt with him that he’s kind of testing me and if I stood up to him and he could see that I could take it he’d back off and stop doing that um and that was a balance of power too as well. I originally felt quite intimidated in that situation as well um.

INT: Mmm. So you said initially that um it’s changed over time for you your experience of supervision where you feel more confident now and more able to speak and what’s..

P: I think that’s lots of things. I think by virtue of doing a being on a counselling psychologist of course you’re going to change and you’re going to grow and I think I’ve become more confident in my skills as a counsellor although I have times when I think what on earth am I doing but I can see that it seems to work with with um my clients and I say that with a certain amount of awe and astonishment because its its such a mysterious process and um when it does work I think gosh how did that happen um um but I think I’ve I’ve changed and grown so much through the training um personally and also I’ve learnt more skills as I’ve gone on and on um so I I no longer feel, well I’m no longer the new supervisee green or behind the years or whatever that expression is [laughs] um so yeah its lots of things that have changed that
INT: Aha, so a personal development um and a build up of skills

P: Yeah

INT: Yep. And seeing the skills that you apply actually being affective with clients

P: Yes, yeah. And feeling that I can sort of hold my own in in a supervisory in a supervision group as well, which I didn’t necessarily think that I could before. And that’s that whole thing of feeling new you know that’s gone that whole sort of new inexperienced feeling. I mean I’m not, I’ve still got lots to learn and stuff but yeah.

INT: Holding your own what does that mean?

P: I think it’s almost a conscious decision not to be intimidated and um before it was quite easy for me to feel intimidated and um it’s a question of how much am I going to allow that to happen and not allowing it to happen. Um its almost like um there’s an interesting thing I read about, if someone sort of is projecting onto you that projection can only kind of hurt you if there’s somewhere it can take root in you, that kind of vulnerability, does that make sense?

INT: Mmm

P: And if there isn’t a place for it to land or to take root then you can’t receive a projection and that can be a projection of authority, intimidation, power that kind of thing, yeah.

INT: Do you also project, into them?

P: I’m sure I do but I don’t know it [laughs] yeah no I’m sure I do um but it’s easy to see other people’s but not your own

INT: So being able to..

P: Actually that’s interesting that that thing about do you also project because that’s changed as well is that that I think when I first started I was projecting a
lot about oh gosh these people are in authority over me and I’m this powerless um ignorant person you know and that that I don’t view it like that so much anymore. Um I don’t project this authority onto them in the same way I mean yes they are people I can learn from and they are more experienced then me but this the my projection of the power imbalance has changed as well if that makes sense
INT: So it that where sort of that sense of um holding your own
P: Yeah I think maybe it is
INT: Your own authority or something
P: Yeah. I mean I think I’ve always had slight difficulties with authority in that um when I was at school I was sort of either rebellious or fearful of other people in authority over me um so coming to university at a later stage in life has been quite interesting because I’ve had to work on that
INT: Hmm. Ok so its been over time your experience of supervision has has changed to a more um confident one, one where you hold your own um ah and how has that how’s that influenced your development as a counselling psychologist, the fact that that’s happened?
P: I think I’ve got to say when I hold my own, that’s in one particular supervisory group and that’s not to say that if I didn’t join another one with a different supervisor that I wouldn’t feel different because I think each group is very very unique and and it is all about individual relationships um so um I just wanted to add that. But I can’t remember the question now, how’s it contributed to my um experience as a trainee counselling psychologist. Um it makes me feel supported, it makes me feel that if I have a problem or with with a client or I I feel like I’m floundering with a client, I have somewhere to go to discuss it and get some illumination or some support, you know. I had one client who turned quite nasty on me in the end and I found
being able to talk about it in the supervision was quite helpful because um
you know this does happen to therapists quite a lot you know yeah
INT: So sort of normalising experiences or?
P: Normalising it, not taking it so personally yeah. Um so I see it as a place
for support and for help in seeing things that I can’t see and um and I think I
try to soak up as much as I can from it, in terms of the theory and um and the
experience of the supervisor, you know, I just want to absorb as much as I can.
It feels quite precious what he’s imparting I mean in one supervision group
now.
INT: So quite an important
P: Yes
INT: part of the the profession
P: Yeah I would hate to be a therapist without supervision I um and I’m not
sure therapists should be without supervision ever really um because it makes
me feel I’m working safely if that makes sense. Because there’s someone
checking my blind spots um and things like that
INT: Ok. Um the next question which you’ve referred to a little bit already but
can you tell me about your notions of power in supervision, what that means
to you?
P: Um I I think it’s automatically when you’re a trainee, it’s automatically a
place for the power imbalance and I’m surprised its not talked about more
actually and more of how to deal with it. I mean maybe it is somewhere but I
haven’t come across it. Um but um we’re not given advise about how to get
the best out of it or how to. I think it does something in the trainee counselling
psychologist handbook about about supervision and how to get the best out of
it but I think I think power is implicit in it because we are students, we receive
reports from our supervisors that go back to the university so essentially we
could get into trouble or we could fail um so they have a lot of power over us supervisors. And in fact that incident where I had difficulties with the other supervisor, I was scared at the time that she would go to the university and and cause trouble for me. And I wanted to leave the group and I felt I couldn’t because I would have been not completing my part of the contract and I very much felt the power at that point when things were at there worst. And I felt my only recourse was to speak to the management which is what I did. And that was me trying to redress I suppose the balance of power because I went to another authority

INT: Mmm, who I suppose had authority over them, her

P: Who had authority over her yeah. So that you know there was power all over the place [laughs]

INT: Yeah. So that sense of worrying that you would cause trouble in uni what did you mean by that?

P: Well um that that she would say that I was a bad supervisee, that I wasn’t fulfilling my part as a supervisee, that I was no good as a therapist, that, any number of things you know um I mean it didn’t turn out like that in the end & we developed a grudging respect for each other but it took time to get there

INT: Mmm. What impact do you think it had in terms of being in supervision?

P: What before it turned nasty or after?

INT: Um I guess wherever you’d like to

P: Before it meant I got nothing out of it, I just sat there hating the supervision process, wanting to get it out of the way, not getting any value out of it, dreading it was a weekly thing and I hated it, didn’t want to go there, didn’t want to be there, and then after I was able to say how I felt, what I thought, there was this shift in the power dynamic, and I began to enjoy it more and take part more and I think that’s where I got that holding my own
216 confidence coz I kind of knew that if I was ever in that sort of corner again I,
217 there was a way of sort of communicating my way out of it, if that makes
218 sense, I don’t know if it does
219 INT: It felt like a corner that you couldn’t get out of at some point
220 P: Yeah I felt trapped I wanted to leave. Um I couldn’t see a way of it being
221 resolved and yet it was resolved so that was a big learning process
222 INT: That such a thing could be resolved
223 P: Yes, yeah. So um and the other person who was in the group the same time
224 as me also wanted to leave and she’s still there now and so its obviously
225 shifted for her as well. And I left for no other reason than I didn’t need an
226 extra placement and I’d done my two years there so.
227 INT: So being um learning that you are able to communicate honestly in the
228 situation was um a transformative one
229 P: Yes it was actually yes yeah
230 INT: In terms of whether being able to work together
231 P: And I think think it was I mean often when there are these kind of
232 misunderstandings and difficult dynamics it is all, a lot of it is all these
233 projections isn’t it and I think the supervisor felt that we were projecting on
234 her this authoritarian sort of disciplinarian tyrannical kind of supervisor and
235 she just you know and we felt that she was projecting onto us incompetent,
236 useless this that and the other, it all got dissolved.
237 INT. Mmm. So I wonder if that she was a Kleinian, and you use the word
238 projection whether a theory of psychodynamic psychodynamic theory helped
239 you in a way to understand the situation, could you have seen in another way?
240 P: I suppose I could have seen it in another way I just happened to see it that
241 way um um ah could I have seen it another way, I don’t really know because
242 it’s become part of the way I think now so I I don’t know I think before the
training I would have said it’s a terrible personality clash and it was
absolutely no point in trying to shift it and I will just have to leave
INT: Mmm
P: um I would just put it down to personality clash um yeah
INT: Having been through the training, learning about different theories
P: Yes yeah I could see that we were all contributing and it wasn’t um it
wasn’t a question of proportioning blame or anything like that. It’s a question
of each person taking responsibility to be honest and truthful and effective in
their communication, yeah
INT: Mmm, so so power for you um is something about a person assuming
authority
P: Or me projecting that authority
INT: Yep
P: And I suppose at my age I should of, feel I should of got over authority
issues um but it as I say being at university has been a learning process for me
INT: I guess I maybe ask I was planning to ask you this more towards the end
but um I took some information from you about your age, ethnicity that sort of
thing and you’ve mentioned a couple of times is age sort of a part of it would
you say in your experience?
P: I think age is because I’m probably unusual on a training counselling course
in that I’m a little bit older or maybe even a lot older than a lot of people
on it, there’s some quite young people on the course as well, and um and I
suppose um it my age doesn’t necessarily mean I’m fully grown up yet and I
don’t have issues, which I have had to deal with on the training course, do you
see what I mean by that?
INT: So having to do the course you’ve come into contact with um not having
grown up yet in some ways, some vulnerabilities
P: In some ways, some vulnerabilities yeah

INT: which seem shouldn’t you shouldn’t have for your age or?

P: Well I think I THINK everyone does have them but whether they deal with
them or not is another matter. I think doing this training you have to um I
think that a lot of people out there are masquerading as grown ups who are not
grown ups, that’s my particular theory but yeah [laughs]

INT: So in terms of the supervision context in what what part do you think
that your age had in terms of how you experienced it. Like you talked earlier
about um authority, and I wondered if it was difficult to have someone in
authority at your age?

P: Um not necessarily because I’m not particularly ageist in the sense that I
thought oh to hell with what people think I want to do this and I’ll just have to
develop quite a thick skin about it and just go after what I want which is the
learning but um because I wasn’t academically strong at school um I sort of
messed it up a bit I didn’t have a good academic grounding and I didn’t have
good experiences with teaches and people in authority, I had to I had to deal
with certain issues, and I found myself either being over compliant and sort of
overly nice and overly passive and trying, taking too much responsibility or
absolutely furious and rebellious and I needed to find a middle ground where I
was um GROWN UP you know and and not not scared and intimidated and
not angry and rebellious, does that make sense?

INT: Yeah I think so, you’re talking about in the supervision context and um
sort of finding a middle ground in a way and those two reactions of being
rebellious or being over compliant were informed by your personal history

P: Yes yeah

INT: A two way process maybe

P: What do you mean by that?
INT: You talking about your um your personal history of academic
experiences and um with teachers and having two tendencies of compliance or
rebelliousness and um it sounds like it was quite a, in the supervision, quite a
learning experience for yourself
P: I think that extends to more than supervision, I think it extends to the power
dynamic in the classroom and ah the power dynamic generally walking around
the university and how you relate to staff and other students and the
supervisory relationship you have with your research supervisor, I think its
across the board this power thing. The power thing that you have with your
personal therapist which you have to have as part of the training um I was
horrified to learn that they were thinking of having the personal therapist write
reports on whether your proficient or not to practice coz that would do terrible
things to the power imbalance. So I think I think power is is a big issue when
you’re a student
INT: Mmm and different experiences as a student
P: Yeah and you can go even further than that and say there’s power in all
sorts of places in life generally that we’re not really aware of. Its sort of not
not explicit but its there
INT: As a student is it something about um people have power when they can
affect your situation in some way
P: Yes yeah, they do and um and and I think I had it in my head oh well I
don’t get on with authority figures um so for me power was a difficult thing
because I had to had to tell myself that I had to learn how to if you see what I
mean um and that’s part of my history, my particular history um where I’m
sure there’s lots of people on the course who have always got on well with
authority figures who who don’t have that issue um and don’t see it as a
problem
INT: So for you um but of the element of power, your experience of it can depend on your personal history your relationship to authority in your life

P: Yes, yeah yeah and and also because of experiences at school and everything like that when I came to university there was thing of I don’t want to mess it up I don’t want to mess it up and then of course that that can cause problems to you know.

INT: Mmm. I’m just thinking about where to go from here um. I guess we talked about power in terms of it being something that’s not just in supervision but within the whole student context, within life

P: But also, within life yeah

INT: where something about people having some ah being able to influence the path of what you are trying to do um and within the supervision context you talked about um being quieter not having so much power perhaps through sort of understanding that personal element of it but also something about um the experience or knowledge you feel you have or you feel others have,

P: Mmm yes initially it did.

INT: And that goes away does it as times gone on?

P: It seems to have done yes but um as I say if I was with a new supervisory group with different supervisor I think the dynamics are very unique and I think its how people handle power because some supervisors do really use their power and others don’t, if that makes sense. I think we experienced the flip side of that with our clients. I think they project power onto us so which is interesting also

INT: Mmm

P: They look to us for salvation, guidance, and wisdom um and that’s a strange feeling, um yeah.
INT: Would you say that you have, have had or have power your own power in supervision?

P: Power’s a really funny word because you its its quite an ugly word in a way isn’t it because it can be so abused so you don’t want to think of yourself as having power that you could abuse

INT: It has almost negative connotations?

P: Yes yeah, but in fact it’s a very useful thing because we need to feel powerful but not in an abusive way but we need to feel power in that we need to feel strong and competent um and I I would say I measure it with how comfortable I feel and I when I feel comfortable then I feel strong and confident

INT: Mmm. And that um that feeling that doesn’t, you’ve grown in awareness of theory and you’ve grown in experience but you’re aware that if you went to a supervision group um it would be how you feel in that particular context that could affect things?

P: I think I think the confidence I’ve gained wouldn’t dessert me

INT: Mmm

P: but I still might feel cautious because I’d be in a new situation, I’d want to observe how the dynamics worked, I’d want to see I could get on or click with this particular supervisor, the new supervisor. I mean some supervisors try to be scary you know like want to suss out whether a supervisor was trying to be scary or whether it was sort of a more approachable supervisor and that’s very much their own personal style. And I think maybe because of my age I’m at an advantage to some students because I think supervisors may be a bit more conscious about the way they speak to me than the way they speak to someone younger, um that’s just a theory, I don’t know.

INT: If we move onto the sort of last main question, which is I wonder in what
ways, if any, has being a trainee and a counselling psychologist trainee influenced or been influenced by those supervision experiences?
P: I think that’s very hard to measure. I think I’ve learnt an awful lot about how to be with clients from supervision. I’ve learnt a lot of theory and how to put it into practice, but I mean its impossible to measure that because you get so much learning from a book and classroom situation and it all goes into one big melting pot. I would say its had a huge influence particularly in my client work um but also in terms of my own personal development as well
INT: I guess I wondered ah being a trainee I wondered if you thought it might be different if you weren’t a trainee, your experiences, supervision and?
P: If I was just a counselling psychologist?
INT: Mmm
P: I don’t feel that now so much. In the first year and most of the second year yes um but but not now so much um
INT: So whilst you’re still training um being a trainee isn’t so important or?
P: I don’t know I mean I think I think once the training’s finished you still have another hurdle to overcome which is you’re now an ah relatively new counselling psychologist and you’ve got to earn it and every year you gain more experience and more more skills and whatever and I don’t know, there’s one supervisor who says it takes about 10 15 years or something before you can call yourself proficient um so um so what am I trying to say. I don’t feel the way I felt in the first year, which was totally out of my depth and I really know nothing, don’t know what I’m doing. And I feel I’m on the right path and I haven’t got there yet but I will do but its going to take time and maybe it wont be till ten years down the line where I can um feel more equal to someone who’s been doing this for years and years. I mean even once I’ve got the qualification I think this is something that is measured by experience
INT: Would you say, so its kind of irrespective of whether you are in training or not

P: Yeah

INT: its sort of a longer view

P: Yeah a longer view I think it’s the experience that you’ve got under your belt that counts

INT: And would you say that your understanding of what counselling psychology is has had any impact on your supervision?

P: Um

INT: Like you mentioned that one of your supervisors was Kleinian and I wondered if you

P: Yeah I think at [participants university] there’s an influence on the relational that I really appreciate and we have had talks um about power I know we have and I’ve kind of absorbed this ethos and I think it comes from [participants’ university] but that as a therapist power is not a good thing, you should strive for equality and two human beings struggling together. And I don’t know if that’s my own particular take on the learning or that it is something that is stressed there, does that make sense?

INT: yeah I guess you’ve got that, whether it’s been deliberately imparted to you or you’ve understood it that way

P: Yes yeah um so um I mean there’s this whole thing about the professionalization of therapy, and I think at [participants’ university] it’s not liked because and I think part of that is the abuse of power that can happen um and I I can see that and I can buy that as a negative thing. So I think that that equality or the I’d strive to do away with that imbalance of power in my work with my clients and and how it affects me also. I don’t know if that’s clear

INT: How it affects you also within when you’re with your clients or within
P: Yes everywhere
INT: Yeah Ok.
P: So um. Its that sort of the right kind of thing. I’m not sure if I’ve said
enough or, how long has the interview been going for? [laughs]
INT: Oh that’s fine. So if I summarise a bit of what I’ve heard in regards to
that
P: Yeah ok.
INT: So in terms of how is being a trainee counselling psychologist influenced
your supervision experiences, very much so early on but not so much
anymore. I’m simplifying it a bit but does that sort of..
P: Yeah. I still see a supervisor as having more more experience more
knowledge which I want to learn from but and I don’t maybe there is power
implicit in that because I’m a student but I don’t don’t feel intimidated the
same way I used to.
INT: So I guess we talked about power often it feels like having a negative
connotation and part of that negative connotation is when you feel intimidated
by a supervisor
P: Yeah yes
INT: And that intimidation is not there so much for you
P: No no it’s not.
INT: Um I guess having spent some time reflecting on supervision and notions
of power, is there anything else you would like to say. Um you know we
talked a little bit about the impact of age. I wondered if there was, and I asked
you earlier the university you go to or being female, I wondered if they had
any if you experienced those as having any impact on on what we’ve been
talking about? They may not but.
P: In terms of supervision?

INT: Mmm

P: I think a supervisor is more prepared to tear strips off someone younger um use their power more. I think I don’t know that’s just a theory. Having said that, I was older and did experience having strips torn off me so um that’s not necessarily true. I think its um I think I think you do have to hold your own and you can only do that if you feel confident. It’s a sort of assertiveness in what you will allow and wont allow, how you will let yourself be spoken to I think and that I suppose owning your own personal power.

INT: Ok, um thanks very much.