

# **THEORISING 'SELF'**

## **Poststructuralist Interpretations of Self Construction and Psychotherapy**

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Psychology at Massey University*

**Karen Frewin  
2002**

## ABSTRACT

Through post-structuralist theory this study offers a critical view of relationships between self and psychotherapy. It suggests that 'belief systems' concerning the self are embodied in institutional and technical practices through which forms of individuality are specified and governed. It proposes that psychotherapy, as 'modern knowledge and expertise' of the psyche plays a role in the stimulation of subjectivity. Making use of narrative inquiry and psychotherapeutics as devices of access to self engagement, it argues that psychotherapeutics are psychological intervention technologies of domination and power that function to assist the assemblage of selves. This study originates through an assumption that psychological knowledge contributes to the way we are in the world, and that we are often produced with little knowledge of production processes.

Concern with subjectification of self, and relationships between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention strategies designed to assist assemblage, warrants theoretical discussion combined with an ethnomethodological participant observation strategy. Through a re-presentation and interrogation of contemporary post-structuralist debate on the constitution of self this study considers therapeutic process as a situated product of temporal discursive practices of technology and power, and delivery of subjectified self as a terrain of understanding through which psychotherapeutics perform, both as interpretative technology and producer. 'Narrative' is deliberated as an assembling and organising device through which meaning-making can be accessed. Processes of subjectification are constituted through a participant observation study of four psychotherapeutic practices offered through training institutions in New Zealand. They are the technologies of Bioenergetic Analysis, Gestalt, Narrative Therapy, and Psychodrama. Engagement with the training programmes produces five discrete narratives that articulate and reflect on the experience of self in relation to these technologies. This study analyses processes of subjectification through interpretation of the narratives. In particular, interpretation draws attention to issues of embodiment, multiplicity, constraint, and positioning, suggesting that they are articulated through power relations, questions of authority, and of legitimacy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed, both directly and indirectly to this work. It has been a privilege to enjoy the supervisory expertise of Dr Mandy Morgan, an exemplary teacher and mentor without whom this study would have been forever reverie. Thank you Mandy for your enthusiasm, encouragement, perceptiveness, creative skills, wisdom, patience, and 'knowledge', all of which have gently influenced the production of this work. Gratitude goes to Associate Professor Kerry Chamberlain for early input and suggestions, and to Dr Keith Tuffin for his learned reflections and rigorous evaluation of the penultimate draft of the manuscript. Thank you to the Massey University Library staff for their most excellent service. I am grateful for the support of colleagues, Linda Bain, Christina Howard, Rachael Pond, and Paul White, each of whom affirmed the work, were interested, and were always ready to help. Thank you Rachael for sharing your mentoring skills during the later days. For their interest and anticipation thank you to members of The New Zealand Society for Bioenergetic Analysis: Ferrell Irvine, Pye Bowden, Kathryn Carmichael, Heidi Young, Phil Straker, and Michael Short. To Linda MacKnight, thank you for looking after Dwight; I could not have finished without you taking responsibility for his care. Special thanks to my family for their confidence and reminders that there is more to life than intellectual pursuits alone. And, heartfelt appreciation to my partner, Marcus Boroughs, for his generosity, warm encouragement, interest, support, and understanding throughout the long days and nights of thesis production.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b> .....	ii
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	iii
<b>Chapter One</b> Introducing the Subject.....	1
<b>Chapter Two</b> Bringing Self into View.....	7
<b>Chapter Three</b> The Practice of Psychotherapy.....	39
<b>Chapter Four</b> Psychotherapy and Self.....	53
<b>Chapter Five</b> Converging with Narrative: An Organising Strategy.....	60
<b>Chapter Six</b> Reflecting on the Process.....	79
<b>Chapter Seven</b> Bioenergetics and the Self.....	93
<b>Chapter Eight</b> Experiencing Psychodrama.....	104

<b>Chapter Nine</b>	
A Gestalt Exposure.....	124
<b>Chapter Ten</b>	
Narrative Therapy.....	144
<b>Chapter Eleven</b>	
A Story About Bioenergetics.....	170
<b>Chapter Twelve</b>	
Speaking Subjectivity: Engaging with Self.....	177
<b>Chapter Thirteen</b>	
A Parting Word.....	219
<b>References</b> .....	222

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT

This is a study about self. It is about my self, your self, our selves. Technically the study is concerned with the subjectification and constitution of self, and the relationship between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist assemblage. The study is articulated through a post-structuralist standpoint but also makes use of narrative inquiry and psychotherapeutics as devices of access to self engagement. I will argue that post-structuralism produces access to subjectification, construction, and issues of power and domination. Narrative acts as both organising strategy and meaning-making device. Psychotherapeutics are employed as technologies of domination through which subjectification of self can be accessed. It is an evolving study, enabled through each device to emerge as a treatise of self.

The study originates through the assumption that psychological knowledge contributes to producing the way we are in the world, and that we are often produced with little knowledge of production processes. It comes through the idea that 'belief systems' concerning the self are embodied in institutional and technical practices (for example, spiritual, medical, political, economic) through which forms of individuality are specified and governed (Rose, 1990).

My interest in relationships between the constitution of self and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist such constitution inspired me to contest the arrangements that have been invented for us, and aroused my curiosity about re-invention. As an academic and a practicing and training psychotherapist, a particular focus is the 'technology' of psychotherapy, and the proposal that psychotherapy, as 'modern knowledge and expertise' of the psyche plays a role in the stimulation of subjectivity, for example, promoting self-inspection and self-consciousness, and shaping desires.

The study argues that psychotherapeutics are psychological intervention technologies/apparatus of domination and power, designed to assist the assemblage of selves (Rose, 1990). However, despite the study orbiting psychotherapeutics, it soon becomes apparent that a discussion concerning self produces self as a point of convergence and focus of

research, while other constructs serve as devices of access rather than principal performers.

As far as linearity is concerned, Chapter Two offers a re-presentation and interrogation of contemporary post-structuralist debate upon the constitution of self; Chapter Three considers therapeutic process as a situated product of temporal discursive practices of technology and power, and Chapter Four delivers subjectified self as a terrain of understanding through which psychotherapeutics perform, both as interpretive apparatus and producer. In order to access processes of subjectification I discuss, in Chapter Five, relationships between narrative metaphor, psychology, and post-structuralism. Included are ethnographic and participant observation strategies that I use to access prevalent psychotherapeutic practices/technologies offered through training institutions in New Zealand; specifically Bioenergetic Analysis, Gestalt, Narrative Therapy, and Psychodrama. I engage directly with each training programme emerging with five discrete narratives that articulate and reflect on the experience of self in relation to these technologies. These narratives serve as assembling strategies through which, in Chapter Twelve, processes of subjectification are interpreted, and exposed as politicised. In particular, this interpretation draws attention to issues of embodiment, multiplicity, constraint, and positioning, suggesting that they are articulated through power relations, questions of authority, and of legitimacy.

I specify linearity because you will have a different experience to mine. The narratives of exposure that you will experience after reading the theoretical presentation were completed in the early days of literature searches and contemplation, when the encompassing work was barely conceptualised. The narratives are constituted through Chapters Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, and Eleven. Their constitution and articulation is discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

In the following few pages I locate my understanding of the various positions I have appropriated for articulation of the work. This should serve to contextualise my approach and may be useful for reader orientation. My account is far from exhaustive and I am reminded of the familiar colloquialism 'the map is not the territory'. Although I found that the positions articulated below enabled this investigation, they are, by no means,

restrictive. The map is but the beginning of a journey that I hope you will find as intriguing as I have.

I attend to the work through a notion of post-structuralism as a device of interruption and deconstruction of taken-for-granted assumptions (Parker, 1999b; Parker, Georgaca, Harper, McLaughlin, & Stowell-Smith, 1995). Emerging through a “loose” collection of theoretical positions (Gavey, 1989), post-structuralism understands knowledge as contextually constructed, culturally produced historical artefacts of relationship where meaning is multiple, shifting, and often contradictory (Henwood, Griffin, & Phoenix, 1998). It is not unusual for post-structuralist work to adopt an inquiring and questioning approach. Features include interpretation of relations between power and knowledge, social relations, subjectivity and social practices (Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Parker, 1992; Weedon, 1987). I interpret post-structuralism as producing access to differing epistemological and ontological relationships through various frames of reference. Knowledge is understood as construction, rather than a given waiting to be discovered. Texts are understood as cultural products, historical artefacts, rather than stable, truthful and enduring.

A post-structuralist standpoint offers access to the production of alternative knowledges, challenges the authority of dominant discursive accounts, and opens conditions of possibility for relationships of difference and conceptual shifts (Drewery, Winslade, & Monk, 2000; Henwood et al., 1998). Hence, it is an appropriate standpoint for a study that challenges traditional understandings of self, and psychotherapeutics. In particular, post-structuralism offers a position of articulation that enables, rather than constrains, access to critical readings of transformation and re-constitution of worldviews.

When I talk of standpoints, I am referring to positions of articulation. When aligned with post-structuralism, the inference of a definitive viewpoint, as implied through the articulation of ‘a standpoint position’, is problematic. Post-structuralism resists conclusive credentials or classification, confronting such overtures as invitation to orthodoxy and dogma. Although this thesis espouses culturally and historically located multiple and inconsistent ‘realities’, and addresses issues through various theoretical perspectives, it is constrained through its form, that is, written text. In this form, the apparent decisiveness of, for example, ‘a standpoint’, cannot be avoided. Articulating conclusively is not,

however, my intention. My articulation of various 'standpoints', and 'worldviews' is for clarification and to explain where I might be 'coming from', my position at any given moment. That is, in any given moment my discursive strategy is presented through particular theoretical positions, which, if they were to be deconstructed, would be found to be produced through particular metaphorical status, for example, organicism, mechanism, contextualism (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Parker, 1990a; Pepper, 1942; Sarbin, 1986). The metaphorical status indicates the worldview through which I position myself, or conversely through which I am positioned. As this work continues both standpoint and worldview positions are articulated.

Self, as a topic, has been a favourite of psychology since the inception of the discipline, and re-conceptualisations of understandings of self are considerable (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Approaches utilised in pursuit of the construct have included semiotic and post-structuralist re-conceptualisations (Barthes, 1974; Henriques, Hollway, Irwin, Couze, & Walkerdine, 1984; Hollway, 1989; Sampson, 1983, 1988), and discursive approaches informed through linguistic philosophy, ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Through these traditions, self has been re-considered as discursively constituted in any given moment as opposed to prescriptive of an inner entity or state (Gergen & Davis, 1985; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Shotter & Gergen, 1989; Wetherell, 1986).

Parker (1995) suggests that it is through dialogue, through language, discourse, that conceptions of self are made known. A post-structuralist standpoint offers a Foucauldian (1977, 1981) understanding of discourse as systems of statements constituting objects, phenomena, and the subjects who speak. For example, psychology and psychotherapeutics are constituted through discursive structures. Psychology, psychotherapeutics and the constitution of self are understood as discursive practice, as socially constructed phenomena.

The social construction of the taken-for-granted is a consistent tenet of this work. Relationships amongst technological practices are a focus of attention. Post-structuralism enables access to the deconstruction of such practices (Derrida, 1981; Parker & Shotter, 1990). It informs and draws attention to political apparatus of domination (Hare-Mustin, 1994a; Parker et al., 1995; Rose, 1990,1996,1999). It is a perspective that enables re-

conceptualisation of both psychotherapeutics and self as situated products, about which, new questions can be asked. For example, how do we articulate and produce our selves, how do we want to be, how do we make sense of ourselves as social process?

Throughout, the study hinges upon the notion of psychotherapeutics as psychological intervention technologies/apparatus of power, domination and subjectification. Chapter Six discusses in some detail my attractions and reasons for targeting psychotherapeutics and the specific practices under investigation as objects of study. Here, it is more appropriate to address the concept of psychotherapy as it is applied in this work.

Traditionally there are a number of different ways of defining psychotherapy none of which are universally favoured. A major issue seems to be consensus about the inclusion of that which *is* psychotherapy, and the exclusion of that which is *not*. A consistent feature of definitions, however, is reliance upon 'change' as an indicator of psychotherapeutic practice, as opposed to, for example, counselling practice. The majority of definitions rely upon the idea of facilitating change in the way a person relates to the world, through the use of essentially psychological techniques. 'Change' appears to be a rudimentary ingredient of all definitions (Clarkson, 1994; Hershenson, Power, & Waldo, 1996; Stancombe & White, 1998; Walrond-Skinner, 1986).

I adopt a definition of psychotherapy articulated by Hodges (1995), "to denote all individual therapeutic practices and techniques that target the self as a site of change" (p301). This qualifies as psychotherapeutic definition through its inclusion of 'change' and its specific focus upon self fits within the context of this work.

Definitions aside, even as practice, psychotherapy takes many forms, such as psychiatric specialisations, psychoanalysis and its psychotherapeutic derivatives, various individual and group models, clinical psychology, behaviour and cognitive therapy; notwithstanding traditions of phenomenology, existentialism, Marxism, and post-structuralism. Illustrations could also include Eastern traditions, the North American associated tradition of humanistic psychology, and transpersonal orientations (Clarkson, 1994; Corsini & Wedding, 1995; Grof, 1985, 1990; Pilgrim, 1996). The scope of practice is broad. Practices under investigation in this study are appropriated both because of the

accessibility of their training programmes within New Zealand, and my personal attractions.

This study discovers itself through articulation in much the same way that it suggests self is produced through articulation. The study is embodied through a metaphor of narrative and inhabited by journeys within journeys. This standpoint remains implicit rather than explicit, until Chapter Five which discusses narrative metaphor as sense making strategy. This implicitness is not intentional; it is part of the process of journeying through an articulation of post-structuralist self. To avoid confusion for readers, narrative as metaphor is distinguished from Narrative Therapy through lower and upper case format, that is, narrative versus Narrative Therapy. Although maintaining similar theoretical underpinnings, conceptually they are not the same.

This is a study offering opportunities of reflection. It questions the implications of our constructions, and our therapeutic interpretations of people's lives. It asks us to consider constitution of self as a practice of cultural relationship, and to acknowledge that not all relationships are equal. It is a study through which academics and practitioners must acknowledge complicity in the maintenance of our ways of life (White, 1995). It is also a study that assigns some responsibility with all of us: to be whom or what we want to be we have to make sense of whom or what we are being.

Particular responsibility is in the hands of psychologists, as the professionals who 'understand' the human psyche, as those who shape the self, the self-shapers. If psychologists wish to do more than support and reproduce the status quo with its attendant forms of power and privilege then they need to understand the contextual relationships between constitution of self and structures of the world. Those who shape the self, the definers, describers, healers, are the prescribers of health, pathology, and appropriate practices. The self-shapers, the experts, the specialists, must decide whether they approve of what they are doing and whether they wish to continue (Cushman, 1991).

## CHAPTER TWO BRINGING SELF INTO VIEW

Conceptualising and transferring this chapter to paper has been challenging. Required to inform on matters of post-structuralist self I am now convinced that the route is not straightforward. In a quest to find that which I now understand is unattainable, I follow many paths, some through invitation, some to which I am beckoned despite the difficulty of the terrain. Even as the chapter closes, I am aware of territory left uncovered, sidetracks abandoned, and much backtracking and re-routing during the times I have lost my way. The journey has been informative, interesting, at times exciting, and serves its purpose as passage to understanding post-structuralist perspectives and the standpoint of this work. Accordingly, I offer the notion of excursion to those about to wander this trail. For some the path will be familiar, for others new and maybe turbulent. The challenges I encountered contribute some richness to my own understanding of post-structuralist perspectives, which in turn, may alleviate difficulties and smooth the way for those who follow.

The following pages invite consideration of contemporary post-structuralist debate upon the constitution of self. I do not attempt to resolve the debate, nor proffer descriptions that are more accurate or a definitive theory of self, but adopt the view that theories of self produce the selves that we are.

Notwithstanding that attempts to define produce self referential paradox<sup>1</sup> (Holland, 1977; Lawson, 1985; Oliver & Landfield, 1962), they also raise the issue of essentialising<sup>2</sup>, a practice that sits uncomfortably within a post-structuralist camp. As will become apparent, such consequences do not stop definitions emerging, albeit often carefully camouflaged. I must acknowledge, as author, that I find myself drawn to some positions more than to others, and that such attractions certainly play a role in the production of this work and the analysis to follow. This might suggest that essentialising in some form cannot be avoided, but perhaps attractions are different to definitions.

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, this is 'the true self', yet this true self is a product of cultural and historical theorising, therefore even as I present it as true I am a product of it and cannot say it is true.

<sup>2</sup> essentialism: the belief that things have a set of characteristics which makes them what they are.

When discussing any notion of self there are a multiplicity of perspectives and a rich array of literature through which to forage for understandings and accounts. Different historical moments have produced different versions of self, as has the current historical time (Rose, 1996) and as does this chapter. Ranging from psychoanalytic conceptions of libido and unconscious; through empiricist traditions of unitary reactive organisms; Hegelian and Marxist social beings; post-structuralist presentations of languaged and discursive worlds; to post-post-structuralist deconstructions (Morris, 1991; Schrag, 1997), searching for entry into such profusion is contingent upon the standpoint of this work.

As the work is both a psychological and a post-structuralist thesis, I focus upon theorists and theory relevant to this territory. I choose to specifically address some theorists who have become familiar contributors to psychological post-structuralist literature of self, and I navigate some terrain with which heretofore I have been entirely unfamiliar. There is not the space to discuss all accounts, and I narrow the focus further by converging upon those works with some relevance to the overall task, that is, the pursuit of technologies of psychotherapeutic discourse and their relationships with self. The chapter offers opportunities; to become acquainted with some of the constructions of self prevalent in the psychological post-structuralist literature; to garner some understanding of the difficulties in defining self; and to negotiate a standpoint from which the rest of this work can evolve.

Before treading the post-structuralist path, I wish to acknowledge briefly some traditional empirical constructions of self. It is not unusual for comparisons across schools of thought to be made in the post-structuralist literature, in particular comparisons with positivist notions, and it may be useful to recapitulate some, probably familiar, ideas about self.

Despite a dearth of self literature during the 'behaviourist years', since the 1940's psychologists as well as lay-persons, have increasingly turned their attention toward the concept of self. Few concepts are as fundamental. Self realisation and self fulfilment are legitimate quests acknowledged throughout Western society. Self confidence, self esteem, self worth, self awareness, self consciousness, and so on, are as much the language of the lay-person as the scientist (Kitzinger, 1992).

Empirically orientated psychologists have produced extensive literature about relationships between self and such notions as esteem, handicapping, awareness, presentation, concept, monitoring (Baumeister, 1987). Despite this contemporary focus upon issues

concerning self there is little agreement in either conventional or post-structuralist psychological circles upon the 'meaning' of self, in terms of definition or general notions. Depending upon psychological status, it is identity; it is a collection of roles; it is cognitive; it is emotional; it is voice; it is structure; it is central; it is narrative; it is peripheral; it is elusive; it is public; it is private (Irvine, 2000; O'Connor & Hallam, 2000).

Perhaps this is understandable. One only needs to ask how self might be defined to realise the difficulties in isolating 'this thing' that in our Western world is considered common to all of us. Self, along with its everyday colloquial understandings, is used by everyone, psychologists included, so much so that in some circles its ontological status becomes almost irrelevant as researchers concentrate instead upon encompassing issues affecting the social life of persons. But, a divergent focus on social life has not stopped 'scientific' attempts to define the concept.

Traditional social psychology textbooks characterise self as an historical development relying on the influence of late nineteenth century social theorists George Herbert Mead, and William James (Franzoi, 1996). Their conceptions provided a springboard for further 'self research'. Both proposed 'a self' with a subject/object orientation, albeit an orientation discussed as two separate aspects of self. The subject 'I', is thought of as 'the knower', that 'which is conscious'. The object 'me' is 'the known', or 'all the knowledge one has of oneself'. When the 'subject I' initiates action, according to Mead, or has a passing thought, according to James, it becomes the 'object me', suggesting that we are either in one state or another rather than a concurrent subject/object position (James, 1890; Mead, 1934).

Mead proposed a developmental self beginning in early childhood where the child 'has no self' until role-taking begins with the acquisition of language. He understood role-taking as a creative accomplishment whereby people imaginatively assume the point of view of others and observe their own behaviour (the 'me') from the perspective of 'other'. Mead's self does not occur in isolation; 'it' develops through symbolic interaction between people. His penchant was for 'a cognitive self' that is fully formed once larger societal attitudes and expectations have been internalised (Touraine, 1995; Wetherell & Maybin, 1996).

James, on the other hand, proposed a more 'fluid self' continually in an emotional interactive relationship with a world beyond 'I'. James focused upon how the 'object me' emotionally identified with aspects of the world, such as family, friends, personal items, virtually anything which symbolised and affirmed sense of self throughout the lifespan, hence his self's changeability. Within James' 'fluid self' were three domains: the *spiritual me* relating to our own understanding of ourselves, the *social me* relating to the recognition we get from others, and the *material me* consisting of our body, valued possessions and loved ones. Each 'me' could change according to circumstances (James, 1890, Morris, 1991). Conventional psychological practice and constructions of self have drawn upon these notions of James and Mead. Research interests have largely focused upon social identity issues affecting individuals, for example, self-presentation, with self typically conceptualised as some type of mental structure or schema (Jansz, 1993).

In his in-depth treatise of the self in social psychology, Baumeister (1998) describes three basic root phenomena as the nature of self. The self has reflexive consciousness, that is, the person is aware of their self. The self is interpersonal, that is, engages and is necessary for relationship. The self makes choices, decisions, initiates action, and takes responsibility, that is, is the agent, or origin of action. Although nearly one hundred years have passed since incipient psychological analysis of self, the relationship between these properties and those proposed by Mead and James is evident. Throughout the years of empirical research and traditional philosophising, notions of 'awareness', 'interpersonal relatedness' and 'actor/agent' have been constantly and consistently conceptualised as part of an empirically understood self<sup>3</sup>. Despite disagreements about definition, from these notions a foundational ethic of self has emerged in conventional psychological and Western thinking. We generally take for granted that self is unitary, stable and individualistic, unique and autonomous, and is imbued with independent agency. We commonly forget that what we accept as given is an empirically constructed self, produced through a positivist standpoint, and, that there may be other ways of understanding and talking about self.

Post-structuralism offers other ways of viewing self. Whereas empirical psychologists have amassed mountains of literature pertaining to 'self issues', for example, self-esteem

---

<sup>3</sup> These notions have not remained exclusive to empiricism; as we shall see they also echo within a social constructionist perspective of the self.

or self-monitoring, post-structuralist literature often converges upon constitution of self and the meanings we might attribute to subjectivity. Although, in part, informed by concepts such as actor/agent the post-structuralist understanding of self constructed through language and action is a climacteric departure from empiricist thinking. It is to these divergent understandings that attention now turns.

As previously discussed, there is not the scope in this study for a review of all the post-structuralist literature ever written about self. My reading and interpretation is only one of many possible stories of post-structuralist self. In the same way that post-structuralism culturally and historically sites the conceptualisation of the self so does this study. Metaphorically we are looking at a snapshot in time, both in terms of authors under discussion, and this work, which means keeping sight of this chapter as situated practice informed through other situated practice. My personal introduction to post-structuralist worldviews was through social constructionism. Social constructionism offers a gentle route to alternative psychological worlds and provides a standpoint for understanding a post-structuralist orientation. Thus, correspondingly, I introduce a social constructionist perspective<sup>4</sup> as rudimentary access to the domain of post-structuralist self.

Gergen's (1993) discussion of the socially constituted individual introduces a conceptualisation of self as relational, talked of as 'relational self' and transformed into the notion of self as relationship. Such considerations are not uncommon in post-structuralist thought and have been nurtured throughout Gergen's prolific self literature (Gergen, 1995; Gergen, 1999; Gergen & Gergen, 1993). For those of positivist inclination self as relationship heralds the demise of a true and knowable self (Terwee, 1995) and is, therefore, regarded with some scepticism. Rather than being alarmed by the sceptical, to acknowledge that views in opposition fuel debate and that various psychological accounts rely upon each other for existence (Gadlin, 1995) allows us to situate the positivist empirical standpoint as catalyst for 'new' explorations into 'the construction' of self.

Gergen's (1993; 1995) notion of individuals as socially constituted, and his inference of a 'relational self' poses a basic question - what could this mean? *Socially constituted* relates to the relocation of self within the social arena. In other words, rather than "a stable,

bounded and single agentive self” (Gergen, 1995, p24) operating independently of the social arena, the suggestion here is that self is not independent of the social; self is understood as a social account. Hence Gergen’s use of ‘relational’ signifies a contrast between ‘social self’ and traditional accounts of self as an ontology of the interior. This is not to be confused with the idea of a self in relationship; rather, Gergen is advocating self produced through relationship.

Such a claim raises more questions, and controversy, perhaps prematurely. Is Gergen suggesting that self is insubstantial, maybe as vapours that rely for existence upon, for example, a boiling kettle; take away the kettle and the vapours disappear? Where are we, who are we, when, if, we’re not in relationship? What of me with my internal schemas, my personal knowledge, I’m not vapour, am I? Surely, something tangible must be present for an interaction to produce relational self, for example, the kettle, the water, the electricity.

Perhaps some sort of insubstantiality is suggested, but when we question appearances or disappearances, or who or what we are, we also prematurely apply essentialist scrutiny to the proposal thus deterring Gergen’s (1993;1995) premise, his move toward a different way of entertaining self; his move toward exploring self as inseparable from culture and history; not as a being existing within circumstances, but as agentic of the environment. In other words as produced through, and as producer of, circumstances.

Contemplating self produced through relationship means introducing alternative ways of understanding the world around us as well as our selves. Putting aside a self assigned with universal properties, an assumption that has guided and motivated much psychological research, and putting aside socio-cognitive arguments for internalised cultural processes, promotes another view. Such a move neither entertains nor suggests resolving issues of “dualism, solipsism, individualism, and the recapitulation of Western ontology” (Gergen, 1995, p30), instead it offers an alternative standpoint from which to contemplate ontological, epistemological, and hence psychological, understandings. All conceptualisations are conceived as by-products of relationship. Psychological knowledge claims are understood as embedded within historico-contextual social relationships, as constructed by-products of social interdependency. “There is nothing *outside* the

---

<sup>4</sup> Readers will understand and recognise that I am presenting my particular understanding of social constructionism, based largely upon my readings of prominent works. I say this in order to

relationship of significance for understanding most of the problems confronting the human sciences” (Gergen, 1995, p30). It is within this context that self is offered as a social account. As products of social interchange, selves are rendered political and the historical notion of the individual self vanishes into a world of relationship (Gergen & Gergen, 1993).

In order to conceptualise self as relational, as a social account, we must understand our relationship with language. It is through language that selves are rendered intelligible. “When we speak, we speak a language, and thus we always speak *from* a language, from a context of delivered significations” (Schrag, 1997, p17). We rely on a language system for connecting or relating events, for rendering events socially visible.

Rather than offering all the answers, social constructionism makes space for considering meanings of self. Presenting self as a social achievement with language as purveyor produces self as a created concept. Constituted as relational the notion of single self is cast aside for a conception of ‘self and other’. This is more than a notion of simple interrelatedness.

We do not begin with two independent entities, individual and society, that are otherwise formed and defined apart from one another and that interact as though each were external to the other. Rather society constitutes and inhabits the very core of whatever passes for personhood: each is interpenetrated by the other.

(Sampson, 1983, p141-142)

*Relational self* becomes understood as a metaphor for the process through which we invent personage. Where, who, what we are, if we’re not in relationship, becomes a non sequitur. Even the suggestion that we are always in relationship is a misnomer, as relational selves we are relationship ongoing, without limit and constantly in motion. We continually interact with ‘other’ whether in the presence of multiple physical beings or not. The pedantics of I, me, us, we, you, are understood as non-existent outside of language, they are speaking subjects created and maintained through our discourse (Anderson, 1997). Pronoun use is conceived as a device (Harré, 1991), as functional, indicating momentary and changing relations between ‘places’ or ‘positions’ constructed in a discursive reality. As a device pronoun use locates “the source and the address of

---

acknowledge that social constructionism is as diverse as any other theoretical practice.

communications, the rights and duties of the communicants in managing meaning, and the rights of access they might have to one another” (Shotter, 1989, p148).

Gergen and Gergen (1993) discuss relational self in ‘practical’ terms with their suggestion of *storied selves*, or *self narratives*, postulating that we live out our relationships with one another in narrative form. Narratives are considered social constructions. As interaction progresses they undergo continuous alteration.

The individual in this case does not consult an internal narrative for information. Rather, the self-narrative is a linguistic implement constructed by people in relationships and employed in relationships to sustain, enhance, or impede various actions. It may be used to indicate future actions but it is not in itself the basis for such action. In this sense, self-narratives function much as histories within society do more generally. They are symbolic systems used for such social purposes as justification, criticism, and social solidification.

(Gergen & Gergen, 1993, p203-204)

The inference here is of cultural and historical, as well as *storied selves*. The ways through which we talk constitute our selves, and our talking selves are constituted through our cultural and historical narratives. Social purposes are understood as ideological mechanisms and processes habituated through our cultural and historical relationships.

It may seem as though an agentic storied self is parallel with an agentic unitary subject. However, the alternative understanding asks us to recognise that history precedes and follows us, and that “we are always already embedded in a story that is not of our own making” (Greenberg, 1995, p273). Whereas *self-narrative* sounds indicative of single self, such a construction relies upon social interchange and shared usage of language for understanding or connecting events in one’s life (Gergen & Gergen, 1993). Self-narrative is not considered a possession of a single self. Self is known to itself only through engagements with the world, and is consequently conceived as relational (Greenberg, 1995).

As an example, individualism can be understood as the product of a set of relations. Self as subject ‘I’ is produced through the interrelationship of textual (linguistic) resources. Shotter (1989) describes the solitary individual as produced through a “culturally developed textual resource - the text of ‘possessive individualism’” (p136). When

describing experiences or our relations to one another, and to ourselves, we turn to this resource, one of many made available to us through the cultural orders into which we have been socialised.

As an account, a socially constituted interpersonal, interactional, relational self produced through embedded historico-cultural linguistic systems where boundaries between self and society are fictional is, on the one hand, satisfying, and on the other hand, problematic. Satisfying because if one ignores problematics, a socially constructed self offers a way of understanding the world that not only challenges the notion of universal unitary subjects, but also makes sense for those with some investment in language as a form of social action. Additionally, as the articulation of the intelligibility of things (Dreyfuss, 1995) language, is, in effect, a sense making technology. It makes sense to make sense of self through language. It is inviting - once you get used to the idea that, perhaps, your self may have little more substance than a head of steam.

On the other hand, such an account still raises questions. Relational self, although attempting to bypass reification, and despite argument to the contrary, still enjoys 'a location'. Self produced through discursive relationship must at least acknowledge properties of speaking subject, positioned/positioner, and consequently located subject. Despite configuration as a social achievement, a socially constructed relational self cannot escape psychological essentialism. As acknowledged by Gergen (1999), albeit a concept which argues language as precursor, it is this very precursor that confines social constructionist self within realist epistemology.

In particular, our traditional account of "relationship" presumes the independent preexistence of the elements to be related. Thus, when attempting to create the sense of a unity, we are inevitably forced to speak of that which enters into the unity - thus essentializing the very elements we wish to transcend.

(Gergen, 1999, p177)

Problematics emerge in terms of biological versus discursive 'entities'. For proponents of relational self this is not a problem as they conclude that body/self distinctions are as socially constructed as any-thing else. Provocateurs can be understood as drawing upon further textual resources, thus counter arguments become irrefutable (see Edwards, Ashmore, & Potter, 1995).

The claim that knowledge of anything is constituted through discourse, and that, therefore, all meaning is textual does not satisfy those of a more phenomenological inclination contending that a social constructionist standpoint fails to confront the ontological question of who does the knowing and where (O'Connor & Hallam, 2000). Such challenge is also subtle refutation of the social constructionist claim, relying upon the assumption that despite all meaning being understood as textual there is still 'someone', or 'something' other than text. Social constructionists traditionally argue that this is an imagined ontology, little different from the body/self argument, but, even if the social constructionist argument is deemed plausible, O'Connor and Hallam suggest, that "the problem remains of how to account for a particular embodied person, including the power<sup>5</sup> of the person to influence the social conversation" (2000, p242).

Issues of the 'ontological', 'embodiment', and 'power relations' are significant in any production of self. The nature of our being, the fundamental 'who am I' that we cannot help but ask our selves remains a dilemma even if it is explained away. As far as we know we do have bodies, and, it can be argued that some discursive constructions are more dominant than others.

Such criticisms are not necessarily easily addressed. Some, such as ontological differences, are standpoint demarcations that cannot necessarily be resolved, other than agreements to differ. Power relations, also, are addressed from conceivably differing perspectives. Proponents of post-structuralist perspectives often relish such challenge and the debating terrain is not barren when it comes to addressing these issues. There are some significant accounts relevant to these reflections, which amply embellish post-structuralist productions of self.

Schrag (1997) raises an interesting notion when he talks of the "zone of the discursive event", described as "the critical zone in which the who is called into being" (p20). Framed in terms of discourse as speech, language distribution, and exchange (in effect, production and consumption) self is called into being within this "economy" of discourse.

---

<sup>5</sup> Power here, and throughout this chapter, refers to power relations reproduced by discourses, suggesting, for example, that institutions are structured around, and reproduce power relations.

Within the exchange, self is called into being as “the who that is speaking and listening, writing and reading, discursing in a variety of situations and modalities of discourse” (Schrag, 1997, p17). For Schrag the speaking subject, the who, at this moment of recognition, understands itself as a self, and garners a sense of self-identity, a consistency across temporal dimensions of time and space. But, rather than indicating some kind of stable unitary identity, this discovery of self takes place within the zone of the discursive event, an event having little stability other than exchange through language. In other words, although we recognise our self as speaker, and discern that this same self is present to us now, has been in the past, and probably will be in the future, in this moment, our self is emergent from and is influenced by diversified forms of discursive context.

Discursive event refers to the ‘space’ in which there is an effort to communicate something about something to someone. This notion is synonymous with the notion of self as a created social achievement. This is where it gets interesting. It is precisely because self is produced through relationship, within the zone of the discursive event, that the question of ‘who’ speaks, is raised<sup>6</sup>. It is unavoidable, and for social constructionists a paradox.

---

<sup>6</sup> The raising of the who, raises the ontological debate which becomes an invitation for standpoint comment. This is really why ‘the who’ is problematic, precisely because it raises the ontological debate. Once the who is raised theorists, and others, want to know - who or what is the who. Harré (1991) suggests the who is the person speaking. Phenomenologists ask what is the nature of the person, the ontological status of the person, and because who and self go together they explore the ontological status of self, citing a social constructionist view as shallow and as avoiding the problematic. Social constructionist’s aren’t really avoiding the debate, they’re just not necessarily as interested in it as phenomenologists are. It is a debate that must always remain debate, it can never be resolved. It often leads into the embodiment debate. That is, if self/who is the person, and the person ‘has’ a body, then we can speak of embodiment and how this impacts upon relational self, but we are usually unable to define the body in other than biological and ‘doing’ terms. Arguing some form of ‘being’ prior to, or existing at the same time, as embodied self, or even as illusive self, (see O’Connor & Hallam, 2000) returns us to ontological debate. In effect a circular argument is produced, which cannot be resolved through our thinking, our ‘discursive minds’, or our ‘illusive minds’. Some form of resolution cannot avoid trespass into the realm of God, and the presence of soul, which is not the stuff of ‘today’s psychology’.

When Gergen and Gergen (1993) speak of 'storied selves' they cannot escape the problematic 'who', but also cannot avoid speaking of self narratives and of living our lives through narrative form. Discourse in isolation is likely to reduce to no more than lexical and sublexical constitutive elements under the auspices of the science of linguistics. Meaning making, that is, the organising of human experience into episodes that seem meaningful, is produced through narrative as social interchange, rather than through solitary discourse (Schrag, 1997). Self is 'found' within the contextualising of discourse, within a context of exchange and intention, and, within such a context, discourse is configured as narrative.

Narrative provides the ongoing context in which the figures of discourse are embedded and achieve their determinations of sense and reference. Narrative supplies the horizon of possible meanings that stimulate the economy of discourse.

(Schrag, 1997, p19)

A social constructionist approach must speak of storied selves in order to conceive relational self, which cannot be conceived through a decontextualised space. Framed as narrative discursive dialogical self, ontological paradox is born, but this cannot be avoided. The who is raised even if social constructionists don't want it. Framed in another way perhaps social constructionism can elude the 'who', but then 'self' is not produced. Who and self are delivered together.

Whether the question of the 'who' is rendered problematic or not is really a standpoint issue. The interests of social constructionists traditionally lie in different spheres, and it is left to other theorists to argue the importance or not of the ontological. The 'who's' perceived synonymy with a stable self-identity is possibly the cause of discomfort for some scholars. However, the who interpreted in a social constructionist sense is not necessarily an entity, a 'thing', or "a pre-given logico-epistemological set of conditions for cognition" (Schrag, 1997, p33). The narrative who, the discursive who, can be understood, as Gergen (1993; 1995) understands self, as a social achievement, as a performance, an accomplishment, as an effect of discourse in the same way that other 'objects' of discourse are understood as effects (Frewin, 1997; Parker, 1990a; Schrag, 1997). This may not be enough for some, perhaps it suggests fragility where they perceive solidity, perhaps such a notion is too incorporeal to grasp, perhaps it leaves some grasping at air, and wanting to locate self in time and space, at least to see and

understand the constitution of humanity. As comfort perhaps to those grasping but not finding, Schrag suggests that the socially achieved self/who exists as “temporalised” (p37).

It is misleading to think of the narrating self as being “in” time or existing “throughout” time. The relation between the self and time is of a more intimate sort. ... Temporality enters into the very constitution of who the self is.

(Schrag, 1997, p37)

Schrag (1997) speaks of a “subject-in-process” ... “in the throes of a creative becoming” (p40). This is a notion that has some affinity with O’Connor and Hallam’s (2000) consideration of Heidegger’s conception of self-knowledge grounded in Being. In their efforts to illuminate/locate the who/self they borrow from Heidegger, suggesting that our constructed ‘experiences’ are in fact ‘pro-jected’ as we are continually “in the process of becoming, or doing something” (p253). Our ‘being’ in the world is thematized through metaphorical projects, and the only way of making feasible knowing the world as we do, is through the self as an illusory reference point. There seem to be parallels here with both Schrag’s delivery of ‘who’ and, with social constructionism’s conception of relational narrative self. With all of these constructions, self is either production or about-to be-production with little corporality in evidence.

O’Connor and Hallam’s (2000) process of arguing the ontological is interesting. On the one hand, they reproach social constructionism’s lack of ontological rigour, on the other hand their constitution and construction of ‘illusive self’ has similarities with constructionism’s narrative self. Rather than attending to their criticisms of accounting for power and particular embodied persons they offer an alternative/different way of understanding self from what is effectively an incompatible standpoint. They align themselves with the argument that “texts are only texts when known about as such” (p243). This allows them to proceed with the notion that “knowing implies a knower and a *being* that knows” (p243), from where they invite “a re-turn” towards the fundamental tensions between Being and beings and ways of knowing and what is known”, which they suggest, “may illuminate the ontology of self” (p244).

The project of ‘knowing’ experience brings forth into view a subject-object division and ‘the self’ as a pre-existing entity to substantiate the ‘reality’ of such a subject-object division. The exact nature of this ‘real’ self is never

fully decided and need not be, since it need only be revealed as a given. The self is determined by the project through which it is sought out, hence it is never determined completely, but is always imminent, or about-to-be, and it is exactly this 'becoming-ness' or 'about-to-be-ness' which defines the sense of self as an illusion.

(O'Connor & Hallam, 2000, p256-257)

Through this worldview, the ontological status of self is revealed as illusory with the category of subject-object understood as a by-product of a project, and therefore not ontologically fundamental. Projects play a central role in constructing reflections respecting the world. They give the world significance, and through projects in the world we 'experience' the process of knowing, similar in a way to Schrag's (1997) understanding of meaning-making and discursive space. Aligned with Schrag's notion of temporality, O'Connor and Hallam (2000) indicate that coordinates of reality, 'space' and 'time' are constituted by the way we approach what is about to be<sup>7</sup>.

I see an object but its meaning comes always from what it is about to be, and how it will feature later in my doings. We are always ahead of ourselves in order to be anything at all. But such properties require that a permanence, a reality, be given in the here and now in order that it can be surpassed by projects which are continually ahead of now. I grasp a telephone because it is about to be used as an instrument of talking and as such it gains attributes of being there for me, to be listened to and talked into. Such attributes appear permanent because, if they were not, I could not use them as such. But as Heidegger succinctly put it, the past always comes towards the present from the future. It is the future which decides the historical properties we wish to attach to objects to make them present in reality now.

(O'Connor & Hallam, 2000, p253-254)

O'Connor and Hallam's (2000) self is impermanent, its permanence as object produced through our need to know that we are more than no thing. Their account of self as illusion is inveigling and persuasive. The Heideggerian leanings confer credibility upon an argument that can act as adroit explanation for the ontology of self. As elucidation, it is allied with the post-structuralist movement, however it could equally serve as denouement to the empirical debate concerning self definitions. The empirical psychological self has universal properties, yet such properties are attached to some thing we've never seen, and

---

<sup>7</sup> Temporality seems to be a crucial notion in determining post-structuralist self's quality of etherealism. We speak of this thing, known as self, as present, yet the more we write and speak of it the more we understand its absence. In effect, attempting to write about and encapsulate the ways that we understand self is tending to articulate and produce 'the presence of the absence'.

don't know if we've experienced. Hence, self as illusion satisfies as a psychological nomenclature for self, whichever philosophy you follow. As an explanation it has steadfast attributes, sitting comfortably with Hume's (1711-1776) treatise of self as imperceptible; "the 'Self' as defined, can be nothing but a bundle of perceptions, not a new simple 'thing'" (cited in Russell, 1948). (Clearly, the issue of 'defining' self is an enduring one).

As an account, O'Connor and Hallam (2000) depart from the social constructionist notion of linguistically and socially constructed self, in so far as they attempt 'location', but shed little light upon either their criticisms of embodiment (or lack of), or the production of power relations. They do produce, or invite consideration of some thing as 'knower', however, embodied or not remains an issue despite their attempt at affirming corporality. They suggest, in particular, that we (meaning humanity) cannot deny a physical separation between bodies; it is a "common-sense assumption" (p242). Such a supposition is problematic in itself.

What if there is no separation between mind/body, or body/body? The 'common-sense' assumption of separation assumes a 'material reality', without entertaining that reality may be as illusive as self. It assumes corporality as a given and denies alternative planes of existence where body may be illusion and linguistic subjectification analogous to a stationary steamroller. Such thoughts are not new. Although some describe his philosophising as madness, Berkeley supported the denial of matter by, what were considered at the time "a number of ingenious arguments" (1685-1753, cited in Russell, 1948, p673; see also Whiteley, 1977). For example, Berkeley suggested that the perception of material things is a mental process rather than proof of existence, that is, whatever is immediately perceived is an idea and an idea cannot exist out of the mind. Such a notion, although sometimes categorised as idealist, is not so unusual today, particularly to physicists for whom solidity is an irrefutable perceptual category (see Edwards, Ashmore & Potter, 1995).

And, even if questioning the corporality of body or not strikes some as insanity, this does not necessarily mean it should be dismissed. Certainly, in a spiritual sense, it is a notion afforded some endorsement through the sentiment that 'we' are not a body at all. I refer here to models of reincarnation that promise that 'we' have no corporality, that our

existence upon Earth is illusion, and that connection with God will reveal that 'we' are more than 'we' ever thought possible. In an academic sense we are asked to consider the possibility of bodies unbounded by envelopes of skin, and to stretch our imagination toward the concept of "... a discrete, and enveloped body inhabited and animated by its own soul, *the subject, the self, the individual, the person*" (Rose, 1996, p173) as an historical accomplishment rather than on ontological, common-sense, given.

As with ontological issues, accounts of embodiment are clearly influenced by personal or theoretical standpoint. From a post-structuralist standpoint, such accounts appear to be works in progress. For example, Sampson (1998) offers a 'talking body'; Stam (1998), whilst acknowledging that the ontological status of the body is not yet illuminated, discusses the social and biological constitution of the human being; Harré (1998) posits 'person as knower', as biosocial entity, interpreted by O'Connor and Hallam (2000) as "unknowable in separable biological and sociological discourses" (p243) .

Such notions invite curiosity. Is it possible to illuminate the ontological status of the body as anything other than biological if we insist upon separating, in dualist fashion, social and body? Such a question solicits more than a simple answer, and is perhaps metaphorically derivative of Pandora 's Box. Is the living body more than biological? What happens when we separate social and body, even for investigation? Is Harré (1998) suggesting that separation is implausible? Certainly if we accept a merging of biological and sociological understandings, Harré's biosocial entity may present, for some, as an ontological *fait accompli*.

Each of the above assertions, including Sampson's 'talking bodies', rests upon the premise that our social and material world is constructed in the way that it is through our bodies. Although we language our bodies, our bodies also language us. In terms of debating self, the body and correspondingly our embodiment, cannot be ignored. This should be of interest to social constructionists. Consequently, it is interesting to note that embodiment, or at least the acknowledgment of embodiment, seems to be missing from some social constructionist accounts (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Radley, 1998; Sampson, 1998).

Providing bodies with significant status is a departure from 'common sense' assumptions. An invitation, through the following text, is to consider the ways bodies and embodiment

are intertwined with, and consequently influence, our social accomplishments, and, our understanding of post-structuralist self. For some, this may appear a detour, however, such engagement sheds light on the relationship between embodiment and social constructionist relational self, and develops an alternative concept of the body in the development of humanity, and post-structuralist self.

Traditionally, the embodied nature of psychological life and experience has been denied, largely through the psychological practice of splitting and compartmentalising the body into functions (Stam, 1998). Body has been treated as either subject or object, whereas it can be considered differently. The lived body is both subject and object, “is both the source and experience of subjectivity and is also the object seen, stylised, and acted upon from without” (Stam, 1998, p6). Our social worlds are configured through the body. To most of us the body ‘appears’ to be material, so let us return to the question of whether the body is material or not?

Shaky ground indeed, so perhaps it is not surprising that up until now embodiment as an issue, has been largely framed and addressed by psychology in terms of the body as dualist object. Unfortunately, this question of corporality cannot be addressed without shifting to metaphysical ground so we have no choice, in this study at least, other than to abandon the question. Undertaking any exploration of body/social brings forth a raft of issues concerning, for example, body/mind, mind/body, mind/body/soul, which are not only reminiscent of a chicken and egg debate (that is, which comes first), but also pervade the historical, and contemporary, domains of, for example, philosophy, theology, and, quantum physics. Entanglement with arguments of dualistic interactionism, reductive materialism, idealism, epiphenomenalism, or parallelism<sup>8</sup> (Cornman, Lehrer, Pappas, 1987), although pertinent for psychology, strays far into these other academic realms. And, in the end, even if we do immerse ourselves in mind/body debate, we inevitably return to the truism that for most of us, in our current evolvment, bodies are a ‘believable’ standpoint from which to address the world. For most of us, bodies seem at least tangible; we all ‘have

---

<sup>8</sup> *dualistic interactionism*: a person consists of two quite radically different parts, a mind and a body, each of which can causally act upon the other; *reductive materialism*: there are no minds but only bodies; *idealism*: there are no bodies, only minds; *epiphenomenalism*; denies that the mind can causally affect the body because the mind is merely a kind of by-product of certain complex physical processes; *parallelism*: there is no causal interaction of any kind between minds and bodies, each proceeds in its own way, parallel to but independent of the other. (Cornman et al, 1987).

one'. Perhaps it is just such ubiquity that tempts us, in some theoretical spheres, to either ignore the body, or categorise it into obscurity. 'Common-sense' prevails, whereas lateral exploration does not.

However, when discussing alternative views of self our ontological understanding of 'the body' is not necessarily the stakeholder. Rather, it is embodiment, with its accompanying body, that seeks attention.

Radley (1998) argues that the body is a medium through which we engage the world; that the body itself acts as signifier, and that it is embodiment, rather than the body per se, that is central to psychological life and to social relationships. We cannot accord greater or lesser signifying powers to the body, than we do to discourse, because to do so immediately reinstates division, and consequently sidesteps the issue of embodiment in favour of objectifying once more the body as a thing among other things, an object among objects. Embodiment is not only about the body, it is also about social worlds.

If we did not have bodies human beings would not be what they are (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Wertz, 1987). Our existence as human beings influences all aspects of our lives. To speak of discursive selves, or relational selves, is to speak of embodied discursive or embodied relational, selves, whether we overtly acknowledge embodiment or not. The ontological 'who', called into being through the discursive event, is an 'embodied who'. Our lived experiences come through the body, whether through gesture, speech, thought, action or inaction, even if we assume, or propose, differently. Embodiment is a condition of human existence (Radley, 1998; Sampson 1998).

The notion of 'lived experiences' may raise issues for social constructionists. They may be prepared to acknowledge the presence of the body within an interaction, but might also suggest that the idea of lived experiences is an historical and social construction, in much the same way as suggesting that knowledge of any thing is constituted through discourse, for example, imagined ontologies. Knowledge of any thing must include lived experience.

In social constructionist terms the body, or in particular, the ontological status of 'the body' is understood as a consequence of the political, moral and social realm within which it resides (Nightingale, 1999). Such assertions constrain social constructionists to talking

'about' the body, rather than heralding a move toward embodied discourse (Sampson, 1998), and possibly have some relevance to the absence of theorising embodiment in many social constructionist accounts of self. Smoothly explaining bodily experiences as constructions can be captivating enough to re-route inquests of embodiment to Never-Never-Land.

The conception of 'lived experiences' may sit more comfortably with a phenomenological trend. Phenomenological accounts recognise the cultural embeddedness and semantically mediated 'nature' of psychological phenomena, yet conceptualise these convictions as "simultaneously embedded in the physicality of a material body" (Nightingale, 1999, p175). Phenomenologically, the body becomes foundational, the 'seat' as it were, for all human endeavour and practices (Sampson, 1998). Phenomenologists surmise that we know the body, and our selves, from the 'inside'. This is a problem for post-structuralists. A theoretical emphasis upon the 'inside' is incompatible with post-structuralist embodied relational self. As soon as we talk of 'inside' we realign with elements of individualism, take as uncritical truisms such assumptions as 'believable material body', and produce an inside/outside split.

Schrag (1997) states that there is no doubt that "the body as concrete embodiment is the site of tasks to be performed and projects to be carried through - the body as lived is that from which something is done" (p55). He is not talking of a vacuum somehow filled and from whence we interpret the world, rather, he borrows from Deleuze and Guattari (1988) and speaks of bodies functioning within an assemblage of forces<sup>9</sup>. Hence, embodiment and lived experience are understood as social practice.

It has been suggested that a phenomenological standpoint of 'foundational body' is sustained through the assumption that everyone knows what it is to be a human body, certainly its fleshy, bounded aspects, are more corporal than the 'mind' (Radley, 1998; Schrag, 1997). Such ubiquitous status can lead to more than just obscurity or omission. Despite theoretical coherence, it can also ground embodiment within a theoretical cul-de-sac.

---

<sup>9</sup> This is a notion synonymous with some arguments of Rose (1996) and emerges in more detail when discussion moves to matters of power and privilege.

If we acknowledge lived experience as embodied social practice, and as a condition of human existence, we can understand the body as a 'selfing device' (Baerveldt & Voestermans, 1998). The inference here is of an active body as part of a process. The body is understood as a meaning-producing device, as a social performance, a signifier, distinct from linguistic communication.

For example, Baerveldt and Voestermans (1998) discuss 'anorexia nervosa', not as "a statement about, or a symbolic reference to, the social position of women, but as the embodied expression of a culturally constituted subject" (p174). They are aligned here with Radley (1998) and Sampson (1998), suggesting that our bodies are not to be understood as constructed through the eye of the observer, but as an experience which is intertwined with our experience of the 'life-world'. Reducing the anorectic body to a collection of discursively constructed meanings ignores "the experiential and expressive body of the anorectic herself" (Baerveldt & Voestermans, 1998, p175); part of the process of selfing is overlooked.

Sampson (1998) expresses this notion similarly, and introduces the pitfalls of neglecting the body, with his concept of 'body politics' (p49).

We spend too much of our energy focusing on language and ideology and so miss the embodied character of language and hence the position of the body in ideological practices... the actual body is molded to carry within its very tissues and muscles the story of ideology.

(Sampson, 1998, p49)

This view of Sampson's (1998), and the parallel proffering of selfing, is of interest because it alerts us to the ways that ideology and self are intertwined. Supporters of embodiment are clearly claiming that the role of the body in ideological production cannot be ignored. For those who address imbalance and injustice the notion of discursively established ideology, maintained through language and conversation has provided a useful, and powerful, resource through which to challenge institutional power. However, the introduction of social practice and discourse as embodied, suggests that relations of domination and oppression have embodied aspects that have been to date, largely disregarded in contemporary research practice.

The body tells its own story in the somaticisation of oppression and domination. In other words, the body is ideologically shaped.

The muscles carry the message of social class. Body movements and gestures tell one's life story: the beaten-down body of the oppressed day labourer; the pain wracked and tortured body of the profoundly undernourished ... bodies that know hunger regardless of what or how one has come to talk about it ... bodies whose muscles have been shaped, hardened and weakened often into debilitating distortion by hard physical labour and minimal nutrition ... these bodies know oppression; they are oppression defined more clearly than perhaps we have been willing to recognise.  
(Sampson, 1998, p49)

Sampson's (1998) 'body politics' directs us toward the embodied nature of oppression and domination, rather than considering only disembodied discursive practices produced within a culture. There is, however, no claim to a foundational or essentialist body that excludes cultural and historical mores. Relative to these assertions the selfing body is not phenomenological.

Perhaps some of the concerns of social constructionists using a discursive/linguistic orientation to address, specifically, ideological practice may be allayed through the notion of a somaticised body. Social constructionists fearing that a theory of embodiment will disrupt political agendas designed to destabilise oppressive and persecutory practices (Nightingale, 1999) may find that when oppression is understood as embodied, as "retained in the body's knowledge of its place in the world" (Sampson, 1998, p50), the discussion of 'ways out of oppression' is undermined through the comportment of the ideologically shaped body before us. But, surely such a prospect must offer greater scope for powerful political disruption than a purely discursive or constructionist analysis alone. For example, a somaticised embodied discursively constructed self offers a transformative understanding of social practices and humanity, plus enables transformative research practice. Even as we conceptualise the idea of embodiment so we must understand our practitioner selves as embodied, thus delivering the notion of embodied research rather than research on the body (Frank, 1998; Sampson, 1998).

The 'problem' of accounting for particular embodied persons is not one that will be resolved on these pages, but psychological and post-structuralist musings upon embodiment are a useful adjunct to accounts of self as socially constructed. Joining the

idea of relational self constituted through language, culture and history, is the somaticised ideological body and its 'role' in the production of embodied relational self. Embodied thinking impacts also upon 'the who' which clearly is more complex than argued in this text, with a 'nature' governed by more than linguistic interaction alone.

When considering the possible ideological affects of somaticisation upon self, and the notion of relational/storied self offered as self produced through language, the question of 'power relations', framed previously by O'Connor and Hallam (2000) as "the power of the person to influence the social conversation", becomes important. Generally, ideology and power are intertwined. However, let us first discuss the relationship between power and self produced through language, which raises more questions. Although, this may seem like backtracking, the route to post-structuralist self is like that, a detour here, a sidetrack there, and spread below, the occasional hilltop vista.

If self is linguistically storied through embedded cultural texts, and if we consider this process as self produced through 'talk', and talk as communication, how is it that we have 'evolved', in terms of producing new or different ways of speaking/being in the world? If we're producing ourselves are we constrained by what we produce? Is language/talk/discourse morphable - do the stories change? Why do some discourses appear more dominant than others do, and how and why does such dominance shift and reform over time? What do issues of dominance and power mean for self, do they mean anything at all?

From some perspectives, these questions feign a naive understanding of a social constructionist position. Both Gergen (1989) and Shotter (1989) discuss meaning as a managed accomplishment, through, for example, rights and duties of communicants, changing relations between positions, linguistic systems, and so on. This is discussed in detail by Potter and Wetherell (1987) who ask similar questions relating to the 'rise and fall' of specific linguistic practices and self-constructions during particular historical periods and in certain societies. They elaborate upon the dominion of power, discussing it from a social constructionist perspective, as sustained through "pressure to be accountable and intelligible to others", thus privileging "certain communal organisations of self-experience" (p106). From this standpoint, dominant practices and self-constructions can be understood as effects of people's desire for prevalence of their 'voice', or 'speaking rights'

over competing versions. Lacan (1977) offers a comparative perspective when describing the “struggle for prestige” (p69).

The self is thus articulated in discourse in ways that will maximise one's warrant or claim to be heard. Some versions of the self will thus come to predominate in some contexts....voice is determined by how skilfully one can use warranting conventions. And a vital part of warranting one's actions, making them appear reasonable and justifiable, is being able to present different kinds of the self appropriately.

(Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p108)

Such an explanation constructs an individualistic human agent motivated by self-presentation. Interestingly this seems more consistent with positivist understandings of self, than with an interpersonal, socially constructed relational self. But, as Potter and Wetherell also suggest, this is not the only way of understanding the dominance of some discourses over others and what this may mean in terms of power. While still maintaining the notion of relational self a different view can be proffered, as follows.

Textual resources, such as ‘possessive individualism’ discussed earlier, can be organised, and understood, as “institutional anchors” (Irvine, 2000, p25), thus framing self-narratives as grounded in institutions, and self as located within institutional contexts.

Such a notion is not unfamiliar, particularly to proponents of, for example, Foucauldian, and Marxist schools of thought that suggest that society is reproduced through the discursive articulation of particular kinds of institutionalised selves, and, furthermore, that not all discursive productions of self carry equal weight. Rather than suggesting that ‘weight distribution’ relies upon self-presentation, the idea is that some discourses become more accessible, more ‘credible’, and thus more powerful.

But, power, or something called power, does not exist universally in a consolidated or diluted form. It exists through action. Textual resources/discourses gain power through use in relation to each other. Power can be understood as a cluster of relations produced through discursive practice (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). As discourses become more powerful, they begin to serve as institutionalised practice (Foucault, 1970, 1972; Frewin & Tuffin, 1998; O'Neill, 1997; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Weedon, 1987).

Conventional and social constructionist images of subjectivity<sup>10</sup> are challenged through this proposal. While acknowledging that warranting and justifying one's actions through the use of discourses that produce particular organisations of self transpires, complexity is argued through the suggestion that when institutionalised practices become dominant people's 'use' is constrained through "the range of linguistic practices available to them to make sense", (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p109). In other words, warranting and justifying take place within 'boundaries' of available discourse. Discourses are resources amongst other resources rather than a means to an end. Power relations, and patterns of domination and subordination, are constituted and maintained because even as self is produced through discourse, self is also subjected to discourse (Barrett, 1991; Parker, 1989).

Rose (1996), takes particular issue with the social constructionist view of language, suggesting that it is flawed. He acknowledges the significance of constructing self as produced through cultural interactional narratives, but, interprets the social constructionist analysis of language as reduced to "talk"; situationally negotiated meanings between individuals" (p177). Viewing such analysis as problematic Rose suggests it accords "too much to language as communication and nothing at all to language as assemblage" (p178).

Whereas Gergen (1989) and Shotter (1989) describe the dominion of power and privilege and relevant self-constructions in terms of accountability and affects of desire in relation to the discourse of others, Rose (1996) censures the construction of individualistic human agency emerging through this description (see also Burkitt, 1999). He suggests that such portrayals posit "the human agent as the core of sense-making activities, in actively negotiating his or her way through available accounts in order to live a meaningful life" (Rose, 1996, p177). Rather than presenting a 'new' self, this description returns us to an 'old' familiar self, which has some similarities with traditional positivist understandings. Self is assembled as a humanistic unified agent constructing itself as a self, albeit within a linguistic and cultural context. An hermeneutic, phenomenological self is re-produced, with

---

<sup>10</sup> As we move into the post-structuralist realm of power 'self' as languaged description is no longer adequate to describe self, hence the shift, when appropriate, to using 'subjectivity'. Subjectivity, as description, encompasses the actions performed upon and through self, as well as the production of self. Subjectivity, as naming, acknowledges the power relations impinged through the use of textual resources.

affects of meaning and communication taking their form in the person, 'who', is understood as an actor interacting with others.

Rose (1996) raises a valid point; however, it may be labouring an issue raised earlier. That is, in any discussion of social constructionist self 'the who' must emerge. Simply put, a deconstruction of 'social constructionist relational self' provokes a return to ontological issues of who does the knowing and where. Rose has named 'the who' in this instance as 'the interacting actor'. It is doubtful that this is the intent of Gergen (1989), Shotter (1989), or any other proponents of a socially constructed relational self. But, intent aside, Rose's point does elucidate the frailty of some social constructionist argument, particularly when arguing in a Foucauldian sense, about the dominion of particular discourses over others and the power of the person to influence the social conversation.

What Rose (1996) writes acknowledges the importance and significance of self constructed through interactional narratives, but simultaneously reduces the social constructionist treatise of self to an essentialist echo. In so doing, he vigorously fortifies his own standpoint, proclaiming that,

In accounting for our history and our specificity, it is not to the realm of signs, meanings and communications that we should turn, but to the analytics of techniques, intensities, authorities, and apparatuses.

(Rose, 1996, p178)

Such a proclamation invites another perspective of self, one that requires an understanding, and an exploration, of the inherent complexities that arise in any discussion of dominions of power and the effects of power upon self. Rose (1996) is suggesting that as an integral solution to 'the problem of self', we cannot rely simply upon the notion of relational self constituted through narrative while wending a way through a life circumscribed through self-presentation.

On the other hand neither Rose (1996), nor myself, are suggesting that social constructionist self is offered as such, however in this chapter, the social constructionist self under discussion seems to be usefully acting as fulcrum from which to inquire into forms and nuances of self, and from which to expand and explore collateral and synchronous meanings of self. In particular, focus upon social constructionist self raises

the absence of, for example, both Foucault's (1977) and Rose's discourses of power, dominance, and being. When such absences are noticed questions such as the following become fundamental in any discussion of self in relation to 'itself'.

Who has authority to speak? Who or where is the speaker?<sup>11</sup> What are truth claims? Who/what may make claims to truth? Through what regimes and practices are we governed?

It seems to matter little, how much, or how far, the notion of post-structuralist self is discussed, debated, bandied about, in one way or another we continually revisit the question of who speaks, although the question can be understood in different ways. That is, from an ontological perspective, or from the perspective of positioning in terms of power. And, we are consistently asked to seriously consider the effects of power relations and differences. It seems that these issues are integral when exploring self as constituted subject.

Rose (1996) promotes subjectification as "a product, neither of the psyche nor of language, but of a heterogeneous assemblage of bodies, vocabularies, judgments, techniques, inscriptions, practices" (p182). But, he is not talking here of simple tools of communication. We should not understand such assemblage as primarily for the purposes of interaction and dealing with interpersonal matters. We are more than 'just interrelational communicators'. Although we make sense of ourselves, and understand relations to ourselves, through techniques of, for example, ways of speaking, moral codes, institutional values, this is only part of the assemblage producing our humanity. In the same way that we previously could not accord greater status to either discourse or the body (Radley, 1998), Rose argues that we cannot afford to treat language, nor the psyche as superlative signifiers. Language is embedded within practices that produce human beings. It is through regimes that exchange arises and it is through exchange that self is called into being. Regimes can be understood as an encompassing assemblage of practices of governance. For example, the "contemporary regime of subjectification" (Rose, 1996, p39) includes all of the ways through which we do subjectification, all of the practices, the systems, the buildings, the spaces, including the concept.

---

<sup>11</sup> In terms of positioning rather than ontologically.

A more concrete example might be to imagine the factory, consistent machinery movement, sound, the product rattling along its carriageway. Have you ever visited a brewery? On the highest floors, open-topped vats filled with liquid hops fermenting, siphon to the next floor down, into closed vats, then down again, a different process on every floor, until the ground floor golden fluid pours into brown, green bottles, special shapes and sizes, aluminium cans, tall and short, boxed and shipped, the final product gurgling through the throats of human beings. The practice of beer making emerges through regimes of, for example, 'altered states' which include alcohol consumption as a regulatory apparatus. Beer is produced through the practice, the technology of the beer-making taking place through the factory. Within the practice are other practices, glass making, packaging, drinking; practices assembling and being assembled through human beings.

Taking various forms, as described by Rose (1996) - "medical, legal, economic, erotic, domestic, spiritual" (p181); practices require the production of speech, they shape, organise, and inscribe, they package assemblages of persons, and produce human being. Within this assemblage, and packaging, language plays a part, but, perhaps more as translator, than primary producer.

This is Rose's (1996) allegation, that too little attention is paid to situated practices that prescribe and induce certain relations to oneself. Inscription devices, such as "cultural technologies that serve as ways of encoding, stabilising, and enjoining 'being human'" are ignored (p181).

Once technicized, machinated, and located in places and practices, a different image of 'the construction of persons' emerges. Persons, here function in an inescapably heterogeneous way, as arrangements whose capacities are made up and transformed through the connections and linkages within which they are caught up in particular spaces and places"  
(Rose, 1996, p182)

Rather than discursively analysing storied selves, should we be examining the assembling of subjects, the analytics of techniques, authorities and apparatus? When considering language should we examine what it 'does', and consequently expose the regimes that empower particular authorities to speak our truth; the regimes that constitute our relations with ourselves as subjects; the arrangements of buildings, landscapes, producing our

subjectification as clients, consumers, those analysed; the regulatory practices that govern individuals through the notion of self?

Rose (1996) suggests that this is precisely what we need to do, and that, we can, by all means, incorporate different understandings of self, but, that we must also address the production and governing of self through technologies of representation, and apparatus of dominance. Psychologists have lingered too long with Wittgensteinian language games and it is time to broaden our interpretations of subjectivity. Indeed, when considering the perspectives so far it is not difficult to see why we do have so many different self conceptions. Rose's argument augments the validity of addressing power relations, and when entwined with the ontological and embodiment arguments of, for example, Schrag (1997), Stam (1998), and Radley (1998), supports humanity as complex assemblage. It seems that any post-structuralist analysis of self highlights the presence of absence and discussion is re-routed to issues of ontology, embodiment and power relations. It is apparent that these issues are pivotal in discussions of self.

For example, numerous concepts are invoked when considering Walkerdine's (1981) self as "a 'nexus of subjectivities' set in relation to different types of (contradictory) texts" (Parker et al, 1995, p89). Some of these concepts might be movement, fluidity, multiplicity, connection, relationship. The nexus notion presents as an alternative understanding of self. Nexus self is certainly not unitary, stable, nor independent, and thus can be understood as contrary to positivist understandings. Because its conception suggests self produced in relation to different texts (not unlike socially constructed relational self), and as texts are in constant motion, subjectivity is understood through this notion as constantly shifting, momentary positioning (Parker et al, 1995).

This explanation offers a glimpse of part of a regime. Nexus self does not address issues of speaking authority, speaker locations, or dominant truth claims. It doesn't necessarily have to, although some will say that as a description of post-structuralist self it should. Perhaps this is where debate begins, and where the problem (of self) lies. Although nexus self participates in the self debate and effectively contributes a way of understanding the negotiation of identities (Parker et al, 1995), it abandons seekers of more heterogeneous phenomena. In challenge it can be argued that not only does nexus self 'fall short', it also cannot avoid essentialism, presenting as it does as some/thing set in relation to other

things, with the constitution of that some/thing remaining a mystery. Such a conclusion invites ontologists, epistemologists, hermeneutists, social constructionists, phenomenologists, Foucauldians, and positivists (the list could continue) to enter debate and continue the eternal argument over 'real' self.

We are reminded by Harré (1991) that self is a province that is known only through reason, and that its very nature protects it from empirical study.

Whenever it tries to catch a glimpse of itself it must become  
invisible to itself, since it is that very Self which would have to  
catch that very glimpse... It is never presented in experience.  
(Harré, 1991, p52-53)

In other words, there is no 'real' self to be found and we must understand that self is a philosophical perspective. Hilltop vistas hinted at earlier are not a clear view. Even in this chapter discussion of various post-structuralist views of self could continue but I suspect we would arrive in the same place we are now. What does seem clear is that self is a standpoint product, not only in terms of where you come from, but also in terms of what you are attracted to. It is also apparent that ontological issues, embodiment and power relations are integrally entwined with a post-structuralist understanding of self whether they come under consideration or not.

So, where does such a conclusion leave this study?

Some of the conceptions of self prevalent in the psychological post-structuralist literature have been discussed and a more informed perspective of post-structuralist self and surrounding issues has emerged. From this discussion, the difficulties of defining self have become apparent. What remains is a standpoint declaration, which is not necessarily an easy task.

To claim a standpoint is to reify a position, and to define that which cannot be defined. Any standpoint declaration must introduce essentialism, a tenet antithetical to post-structuralist thought. Yet this post-structuralist study cannot progress without a self standpoint. A paradox indeed.

If I am to remain homogeneous with post-structuralist heritage, I need to name myself as hermeneutic inquirer and simply report, critique and compare the psychological post-structuralist literature of self. However, as I have set myself a task of analytical study I must style post-structuralism accordingly, and choose from amongst resources and tools to complete the task. I can claim discourse analysis, deconstruction, grounded theory, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, textual analysis, or any number of other styles and still present as post-structuralist study. I can do this because it is accepted practice to do so. As long as I explain myself in a way that makes sense to others, my choice is considered valid.

But, my point really is this: In the same way that I choose my analytical tools I also choose my self standpoint. To some extent, I am constrained; I must choose what is useful to me, what makes sense to me, and what will work for this study. There is also an element of attraction; even if other standpoints make sense, I choose what I like, what I am attracted to, and I suggest that this is so for most proponents of any theoretical concepts. Theoretical perspectives are tools not necessarily real or true, but useful, in terms of both analytical work and equilibrium. Sometimes they are also fun and exciting and would all be useful, but this study demands a more restrained focus and I have to choose. And, so I do.

My favoured standpoint promotes self as embodied assemblage. To ignore the demands of Rose (1996) paralyse self as constitutive of language; embalmed as a cultural and historical artefact. Although I may appear to favour two positions, in effect I am adopting a standpoint compiled of all that has been discussed. We do construct our selves through language, and our selves are also constructed through language, our bodies, and our regimes. We are inter-relational creatures, culturally and historically bound, but we are 'bigger' than we may have thought. We must account for power relations otherwise we cannot make sense of our relationships, nor our evolvment; we cannot understand where we have been and where we might go, or what we might become. Hence I engage with a standpoint offering scope to address the multiple complexities surrounding humanities self.

Such scope is elaborated if a moment is taken to consider how we arrive at our proclamations. Not only do theories explain they also produce. Self is constrained, enhanced, stagnates, or evolves through theoretical perspective that becomes understood

as gospel yet takes on such status of ordinariness that to question is to induce incredulity. We sometimes forget that our constructions are metaphorically induced, and that Western forms of subjectivity are no exception (Lovlie, 1992; Parker et al, 1995).

As humanity parades various forms of subjectivity, the post-structuralist analyst might look for the metaphorical foundations or building blocks through which particular types of selfhood are made possible. Worldviews are infused with notions such as 'core self', 'true self', 'private self', 'relational self', which can be understood as metaphorical icons similar to that of Pepper's (1942) 'root metaphor'. The root metaphor provides the framework and underlies conceptual sense making of events in our world; it is pervasive in language, thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Sarbin, 1986). Rather than visible nuances, root metaphors acquire a taken-for-granted status as their metaphorical qualities become submerged. Original tentative conceptualisations of 'how we are in the world' become reified and take on legitimacy (Parker et al, 1995).

This is so for the self standpoints discussed in this chapter and for the analytical standpoint adopted through this study. Original conceptions and metaphorical status are submerged. Meaning is clandestine. The discipline of psychology has reflected and helped to shape the way we think of self. The advent of post-structuralist thinking has introduced complexity and intrigue, but continues to act as shaper of selves. As psychologists, studying humanity, we have a responsibility to expose and consider the selves that we construct. Psychology has assisted in making that which is public, private; it is through psychology that the personal and the political have integrated as matters of self until the entwining has evolved into dominant structures traditionally left unchallenged. Unchallenged we deliver 'problems of the psyche' to therapeutic intervention, and understand our problems in terms of family dynamics, inner states, unconscious dynamics and so on (Gadlin, 1995). We embrace a society of individualism and personal responsibility with little or no understanding of the assemblages producing our captivated selves.

This study invites consideration of the relationship between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist assemblage. It borrows from post-structuralist thinking of self because such thought fosters the disentangling of power relations, deconstructs and identifies underlying metaphor, and assists in illuminating the

entwined personal and political. Additionally it offers other ways of constituting self, and from other ways, different, new ways of knowing are articulated. From this standpoint “we might at least enhance the contestability of the forms of being that have been invented for us, and begin to invent ourselves differently” (Rose, 1996, p197).

## CHAPTER THREE THE PRACTICE OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

This chapter has concerns with the practice of psychotherapy. It doesn't propose an evolutionary overview, or a discussion of various practices. Rather it considers the notion of psychotherapy as a situated product that impinges upon and shapes the self, (Hodges, 1995; McNamee & Gergen, 1992; Parker, 1999b; Parker, et al 1995; Rose, 1990, 1996). As well, it investigates the charge of psychotherapy as a form of social control masquerading as a technique of the helping professions (Hare-Mustin, 1994a).

The position of psychotherapeutic practitioners can be historically understood as gatekeepers of the psyche, or standard-bearers and truth-holders of 'the path to mental health' (Cushman, 1992; Rose, 1990, 1996). It is to the psychotherapeutic and allied practices that we turn when assailed by troubles of the mind, relationship issues, or behavioural problems. Utilising philanthropic principles, traditional practices have produced 'expert knowers' administering to 'health seekers'. Such comments are not faults nor criticisms to be directed at hard-working psychologists, psychotherapists or counsellors, rather they illustrate the discursive milieu of an era in which dominant discourse has encouraged 'the professional expert' as possessor of 'knowledge' and 'insight'. For those invested in the 'good' and 'worthwhile' task of 'helping' people who are struggling with equilibrium Hare-Mustin's (1994a) proposal that "therapists are engaged in social control more than social change" can seem startling (p20).

Within this era of ministering experts, the dominion of modern psychotherapeutic practice and its potent influence upon the subjectivity of humanity has not been ignored. For example, debate has explored and challenged, the power of psychiatry and the 'medicalising' of 'mental distress' (Coleman, 1984; De Swaan, 1990; Foucault 1965; Keen, 1997; Leifer, 1990; Parker et al, 1995; Prior, 1993; Szasz, 1979); the moral responsibilities of practitioners (Greifinger, 1997; Prior, 1993; Szasz, 1979); the influence of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM)<sup>12</sup> (Tavris, 1992; Tomm, 1990; Szasz, 1979); and the socialising effects of psychotherapeutic discourse (Friedlander, 1984; Pallone, 1986; Prior, 1993; Tavris, 1992; Tudor and Tudor, 1994; Szasz, 1979).

---

<sup>12</sup> Originally published by the American Psychiatric Association in 1952 and consistently revised over the years. At the time of writing known as the DSM-IVR.

Traditionally, however, therapist-client models have taken little account of the wider ideological and political configurations within which therapeutic practice takes place. The notion of psychotherapy as a discursively and ideologically produced practice of 'our time' through which both distress and treatment are constructed and socialised comes as a surprise to many practitioners, researchers, and laypersons (Banton, Clifford, Frosh, Lousada, & Rosenthal, 1985).

The following contemporary story<sup>13</sup> may illuminate this point.

*Recently I received a phone call from a friend who has been a practising counsellor for seven years, has completed a three-year nationally recognised counselling course, several years of private training, and many hours of experiential personal therapy. He rang with a revelation. He was very excited. While recently attending a refresher course he learned something 'new' about 'roles'. Upon his return home, and when listening to a client's story, he noticed that the story corresponded with his new perspective of 'role theory'. Simultaneously he realised that he could fit his client's story into any number of psychotherapeutic models, and vice versa, and treat the client accordingly. Any model could be made to fit any client and any story, and the ensuing therapeutic work would follow a path determined by his choice. Having previously assumed that there were right ways to work, he also noticed that choosing and following a particular model could invite a resolute approach through which he, as therapist, might ignore or miss some things going on for the client, because he would be working under the assumption that his choice was right. His assumptions would affect the way he practiced. Furthermore, he recognised that any chosen way of working would influence how both he and his client understood the issue, and the possible outcome. Moreover, he suggested that the client didn't really have a say in whatever technique he, as counsellor, chose to work with. My friend was both elated and alarmed by his discovery, adding that facilitators of another course he was currently attending had a tendency to talk down to attendees, as though they had all the answers. He had challenged some of the things they said, but noticed that he was the only one to do so. This caused him to wonder about the benefits of therapy for clients unable to challenge, or who take all they are told as gospel, and what this might mean in terms of power relations within the therapeutic relationship.*

There are a number of reasons for telling this tale. My friend's story illustrates the ease with which practitioners might assume the 'rightness', or 'truth' about a way of working. Practitioners often fail to acknowledge that there are many routes to 'well-being', all of which may have their own particular consequences for the client. Additionally, the story raises the oft-unacknowledged consequences of power relations within the therapeutic alliance.

---

<sup>13</sup> Identifiable details are obscured.

While I was pleased to hear the excitement of my friend's 'great discovery' and we talked at length about the dominance of particular ideologies, the socialising effects of language, the construction of self, and a 'general ignorance' of power relations, I was also surprised to hear him frame his perceptions as 'revelation'<sup>14</sup>. His thoughts were so aligned with my own research study, that I couldn't help but be supportive, but privately I was also alarmed by his naivety and wondered why he did not know 'all this stuff' already.

He is a professional. If he, a person who is careful and conscientious about his practice, his relationships with clients, and his position as 'the counsellor', had little awareness of what appears to me, an academic researching psychologist, as very basic 'knowledge', then what of the many other counsellors, psychotherapists, psychologists, 'out there' who aren't as careful and conscientious? How many practitioners work from a standpoint of 'one shoes fits all', where therapists are 'all-knowing', and psychotherapeutic practice is understood as a legitimate, often scientific, treatment for distress? How many understand the constraints applied through choice of model? Who is aware that even the therapeutic setting, whether in a hospital, private consulting rooms, or an idyllic weekend hideaway, constructs relationship and repercussions, that impinge upon a client's sense of self?

Part of my own surprise, and alarm, was of course my own naivety, and my own blinkered assumption that other people 'operate' the same way as me. In the same way that many theorists and practitioners forget the historical and contextual origins of both themselves, and their models, I had forgotten, and still do forget from time to time, that my own psychotherapeutic practice and musings have long been influenced through a post-structuralist standpoint. Because I am both academically and psychotherapeutically oriented I put the two together, they are often blurred. Yet, even though I try to question, challenge, and remain mindful of my psychotherapeutic orientations, as easily as anybody else I can become inured to my own, often comfortable, way of practicing. It is only when I return to my theoretical foundations that I am reminded that my practices and knowledge's are neither neutral nor innocent, and that any set of assumptions can act to constrain and enable depending upon the production and the knowledge of producers.

---

<sup>14</sup> I have since discovered that 'not knowing' is not so unusual. Hansen and Freimuth (1997) suggest that practitioners are often unaware of how their assumptive worldviews and schools of thought affect their conceptualisations.

The power of psychotherapeutic intervention to shape our selves and our world is not well understood, not always recognised, and often ignored. The ideological and discursive resources and constraints that construct the therapeutic relationship are not insouciant. As researchers of the human condition and as practitioners of integrity, we need to know more about the selves produced when clients are 'told' how to be. Such aspirations can be accomplished through knowing more about the discursive and ideological operation of therapeutics upon persons (Hodges, 1995).

For psychologists, post-structuralist inquiry has generated much discussion about the discursive production and politicising of therapeutic practice, allied as it is with psychological practices. Post-structuralist methods of investigation have supported the questioning of taken for granted assumptions and the historical status of meanings (Drewery, et al 2000; Drewery & Monk, 1994; Gerhardt & Stinson, 1996; Hare-Mustin, 1994a; Harper, 1994, 1995; Hodges, 1995; Keen, 1997; McNamee & Gergen, 1992; Madill & Doherty, 1994; Owen, 1992; Parker et al, 1995; Parker, 1999b; Stroebe, Gergen, Gergen, & Stroebe, 1992) to the extent of developing new therapeutic approaches, for example, Narrative and Solution-focused models, which, for some, fit more comfortably with a post-structuralist perspective (Epston, 1989; Freedman & Coombs, 1996; Furman & Ahola, 1992; Monk, Winslade, Crocket, and Epston, 1997; White, 1995; White & Epston, 1990).

Such questioning is relevant to the status of this study, but the concern of this chapter is to propose a post-structuralist understanding of the prevalence and power of psychotherapy as a technology of historical time that impinges upon and shapes the self, even beyond the therapeutic setting. To this end I won't currently explore the production of new therapeutic technologies, nor delve deeply into either the construction or deconstruction of discursively produced meanings, although such concepts will be discussed as this study proceeds. Rather, I take this opportunity to focus upon talk of psychotherapy as a form of social control and the assertion that therapists engage in social control more than social change. Such focus will illuminate the production of psychotherapeutic practice as a shaping technology, and unite the somewhat oxymoronic coupling of apparatus of power with helping profession.

The notion of psychotherapy as a situated product that impinges upon and shapes the self is promoted through the understanding that neither claims of social control nor therapeutic process occur in a vacuum. From a post-structuralist perspective, all claims to knowledge, including psychological, are understood as embedded within historico-contextual social practices and relationships. Such practices and relationships are not static; structures of language and meaning through which people produce their lives change, as do our ideologies. In situating claims of social control and this study, contextualised language in terms of meaning-making apparatus, relationships of discourse and power, and the impingement of such relationships upon knowledge claims, warrant some consideration. Accordingly, the following account of discursive production serves as contextual indicator for locating psychotherapeutic practice as a technology of power and apparatus of dominion.

In briefest terms, discourse can be understood as interconnected systems of statements (Parker, 1992). Rather than an independent languaged commentary of events and objects, particular knowledges and practices are constituted through commonly understood discourse (Gavey, 1989; Hare-Mustin, 1994a). Cultural stories (for example, marriage); bodily movements and myths (for example, femininity); institutional structures (for example, government, education), and experiences of our selves or social and psychological events, are discursively constituted versions of actions and phenomena (Parker, 1992; Widdicombe, 1993). Numerous 'knowledge claims' or 'discourses' are simultaneously at work producing many different and generally competing meaning systems (Parker, 1990b, 1992). It is through linguistic and non-linguistic meaning making systems that we come to understand the world. Through discourse, we understand the construction of our lived 'reality' (Wetherell & Potter, 1988). Discourse both produces and is produced; it constitutes, maintains, enables and constrains, our circumstances and us.

Each discursive act is constituted through an ideological history, often deeply and metaphorically so implicit that the discourse appears natural, common sense, or obvious (Billig, 1997). Moreover, humanity is part of and continues "the ideological history of the discursive themes which they are using" (Billig, 1997, p49). Such themes are not neutral, discourses maintain their own power<sup>15</sup> and are not necessarily equally weighted. Some

---

<sup>15</sup> Power here refers to power relations reproduced by discourses, suggesting for example, that institutions are structured around, and reproduce power relations.

are more accessible and more credible than others. For example, typically our institutional practices, such as, medicine, education, or science, are anchored through powerful dominant discourses which construct and reproduce our social customs and our experiences of meaning (Foucault, 1970, 1972; Gavey, 1989; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Weedon, 1987). Such dominant conceptions of 'truth' and 'reality' are both inclusive and influential.

Recursively, both discourse as self assemblage and our selves as discursive progenitors are constituted through apparatus and relationships of power. In other words we understand our selves through discourse, at the same time as we produce discourses to understand our selves. We don't always understand how much of our productions, and our selves, are produced through dominant and traditional practices. For example, and as discussed in the previous chapter, mainstream psychological discourses traditionally construct 'modern' self as a unitary rational subject, stable, individualistic, and imbued with independent agency. Challenge to this dominant understanding is often met with astonishment, ridicule, and court-martialing to the margins. Whereas, and as promoted through this study, there are other ways of understanding and talking about self. Mainstream psychology's self, which we accept as given, is a contextual artefact, empirically constructed and discursively produced through a positivist standpoint.

As 'truth-sayer', or 'legitimator' psychology, and subsequently psychology's self, is powerful. Once upon a time, religion, a previously dominant, and still robust, discourse, was the apparatus through which we constituted our humanity. Psychology, allied as it often is with the hegemonic science discourse, has become a replacement apparatus through which to understand our lives (Hodges, 1995).

Through humanity's public acceptance discourses such as science, femininity, masculinity, religion, law, medicine, adolescence, middleage, psychiatry, psychotherapy, are re-produced. Such consent yields and legitimises powerful social regulators that simultaneously inform and create the political apparatus that govern society (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Rose, 1990, 1996). In other words, the discourses are assimilated as acceptable cultural practice and thus constituted as 'commonplace' or 'ordinary'. Humanity is socially regulated through cultural practices that are re-produced on a daily basis.

As an institution, and since its official invention during the second half of the 19th Century (Cushman, 1992), modern psychotherapeutic practice has principally operated under the auspices of a dominant scientist-practitioner discourse. Psychotherapeutic interpretations of theory and practice are habitually understood as scientific, that is, akin to facts, with practitioners viewed as knowledgeable experts. During the 20th Century, and still in the 21st Century, psychotherapy is discursively constituted as a 'legitimate' psychological technique for gaining entry into "the realm of the private that the modern era has located within each self-contained individual" (Cushman, 1992, p22). The apolitical, trans-historical constitution of psychotherapy is often ignored. The 'facts' are not necessarily as they seem and psychotherapy as stable legitimate practice is open to challenge.

Currently many different forms of psychotherapy are practised, as well as many variants of the major approaches which include behaviour therapies, cognitive therapies, cognitive-behaviour therapies, skill training therapies, behavioural medicine/health therapies, humanist and experiential therapies, psychoanalysis, psychodynamic orientations, interpersonal and sociocultural therapies, eclectic and integrative therapies (Corsini & Wedding, 1995; Ford & Urban, 1998). Although these approaches purport differing ontological and epistemological assumptions they operate under at least one compatible premise, that of the self-contained individual. Challenges to this doctrine have transpired. However, until recently psychotherapy has primarily operated under an assumption of an interior self infused with feelings and thoughts that are understood as intrapsychic process, rather than products of culture, history, or interpersonal interactions (Kaye, 1999). It is largely through psychological and psychotherapeutic discourse and practices that the technological means, and justifications, for 'entering' the modernist interior have been developed. "Psychotherapists have become first and foremost, doctors of the psychological interior" (Cushman, 1992, p57).

Psychology, as 'scientific' practice, plays a crucial role in the production of unitary self discourse, and it is through this discipline that various forms of psychotherapy are informed. As a system of meaning psychology constitutes humanity as 'state dependent'. In other words, people 'have' certain internal states that psychologists can recognise, predict and control. Through this system psychological discourse takes up a position of official/legitimate transcriber of the shape of the interior, the private, and the personal. As sanctioned interpreter, psychology as a discipline becomes understood as a social

necessity. Positioned thus, psychology is legitimately justified in offering solutions for gaining entry, monitoring, and regulating the thinking and feeling going on inside individuals (Cushman,1992; Parker,1999b; Rose,1990,1996). Through the psychological practices that construct this realm of the interior, psychotherapeutic technologies are refined. Psychotherapists, as caretakers of the private province, produce their own theories and practices, and thus, legitimise their position as helping professionals, holders, and dispensers of expert knowledge.

This interweaving of theory and practice produces a network of enculturised understandings about how persons operate in the world. However, network producers and users disremember that therapeutic technologies are temporally constituted through historico-cultural context. Therapeutic technologies are not discovered artefacts, or truthful inventions, they are created concepts cultivated through social custom and habitat. Assumptions about the technologies as neutral, apolitical, and transhistorical, produce a normalising and pathologising culture (Burr, 1995; Parker 1999b). The socially constructed constitution of taken for granted phenomenon, such as emotional distress, delinquency, or depression is obviated through the dominance of traditional technologies. Such notions disregard the power of psychology and psychotherapy in shaping, not only individuals, but society in general.

Power is produced through relationship not in isolation. It is through understanding the entwined political, historical, and socially constructed constitution of psychological technologies that the power of such institutional practice is identified. Such a process is particularly relevant to technologies of psychotherapeutics. As a practice psychotherapeutics has concerns with the interior, with what goes on inside minds. Within the experience and treatment of distress, the role of language and society has been brushed away. Whereas, it is through elaboration and discussion of the role of language and society that analysis of practices of power can be engaged (Parker, et. al., 1995).

Through the following Foucauldian interpretation, the dominion of our helping professions can be located as a consequence of our modern configuration of self and its function in Western society. Such an account promotes an historical perspective suggesting that the dominance of our 'expert helpers' is a cultural product. It contributes as explanation for the politicising of psychological technologies and offers an argument for production of

psychotherapeutic practice as a social regulator. It deconstructs the 'common sense' ideological history of psychological discourse and conceptualises psychotherapeutics as a political product of historico-cultural time and, consequently, an effect of regimes of power (Parker et al, 1995).

A Foucauldian standpoint orients us to the evolving individual self that emerged through the turbulence of the Renaissance; the Industrial Revolution; increased mobility; the decline of religious authority; urbanisation and secularisation. This evolving individual self was unpredictable compared to the prior self that was constrained under the faded control of feudal lords, monarchies, tradition and religion. During the same era, the ascent and demands of capitalism prompted a new role for the state. Previously solely concerned with the ordering of 'a good life' political practices now veered to oversee the continually changing forces that were made up in large part of human resources. Priorities focused on the ordering and disciplining of the state's subjects, which introduced a new relationship between history and politics. The modern individual became an object of political and scientific concern, and the state, rather than any larger ethical order, was gradually constituted as an end in itself (Cushman, 1992; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 1977, 1981; Rose, 1990, 1996).

The gathering of information became a crucial component of the government's administrative apparatus. 'New self', now isolated from traditional moral guidelines, was introduced to a new kind of expert. Detailed knowledge, gathered empirically, constituted the strengths or weakness of political forces, steered political choices, and the welfare of the populace. The geography, environment, population, resources, problems, became critical elements of the new order. The needs of the people were not conceived as ends in themselves they were seen in terms of increments of power, the state's power. Human beings were to be docile and productive, marshalled through, for example, the military, the factories, the hospitals, the universities, the schools. Welfare was constituted through the empirical observations and predictions of the social scientists with philosophic discourse that sought the essential nature of humanity diverted to the margins. Disciplined orderly individuals fulfilled the demands of capitalism, and vice versa, capitalism was supported through normalising and controlling the populace (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Foucault, 1977, 1981).

'Disciplinary power' maintained through disciplinary technologies was established through techniques, strategies, practices (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982). There were new kinds of objects of knowledge about which to be concerned. The lives of human resources, their activities, their miseries, their joys, their work, and their deaths, became important, in so far as they were politically useful. Self became an object of observation, but from the 'inside' as well as the outside.

Foucault's (1977) work offers Bentham's (1791) Panopticon as illustration of the operation of disciplinary power, with power understood as "the operation of the political technologies throughout the social body" (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p185). Bentham's large prison courtyard with its central tower allowing surveillance of all prison cells maximises efficient organisation. The prison inmate is permanently visible to the tower guards whether the tower is occupied or not and consequently must behave as if surveillance is constant; public scrutiny can occur at any time. Bentham's Panopticon acts as metaphor for the internalising of disciplinary power and serves to site political technologies within and on the body. Regulation by others becomes unnecessary because self-regulation becomes the norm (Cushman, 1992; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982; Parker et al, 1995).

Under self-regulation, 'governance of the individual' is complete. The subject of governance is self-conscious; power is exercised through self-surveillance. The subject self-monitors in comparison to institutional norms. For example, constructions, discourses, of femininity, masculinity, youth, middle age, serve as standards through which the subject's behaviours, desires, and constitution can be regulated by the subject. Technologies of power are positioned to guide and administer this transformation and reformation. Disciplinary effects are twofold as both normalising and marginalising occur. Through the creation of abnormality, normalisation spreads, as anomalies must be identified, treated and reformed.

The structures of normalising technologies are almost identical. Through common definitions of goals and procedures the organisation of orderly domains of human activity are established. Exemplars such as the Panopticon define normality at the same time as defining deviance, that is practices falling outside the system and consequently in need of normalisation.

Thus, although neither the scientific nor the social paradigm has any intrinsic validity, by determining what counts as a problem to be solved and what counts as a solution, they set up normal science and normal society as totalising fields of activity which continually extend their range of prediction and control.

... Whereas normal science has turned out to be an effective means of accumulating knowledge about the natural world (where knowledge means accuracy of prediction, number of different problems solved, and so on, not truths about how things are in themselves), normalising society has turned out to be a powerful and insidious form of domination

(Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982, p198)

This Foucauldian contextualisation produces our discursive practices as an historical articulation of the prevailing normalising paradigm. Our practices of power are not necessarily experienced as repressive or negative forces regulating our daily lives. They are accepted because they are productive, they produce things: forms of knowledge, discourse, us. Their power becomes submerged in the forgetfulness of time, and the disregard of technologies as part of regimes. Whether we forget or disregard power is still privileged and as a productive network, it runs through the whole social body (Foucault, 1982).

Power designates relationships; technology-to-technology, subject-to-subject, technology to subject, and vice versa. Practices produce opportunities, options and choices, guiding conduct and offering outcomes. Self's apparent freedom of movement entices acquiescence. Psychotherapeutic discourse conjures images of change and liberation offering in its various forms, freedom from the constraints of unwell-ness, issues, or problems - freedom from unhappiness - freedom to be yourself - freedom to explore your individuality - freedom to grow - and so on and so on. But, these offerings are illusory, for without knowledge of power relations the subject is still entangled in a discursive field dominated by an invisible tower. Such liberating concepts require constant self-surveillance, observing and comparing of our selves, speculating about our 'true' natures and our identity (Sass, 1987; Taylor, 1989). Such self-surveillance is not bound to the consulting room, during therapy with our therapist. It becomes a life-style, a way of talking, a way of thinking, a way of interacting - a way of being in the world. We regulate our selves even more stringently than the Panopticon would suggest, because we do it under the guise that we are moving toward freedom.

Unknowing we are enmeshed within 'an expertise of subjectivity'. Professional groups (such as psychologists, clinical, occupational, educational; social workers; personnel managers; probation officers; counsellors; therapists) are each asserting their special knowledge in respect of self. Their claims to social authority are based "upon their capacity to understand the psychological aspects of the person and to act upon them" (Rose, 1990, p2). Their claims are not secured within a realm of the adept.

These new ways of thinking and acting affect each of us, our personal beliefs, wishes and aspirations, in other words our ethics. The new languages for construing, understanding and evaluating ourselves and others have transformed the ways in which we interact with our bosses, employees, workmates, husbands, wives, lovers, mothers, fathers, children and friends. Our thought worlds have been reconstructed, our ways of thinking about and talking about our personal feelings, our secret hopes, our ambitions and disappointments. Our techniques for managing our emotions have been reshaped. Our very sense of ourselves has been revolutionised. We have become intensely subjective beings.

(Rose, 1990, p3).

The notion of private self is apparently, a myth. Within this treatise, our private selves are objects of power. In relation to images of satisfaction and through constant evaluation of our experiences, our feelings, and our emotions, we regulate, style and shape our existence in terms of a regime of autonomy and liberation. The emancipated self lives a life bound to the project of its own identity. Through a rationale of choice we are beguiled into 'voluntary' confession of our flaws and dissatisfactions as the 'modern knowledge and expertise' of psychotherapy stimulates subjectivity, promotes self-inspection and self-consciousness, and shapes desires. Our salvation is coerced through our own anxieties, as well as through our peers, our families, and our communities (Rose, 1990).

Psychotherapy invades all spheres. Far from being a simple tool of the helping profession, it carries within its technologies language and modalities that shape our selves even without our knowledge, certainly without our explicit permission. Even those who ask for submersion do so from enculturised expressions of inadequacy, believing that their 'failure to measure up' is a personal individual fault needing improvement or 'fixing' by an 'expert' in the profession. Through understanding the degree to which we are externally determined, notions of 'voluntary treatment' can be assigned to the mythological assemblage of private self (Bakhtin, 1986; Szasz, 1979).

As novel techniques are produced for structuring our realities, we are coaxed into new ways of thinking about our lives and into new ways of acting. Through psychological knowledge claims new effects are produced, new relationships and connections are forged “between the aspirations of authorities and the projects of individual’s lives” (Rose, 1990, p4). In association with the State, the subject is active, relating to others in terms of psychological forces that affect all subjects and all relationships. In terms of social order, efficiency, profitability and consumption, the political aspirations and values of government are symbiosed through the attempts of individuals to make worthwhile lives for themselves (see Rose 1990; Tuffin, Morgan, Frewin, Jardine, 2000).

Such a citizen subject is not to be dominated in the interests of power, but to be educated and solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities.

(Rose, 1990, p10)

Through attempts to control the populace, psychology and psychotherapy are provided with a rationale for existence. As legitimate disciplines, they are charged with protection of ‘the private interior’. In turn, they produce techniques of access, and concurrently influence and form the subject. Through the therapeutic code of conduct psychological theories of the self have been created, adapted, and accommodated “in order to construct and refine the concept of the interior and develop the means by which to enter it” (Cushman, 1992, pp57-58). In collusion with capitalism, psychological practices achieve strategic ends by utilising the self’s relation to itself (Hodges, 1995).

Within this post-structuralist framework, therapeutic process can be conceived as the situated product of temporal discursive constructions of technology and power. Therapeutic process can be re-conceptualised as constituted through political discourse, both in relation to the techniques of the therapeutic encounter, and through its wider efficacy in terms of self, knowledge, truth and power. Through such constitution, attention is drawn to the way self regulates self, the therapeutic subject, and the subject of therapy (Hodges, 1995).

Understanding therapeutic practice as a situated product, contextualised and historicised, not only locates psychotherapy as a form of social control, but also enhances cultural

critique. Different understandings allow new possibilities, such as new practices that can describe and reproduce different configurations of self, possibly configurations that disengage change from control (Cushman, 1992). Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of different new understandings is the consideration that can be afforded to how we are in the world, how we are permitted to be in the world, and how we want to be.

## CHAPTER FOUR PSYCHOTHERAPY AND SELF

In this study, the application of post-structural interpretation to 'customary practice' acts as a theoretical device. The application produces conditions of possibility through which differing versions and meanings can be considered. Sometimes this process of explicating and deconstructing power relations seems to suggest a human history constituted through dastardly themes designed to harness human populations as slaves to their own desires. At times, discussing lives as produced through textual interchange does bring to mind such considerations. However, rather than a simplistic view of desires reduced to a moralism of individual satisfactions, the arrangements through which assemblages of power are produced are complex. There are no Machiavellian monsters pulling the strings of governance. Psychotherapy, the assemblage of power under discussion in this chapter, need not be understood as some kind of mind control device. Assemblages of power are not morbid machinations, but are meaningful systems that can be acknowledged as both enabling and constraining.

Exposure to psychotherapeutics has many benefits and it is not the purpose of this work to depreciate practices. Technologies of psychotherapy can enable not only symptom abatement but also personal power. For example, as psychotherapeutic participants we can discursively and creatively produce our selves through a range of techniques not necessarily available to those who don't partake. We can adopt tactics for challenging undesirable behaviours which may be health damaging, such as cigarette smoking, excessive alcohol and/or drug use. If we have certain goals or desires, we can be assisted to change our thinking in terms of motivation, assertion, or determination. We can learn about human behaviour and consequently develop more understanding about our selves, and those with who we are in relationship. When we learn about how we are in the world, albeit framed through a particular psychotherapeutic lens, we often become more self-aware and consequently gain more 'personal control' over the production of our own realities. Within our Western orientated environment, such skills are enabling, they allow, and help, us to function successfully in our cultural system. But, as they enable they also constrain.

What this study proposes is a way of accessing the arrangements through which our lives are prescribed. Psychotherapy, when identified as a technological apparatus of power and subjectification produces subjects of technology of whom we know very little. As a theoretical device, a post-structuralist perspective applied to psychotherapeutics and self enables the asking and answering of such questions as: if we are doing self-awareness, what sort of self might we be producing, and, if we aren't doing self-awareness, what sort of self is being produced? Do we want the kinds of lives prescribed for us? Can we manage our selves differently? Are there spaces for productions of difference? Can we celebrate difference instead of tolerating or marginalising it?

This study suggests that to know more about the effects produced through psychotherapy will enable not only academics, but practitioners and laypersons as well. Simultaneously, this study probes the production of self, suggesting its constitution as discursively and historico-contextually embodied. Psychotherapeutics becomes the territory through which the production of self can be explored. Discussion in the previous chapters has produced self as 'embodied assemblage', and psychotherapy as 'self constructing apparatus'. It is the reciprocal relationship between the production of self, as the domain through which our bodies, customs, comforts and inclinations are to be understood, and the elaboration of psychotherapeutics, as a regime of knowledge and practice acting upon the production of self, which is now at stake (Rose, 1990).

The previous two chapters discussed both the constitution of self and psychotherapeutics as historico-contextual situated products. As situated product, psychotherapeutics impinges upon persons in numerous spheres and in a number of ways. As self-constructing apparatus, psychotherapeutics are not confined to the consulting room as simple skill or helping techniques. As embodied assemblage, self is constituted through psychotherapeutic technologies that act as agents of change upon this domain through which we construct meaning. In other words, our meaning making is impinged through the intertextual exchange between psychotherapeutics and persons. The remainder of this chapter elaborates and illuminates this relationship.

Psychotherapeutic systems each have their own peculiarities, yet are united in their focus upon individual change, that is, in bringing "the subject from one way of acting and being to another" (Rose, 1990, p246). Self-regulatory techniques of practice urge ethical and

moral codes through which participants can manifest subjectification by supervising, assessing and improving selves.

Rendered visible through the languages and procedures of practice, moralities and ethicalities map out the territory of 'change'. For example, personal attributes, assessed and evaluated, are packaged through contextual scenarios of relationship with self - in the consulting room, in the home, the workplace, the community, in the solitary moments of self alone. Transit to goals and detouring of pitfalls rely upon relationship with self, upon self-processing through models of self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination. In the quest to accomplish self-conversion from one way of being to other, "techniques of self" (Rose, 1990, p241) engage self against self, as self is deciphered, by oneself, as object and site of reconstruction (Rose, 1990).

Though the moral codes of psychotherapeutics might be far from overtly prescriptive, the psychotherapeutic terrain is described through a moral regime of limited dialect. Morality is embraced through tropes of: working to improve quality of life, achieving autonomy, releasing potentiality, or transforming dependency to liberated freedom (Rose, 1990). The following examples articulate inscriptions of hard work and accomplishment fostered through expert guidance.

The Auckland Family Counselling and Psychotherapy Centre points out that psychotherapy can be 'difficult, painful', and even 'fearful' for 'clients'. Yet possibilities of great rewards are offered: 'new ways of being in relationship, joys and triumphs, and deeper understanding' (Sidelines, 2000).

The aim of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists, which offers 'skilled understanding and treatment of significant psychological disturbance', is to promote 'improved communication patterns', 'enhanced relationships', and 'the discovery of meaning and purpose in life' (*Choosing a Psychotherapist*, n.d.).

Empirically based treatments and models, for example, cognitive-behavioural therapies, are not exempt from moral coding. 'Symptoms' of clients are understood as determined by 'environmental, situational, and social factors' affecting both behaviours and thinking. With a focus on social competence cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy promises to 'remove, change, or modify evidence' of 'problematic behaviour'. Although seemingly unpretentious

promises, the cognitive-behaviourists broad diversity of 'symptom management', which includes issues ranging from, clinically diagnosed mental disturbance, to family and marital therapy, sexual orientation, addiction, and, the removal of unwanted thoughts, rather diminishes such modesty. 'Improvement' is facilitated through the application of techniques, for example, goal setting and skill teaching, which will produce successful outcomes such as, increased positive and pleasing relationship interactions, altered environmental conditions, and, training which will maintain new changes (Ford and Urban, 1998; Goldenberg and Goldenberg, 1991; Rose, 1996).

The moral codes of practices under specific surveillance in this study are equally explicit.

The Gestalt Institute of New Zealand promotes 'living as an art' requiring successful management focusing upon 'resolution of cultural conflicts which clash with individual needs'. Resolution promises 'nourishment' of 'our free-flowing natural liveliness' through 'dissolution of blocks', resulting in 'the integration of life experiences into an authentic self' (*Gestalt Institute of New Zealand, 2000*).

The Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association present workshops that seek 'doorways to our creativity, spontaneity and our unconscious life', thus 'bringing the 'invisible' to life' (*Australian & New Zealand Psychodrama Association, n.d.*). Partakers are warned that the process is 'not easy', but rewards of: 'awakened abilities and energies', and 'making a working whole out of the isolated and fragmented aspects of ourselves', so that we can 'feel part of the universe again' (*Australian & New Zealand Psychodrama Association Inc., 1993*), as well as, perhaps, being a little frightening, are alluring.

Bioenergetic principles, while having more of an emphasis on the body than some other therapeutic practices offer similar hopes such as, 'realising more potential for pleasure' (*New Zealand Society of Bioenergetic Analysis Inc., n.d.*) and 'increasing ability to experience joy'. Experiencing the 'life' of the body is presented as a healthy alternative to muscular tensions and contractions, which inhibit 'energy, spontaneity and creativity'. Bioenergetics has no less a goal than to 'restore grace, flexibility, full aliveness, and reconnection with our souls' (*New Zealand Society of Bioenergetic Analysis Inc., 1997*).

Even narrative therapists, claimants of constructionist positions, talk of 'liberation from the entrapping nature of problems', 'strategies and ideas for change' (*Family Therapy Centre, 2000*); of 'shaping lives and uncovering structures' (*Family Therapy Centre, 1999*) of the 'growth and development' of "preferred selves" (Freedman & Coombs, 1996, p35); and the transformation of identities from 'flawed to heroic' (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998).

These offers of hope and transformation, of release from the burdens, trappings and chains of tainted personhood, promise transport to autonomy, to single sovereignties and health and happiness. Psychotherapeutics are not confined within the consulting room. They invade and are invited into all spheres. Strategically positioned they manage the ethicalities of our lives, in the workplace, in relationship, in the mundane and in the ordinary (Rose, 1990).

For example, in the organisation of work: crises of identity; success or failure; personal fulfilment; the costs, benefits, choice of career path; are conducted through subjectification of self to the therapeutic. It is a mistake to think of the economist as directing the "working body" (Rose, 1990, p244). It is not the economist, but the therapist, that saturates the "working body" with desires that transform the workplace into a psychotherapeutic playground, where converts are prepared, enhanced, and maintained through the expertise of human resourcers.

In 'relationship', with kinfolk, sweethearts, friends, and colleagues, we discover and conceptualise our selves through "a neuroticization of social intercourse" (Rose, 1990, p245). Our personal satisfactions, our searching for happiness, our social lives, are constituted through vernaculars of successful marriages and warm-hearted families, well-adjusted children, healthy bodies, and minds, plus, flourishing careers. All types of problems, ranging from ill health to dysfunctional offspring, to frustrations at home and in the workplace, come to be understood as personal incompetence in our 'relationships' with others. Thought of as remediable, our incompetence is delivered to the therapist who takes charge of these disturbances of the interpersonal, moulding them into repetitions of familial patterns, diagnosing, and prescribing ways to fulfilment and happiness through virtuous and correct conduct, which is the only prescriptor of functional, healthy lives. It is through the language of relationship that we are re-defined; through the encounter with therapeutic law we are prescribed the tools to re-assess, to re-conceive, to correct and

discipline our selves to a virtuosity of conduct that will lead to fulfilment, health and happiness.

The ordinary is transposed to the abnormal, the prosaic to occasion, as daily affairs are elevated to “life events” (Rose, 1990, p244). For example, information directories cite therapeutic intervention for ‘grief, decision making, stress, depression, anger, trauma, gambling, fear, loss, awareness, spirituality, life’ (*Telecom New Zealand Yellow Pages*, 2000). Therapeutics engage with all spheres, with ‘consulting and training’; with ‘individuals and groups’; with ‘adults, youth and children’; with ‘life skills coaching and sexuality’; with ‘male concerns and female concerns’; with ‘education and mentoring’ (*Telecom New Zealand Yellow Pages*, 2000). The events of the mundane are translated as pathological sites of intervention through which our selves are subjected to assessment, to education, to normalising, to introspection, and subsequently delivered into a Panopticonic responsibility for our own well-being. In a taken-for-granted world, we willingly pass through the psychotherapeutic confessional, constituting our very selves as we prescriptively speak of our inner realities, our failings, our successes, our lives (Rose, 1990).

Subjectified self is the terrain through which we understand our relationships, our bodies, our customs, comforts and inclinations, and psychotherapeutics are the technologies for understanding (Rose, 1990). Transformed, we live attached to versions of identity that we have been led to produce. Identifying our selves through our speech and conduct, we take responsibility for the selves we talk about under the assumption that we know who we are.

Through techniques of selfing our saturated and constituted lives are steered upon a path of personal fulfilment and autonomous liberation. Shaped in the guise of freedom the language of expertise channels our ethics and moralities into ‘the liberated self’, but it is a self that is regulated through “the project of its own identity” (Rose, 1990, p254). The norm of autonomy and the illusion of freedom leave us as self-scrutinising beings, constantly and minutely evaluating our experiences in relation to a regime of modern governance.

Psychotherapeutics have come under scrutiny before, but the questions of programme evaluators, of empirical validation, of which practice works, and which doesn’t, are not the concern of this study. In this moment of history, the relationship between constructed self and psychotherapeutics as self-constructing apparatus is under interrogation. Practices,

and their performance upon persons, are about to be made visible. Accordingly, the apparatus of self-surveillance is applied in a way not previously discussed by Bentham as the purpose of this study is misaligned with that of the state. Surveillance is directed toward techniques of relationship, toward disenfranchising government of our souls and enabling access to powers of our own choosing.

To this end, the next chapter invites consideration of narrative and ethnomethodology as devices of access and inquiry. I invite you to join an articulation of narrative as sense making strategy, of contextual time as a feature of daily living, of ethnographic enmeshment and autobiographical conundrum. The work continues engagement with apparatus of power and domination, and relationships of constituted self, adding some features which contribute to 'stage setting' for the performances of exposure soon to be presented.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONVERGING WITH NARRATIVE: AN ORGANISING STRATEGY**

The theoretical perspectives represented in the previous chapters support and endorse not only the discussion of psychotherapeutics as a self-producing regime, but also enable conditions of possibility through which the effects of particular practices might be considered. Promises of visibility may seem bold, and even incongruous within a study that suggests productions are an effect of performance (it is in and through relationship that self, or any other phenomena are produced). Visibility is not offered as metaphor of disclosure, through which hidden and subversive structures will be revealed, but as metaphor of perception, as movement toward articulation of the unspoken, as generator for understanding the assemblage of our selves through psychological intervention technologies.

To recap, the study, so far, articulates intersubjective self produced through the operation of practices that subjugate, through historico/contextual/embodied apparatus of power and domination that act upon persons. Psychotherapeutics are identified as technologies of dominion, as technologies of selfhood, and, as object and device of this particular study. Theoretical post-structuralist accounts and positions presented through the previous chapters have disabled the deployment of technologies as discrete and independent. Furthermore, they have legitimised access to a type of rewriting process, through which psychotherapeutics, self, and the relationship between the two, can be acknowledged as constituted through discursive practice, and can, correspondingly, be similarly deconstructed. Positivist notions of stability are abandoned. Self is not discrete, neither are psychotherapeutics. They are intertwined, entwined, mutually producers and produced. Alternative knowledges are promoted as this study acts to contest, to unravel, to articulate, invite, and enable, different strategies for meaning making and for understanding subjectification to apparatus of power.

Within this context, conditions of possibility are not unlimited and neither is meaning making strategy. This study takes discursive form, as do the practices it re-presents. Accordingly, the process of making visible draws upon post-structuralist standpoints and

introduces the narrative metaphor as a discursive strategy for making sense of the impact of psychotherapeutics upon self.

Previously, narrative was introduced within the context of ontological debate during Chapter Two. The zone of the discursive event was discussed as a medium through which the discovery of self takes place. This does not refer to some kind of stable unitary self, but to a self emergent through a form of discursive context; a 'space' of exchange and intention through which communication about something to someone is produced. It is within this space, this context, this zone of meaning-making, that discourse is shaped, arranged, and organised, into communicable structures, that is, narratives (Sarbin, 1986). Through narrative, discourse as distribution and exchange is imbued with possible meanings. In other words, discourse when decontextualised is reduced to its lexical elements until the performance, the accomplishment, the social achievement of social interchange known as narrative. Within this context, narrative can be understood as meaning-making strategy; as a way of organising discourse. It can be used to bring a sense of order and meaning to events and actions (Riessman, 1993). Coherence and plausability can be gauged through its ability to "make sense of available information" (Freeman, 1993, p163) and according to Ricoeur (1981) to its *fit*. Neither sense making, nor fit, refer to tried and true and probably familiar old plots, nor to single interpretations as appropriate and proper. Coherence and plausability ask us to consider the text as limited to a field of possible constructions, yet *fit* asks for minds to stretch sometimes "beyond the reach of the obvious", to be open and receptive to new forms of interpretation (Freeman, 1993, p165). In other words, the boundaries of plausability are elastic.

Because I want to actively produce some sort of sense making of exposure to particular psychotherapeutic apparatus upon persons, I introduce narrative as a strategy through which I may be able to make known any 'effects'. My interest is not in trying to locate 'the self', but in making the subject-in-process visible. Hence, I propose 'using' narrative as an organising strategy through which I can articulate a process of subjectification. My intention is to produce 'stories' of my own exposure to psychotherapeutic technologies.

Up to this point, I have largely articulated post-structuralist accounts with barely a hint of narrative as either a sense making, or any other kind of strategy. I suggest now that not only will narrative act as a useful tool within this study, but that this is also the place to

make explicit the notion that this thesis is in itself a narrative. This study should not be upheld as simply a post-structuralist elucidation of relationships amongst psychotherapeutics and self. It has its own heterogeneity, and within its complexity, alongside its post-structuralist standpoint, this study has shape, structure and form. It is narrative.

Despite the suggestion of form, the contextual siting of this work obviates accusations of object status. Notwithstanding articulation as discursively categorised phenomena (Parker, 1990a), post-structuralist accounts are understood here as 'moments in time', supported through past, present, and future, and held in place through language and power. Indeed, the constitution of post-structuralist and narrative accounts are related through these very characteristics. Introducing the notion of narrative form might arouse concern revolving around the unification of post-structuralism and narrative. This warrants some discussion before narrative as strategy is articulated as a visibility device.

So, why propose the idea of narrative metaphor, what are the implications, what do I really mean by sense making strategy, and why do I suggest that this entire study is narrative? To explore these questions and to expand and clarify concepts the following few pages discuss the notion of narrative, its relationship with post-structuralism, plus the purpose of strategising metaphor in relation to this work.

Relationships between narrative and psychology are not new. Narrative psychology and narrative research have contributed to other than positivist ways of understanding human thinking, motivations and behaviours (Greenberg, 1995; Parry, 1991; Sarbin, 1994; Schnitzer, 1996; Stroebe et al, 1992). The 'narratory principle' proposed by Sarbin (1986, 1994) is a familiar one. Sarbin's suggestion that life is storied through a narratory principle guiding the performance of human actions and the interpretation of human events has been processed through many standpoints including social constructionism, feminism, and post-structuralism (Crossley, 2000; Gergen & Gergen 1993; Henwood et al, 1998). Indeed post-structuralism has more in common with the principle than often acknowledged.

As discussed in Chapter Two, our constructions, our discourses, are metaphorically induced, and just as Western forms of subjectivity are no exception to metaphorical status neither is 'narrative' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lovlie, 1992; Parker et al, 1995; Pepper

1942; Sarbin, 1994). As metaphor 'narrative' is conceived through the worldview of contextualism, for which the root metaphor is the historical event, or act (Pepper 1942; Sarbin, 1994). Correspondingly, 'narrative' is aligned with post-structuralist thought and writings that are also articulated through a contextualised standpoint. Both narrative and post-structuralism emerge through a standpoint usually considered the antithesis of the dominant psychological worldview of mechanism (Pepper, 1942; Sarbin, 1994). Mechanism emphasises order, predictability, and traditions of causality, whereas contextualism is concerned with the multiple texture of events, of changes in structure and positioning, of flux and novelty (Sarbin, 1977, 1994). To those more accustomed to the traditions of mechanistic science initial introductions to the notion of contextualism can seem confusing and chaotic.

As root metaphor, the historical event can be beguiling. The usual way of understanding history is as an account or study of a past event or events. From a contextual standpoint, the more traditional forms of history are indeed understood as attempts to re-present or re-juvenate such events (Pepper, 1942). Confusion around contextualism sometimes arises when it is assumed that the conjoined 'historical', 'history', 'events' and 'acts', similarly refer to events in the past. This is where understandings diverge. When accounting, or even thinking, through the world view of contextualism, 'the event', whether in the past or not, is considered as in the present and very alive in the current moment.

From this standpoint similarities between narrative and post-structuralism begin to emerge. For example, consider the ways through which a post-structuralist theme has endured throughout this work with emphasis upon historico/contextual/embodied artefacts. Without the past context we could not understand the present context, and both the past and the present have been produced not only with the future in mind, but also with the future leading the way. The 'original' purpose of this study does not lie buried in a four-year-old research proposal, or remain entwined within the introduction. It continues as flagship. Although we usually construe human action as occurring within time (Freeman, 1993), the perspective presented here asks for the suspension of commonly understood temporal linearity, that is, past, present, future as a developmental sequence. It invites review of our conceptions of temporal order. For example, the concept of human development, generally considered a process moving forward, can also be understood as a retrospective practice ordered through processing narratives of past behaviours. That is, despite

theorised milestones we have little knowledge of our development until we have lived it (Freeman, 1993). Considering temporality through a contextualised worldview offers different ways of understanding many traditional concepts, including relationships between post-structuralism, narrative, and self.

Reconsidering temporal linearity resonates with Schrag's (1997) 'temporalised socially achieved self' discussed in Chapter Two. Schrag's notion of self performance is constituted through temporalised discursive and narrative relationship. His meaning-making is neither static nor linear; temporality is understood as contributing to constituted self, at the same time as constituting 'the narrative'.

In the same Chapter, O'Connor and Hallam (2000) stress metaphorical reflecting projects as themes through which the illusion of self can be determined, and through which we can 'experience what we know'. In other words, through our present reflections of the past we produce our selves and make sense of events. O'Connor and Hallam's projects, and subsequent 'knowings', are linked through Heidegger's interpretation of futures past and present, that is, "it is the future which decides the historical properties we wish to attach to objects to make them present in reality now" (O'Connor & Hallam, 2000, pp253-254). Our desires, our wantings, our questions, the actions we look forward to, produce our present as we draw upon the past in order to constitute some meaning which will inform our project. Theirs is not a direct discussion of narrative and post-structuralism, however they offer a similar vision of temporality as that deliberated by Pepper (1942) and Schrag (1997), and consequently contribute to the notion of narrative and post-structuralist thought as constituted through a metaphor of motion. Present, past and future are so entwined, and so fleetingly glimpsed, if at all, that we can never be entirely certain of where we stand, other than in a transient moment.

Investigating the relationship between narrative and post-structuralism produces imagery evoked through the historical event metaphor which is remarkably post-structurally flavoured,

... an ongoing texture of multiply elaborated events, each leading to others, each being influenced by collateral episodes, and by the efforts of multiple agents who engage in actions to satisfy their needs and meet their obligations. Contained in the metaphor is the idea of constant change in the structure of situations and in the positions occupied by actors. The

texture of events does not require linearity.

(Sarbin, 1986, p6)

From a post-structuralist, narrative, contextualised perspective, attempts to understand human behaviour mean reviewing the historical, cultural, and hence contextual spaces in which and through which action is produced. Sarbin (1994) joins the temporal debate arguing that “both the historical act and the narrative are dependent upon time constructions: past, present, future; beginning, middles, and endings” (p 33). He goes so far as to present ‘narrative’ as an identical construct to that of the historical act supporting his argument through the practice of accounting. An historical account requires an historian, that is, a narrator. The historical account or product is a narrative account of what happened, produced through the imaginative skills of the historian/narrator. Sarbin’s analysis produces ‘narrative’ as an alternative descriptor for contextualism. Accordingly, when Sarbin proposes the ‘narratory principle’ he is proposing a replacement metaphor for that of contextualism. He is suggesting that, certainly in terms of human action, narrative is all there is, and everything is narrative. For example, psychology, an undergraduate course, the DSM IV-R, a doctoral thesis, and in other realms, feminism, nutrition, physics, philosophy, parenting, are all constituted through narrative. From this perspective, even processes, such as that of accounting, or phenomenon, such as the medical model, can be described as narratives in much the same way that some people describe them as discourse. This is because Sarbin, amongst others (Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Riessman, 1993; Robinson & Hawpe, 1986), is suggesting that we live in a storied world, and, as discussed above, using narrative is the way that we make sense of the world around us.

When Gergen and Gergen (1986;1993) talk of storied selves (see Chapter Two) they invoke ‘the narratory principle’ with all its associated imagery of beginnings and endings, before and after, multifaceted related events, time continuum, goals and purpose, arrangements and structures, causal connections. They don’t stray from their social constructionist orientation. Narratives are considered social constructions, “linguistic implements”, “symbolic systems” (Gergen & Gergen, 1993, pp203-204) through which people appear coherent, organised and sensible (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). Narratives are discursive structures, even discursive objects. They are discursive objects in narrative form. They take the shape of a story. They are called narratives rather than discourses, because of the way the discourse is organised through narrative, because of the way it is communicated, because of ‘the shape’, the ‘storied form’.

Correspondingly, I position this study, this thesis, as narrative, as psychological narrative. It is an historical and contextual account, drawing upon the past and even as it functions in the present 'now' moment it is speeding toward the future, becoming the future, even as it remains in the present falling into the past. Poised in a particular metaphorical space, as theoretical tome, an account and description, a narration, it carries its own ancestry with distant origins conceived and bound through a pragmatic orientation, but with a goal as focus. So far, I have talked theoretically about productions and constructions, political regimes, apparatus and technologies, power and domination, language, embodiment, relationship, self and subjugation; all interconnected and related and progressing toward an end point. But, this work began before introductions and chapters, before propositions and arguments, before post-structuralist standpoints and positions, and it will continue after the closing chapter, the last sentence, the final full stop.

Similarly, post-structuralist articulations in this study suggest that none of the regimes under discussion are simple collections of theoretical techniques and practice. Each has its own contextual history. Each is constituted through discursive relationship, and even as they are constituted they constitute. In relationship, they recite their stories. This is not to suggest that narratives are something separate to discourse. The world is still understood as produced through embodied discourse, but we organise and create and produce our meanings through narrative, through a structure that acts not only as an organising strategy, but in this study as a technique of visibility.

But, when I offer visibility through this contextualised apparatus I cannot assume that I am undertaking some kind of discursive analysis of texts through which I can disclaim my authorship as a reflexive artefact. My investment is more than part of the study, more than analyst positioned simply as influential researcher. When Sarbin (1994) suggests reviewing the contextual spaces through which human behaviour is constituted he includes, in that review, in those spaces, the historian, the narrator, through which accounts are produced. He argues that if we wish to understand human experience and behaviour then we must review the historical and cultural context within which the behaviour occurs. Moreover, if we wish to understand the writings of a contextualist then we must review the content of that person. This argues for the inclusion of narrator within the work. Similarly, Gergen and Gergen (1994) marshal an active investigator whose job

is to make intelligible, forms of accounting and means of relating and as such cannot help but be a part of the process. The active investigator is positioned as meaning-maker. Similarly, the post-structuralist orientation of this thesis/narration articulates meaning as context dependent, and meaning does not just refer to the theoretical tracts that produce the work as a psychological account (Hare-Mustin, 1994b). If this work is making meaning, there must be reference to the meaning-maker, to the autobiographical<sup>16</sup> content of the work.

Not only is this work a story, but it is of stories within stories. A story of psychotherapeutics, within a thesis story; stories of reading Foucauldian historical accounts, of psychotherapeutic domination, of reading Rose's regimes and technologies, stories of selves articulated, embodied, discursive; made meaningful through shaping, forming, structuring; simultaneously revealing interweaving contextual historical artefacts of both past and future tensely existing concurrently in the present; of the impossibilities of focusing on one without considering the others (Lee, 1994); a story of me, through me; a story of you. This is autobiography of our selves, of our lives, of our times. This work is self-narrative, my self, your self, our selves, them, us. Self-narrative cannot be imagined as solipsistic enterprise, because all narrative is of self (recall the zone of the discursive event). Narrative is a socially interactive process; through social interaction both narrative and self are produced simultaneously, one is not called into being without the other (Lee, 1994; Sarbin, 1994; Schrag, 1997). Remembering, of course, that I do not speak here of self stable across time, I talk of self in this moment, socially constituted through the social interaction engagement of the story.

In their duography Gergen and Gergen (1994) embody an ever shifting matrix through which they acknowledge and reaffirm that 'it' is not my life, or your life, but our lives (Lee, 1994). Through our narratives we relate, we connect, we belong, we understand, we produce knowledge. This thesis is about lives, it is my life, but not mine alone; it teems

---

<sup>16</sup> Freeman (1993) invites us to question the possibility of *autobiography*, suggesting that the process of articulation is one of transformation. That is, we transform discourse into "something different from anything before" (p21). *Auto* infers belonging to self, *autobiography* one's 'own'. From a post-structuralist standpoint, if we are producing in each moment, and if, in order to produce we draw upon available discursive resources, then we cannot claim *autobiography* in the sense that it is ordinarily understood, as issuing from self, as 'mine'. However within the context of this work I shall use 'autobiographical' to emphasise the interpretative apparatus of historian/narrator, investigator, as opposed to offering the work as an account of others written by an authoritative researcher.

with authors, with readers, with interpretations. As I present the story, so I present myself as subject, as subjectified subject, exposed not only to this literature, to this writing process, to this examination, but also to the practices I talk about. In each moment, I am re-constituted as I interact and react with what is produced. The work of others is introduced, re-introduced, re-moulded, sometimes left somewhat intact<sup>17</sup>, contributing not only to my subjectification, but influencing direction, adding to, changing the story. Readers: friends, supervisors, examiners, library users, connect with the story, relate, understand, produce interpretations, transform; knowledges entwine and the shape of the story shifts to interact again, incessantly in relationship.

So, not only are we constituted through the operation of practices that subjugate; through historico/contextual/embodied apparatus of power and domination acting upon persons, but we are continually re-constituted even as we attempt to make sense of the process of constitution. In the chapters to come I articulate a process of subjectification to therapeutic apparatus through the process of narrative because narrative is a way of organising and making some meaning of the subjectified process. Because narrative is an organising strategy it is also a process of subjectification, which means that even as I narrativise I am articulating a process as it happens. The motility of constituted self is revealed through the ceaselessly recursive process of re-storying. Stable self is not revealed, there is no stable self to capture. Instead, the ways through which I make sense of my subjectification are articulated.

This is an attempt to inform rather than constrain, to make visible, rather than arrest. This is a process of exposure to apparatus of dominion that politically constitute our social selves. This is a process that will expose a process, that is, the relationship between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist assemblage. It is a process of empowerment, of understanding meaning making, through which the subjectified can articulate bonds of dominion, distinguish the personal and the political, and take possession of their own invention.

The process of subjectification argued throughout this work not only raises issues of the political and the personal, but ethical dilemmas as well. Accordingly, there are a number

---

<sup>17</sup> In the form of direct quoting, albeit out of context.

of reasons why I present my person as subjectified subject in the chapters to follow, rather than choosing to identify others.

This study is about the operation of practices that subjugate; technologies and practices directed toward 'the self'; that produce self. As an object of study, I have focused upon psychotherapeutic techniques articulated as technologies of selfhood. I have argued that the personal and the political are entwined, that the personal is political, that exposure to technological apparatus produces politicised selves with little means of redress or disengagement. I have suggested that exposure to political psychotherapeutic technology is influential and persuasive, that it produces forms of subjectivity, self standpoints, ways of being in the world, and self-shaping positions which are not always easily contestable. I have suggested that the body itself exposed to subjectification acts as selfing device. Exposure and subsequent productions are processes which are personal in the sense that they are processes which are 'done' to people; 'done' to people like me, and to people like you, they are processes which are personally experienced. As a researcher, I cannot condemn others to such a process, either ethically, or morally. The process under investigation is a political process of subjugation; it has effects. I cannot ask others to undergo a process of possible transformation without some understanding of the possibilities. Consequently, and in the traditional sense of identifying research subjects, I choose myself as subject. Exposure to a personal political process of unknown outcomes is one to which I give my consent. I 'do it' to my self, before I will 'do it' to somebody else.

Furthermore, I have articulated a strategy to make sense of these subjugation practices, to study the production of self, which simultaneously organises subjectivity in relation to technology that subjugates. Self is constituted in the act of studying 'its' constitution. Narrative, itself, can be understood as a technology of selfhood, as meaning-making apparatus, as something that we do to produce our selves. Narrative is in relationship with subjectified self. The process of organising subjugation, of positioning person to produce selfhood, is as ethically fraught as exposure to apparatus of dominion. Even as I am organised, somehow I must organise my self in order to articulate my organisation.

Ethicalities and moralities stand alongside other reasons for positioning myself as research subject. Taking the personal standpoint exposes my person to shifts in subjectivity, to feelings, to bodily effects, to resistance, to inarticulations, to the ease and the difficulties

of positioning displacement, to the access and deployment of my discursive strategies, to a mental buffeting that at times seems chaotic enough to induce insanity, to fun and to excitement. I take the personal standpoint so that I can articulate the complexities of the process as it happens, the process as it happens to a person. As a political process of personalisation the knowledge is personal, the narrativising is personal, I take the stand and represent 'the personal'.

It might be suggested that I am doing an ethnographic study here, some type of participant observation, and that I have failed to mention these theoretical approaches in my explanation of this process. Certainly, when the study began I thought I was 'doing' some kind of ethnographic participant observation. Now, I have changed my mind.

There is no doubt that I have borrowed ethnographic techniques. I enter a cultural space (five spaces to be precise). I am exposed to practices produced through that space, and subsequently produce an understanding (in storied form) of my exposure. I am not a passive subject allowing 'the experience to wash over me'. I participate in the space production. I engage in an active process. I participate then articulate 'what happened' to produce an understanding of it. My stories are not meant to be representative of the particular spaces I enter, they are not observational accounts. Freeman (1993) might describe them as recollective textual interchange. As research strategy, they produce access to knowledge of subjugation. They inform of the subjugation process, simultaneously producing knowledge about meaning-making, production of self, and of possibilities. There is the hope that through access to new knowledges and meaning-making, power relations will be destabilised (Henwood et al, 1998). The research strategy produces different perceptions, new visibility, probably new questions. But, the subjugated knowledges are focused through 'one subject' only. That 'subject' is my person. If I have observed anyone thing at all I have observed 'my self', so in that sense I have strategised participant observation alongside ethnographic techniques.

Ethnographic literature does not argue prescriptive or stylistic rules of interpretation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, 1998; Fetterman, 1989; Van Maanen, 1988), but this does not de-legitimise nor reduce its considerable effectiveness as a powerful research methodology for the investigation of cultural space (Brannen, 1996). My borrowings are informed through this theoretical standpoint and through an understanding of ethnography

as a 'fieldwork' technique that incorporates and acknowledges the presence of researcher as narrator and actor, as producing participant, as sharing 'a human experience' (Humphreys, 1999). Traditionally, alongside interpretation, ethnography, per se, offers representation of an environment. Ethnographies are accessible for debate, multiple interpretations, and controversy, however it is through representation that furthers understanding that ethnography has its foundation (Van Maanen, 1988). Foundational representations are not my focus, which is why I emphasise 'techniques on loan' as strategies of investigation, rather than presenting this study as ethnographic.

The investigative strategy I apply can be understood through Brandes' (1982) distinction of autoethnography as 'anthropological autobiography'. That is, not only am 'I' the subject of investigation, but I am investigated by my self through a social context within which I am produced. To research amongst one's 'own' culture, in this case as Westerner within Western apparatus of dominion, certainly in ethnographic circles, seems to have a distinct relationship with the 'quality' of 'auto'. In other words, if the researcher is an 'insider' of the investigated culture, then 'auto' is warranted and legitimate (Hayano, 1979; Reed-Danahay, 1997).

This can be understood in different ways, for example, as an investigator with inside knowledge of cultural practice; alternatively or simultaneously, through the standpoint of Western individualism under the assumption that I, my self, am 'inside' my person. That is, 'I', the self, comes from within. In previous discussion, it has been established that the majority of psychotherapeutic practices operate under this assumption. It is a dominant Western value, has been a value of my lifetime, and is the way that I have been raised and influenced to understand myself. What I must acknowledge once more is that 'my insider', if I have such a thing, cannot be stable, from the standpoint of this study. 'It' must be multiple, shifting across time, able to be located only through artificial 'moments' such as the historical articulation of accounts. In relation to the role of 'insider' of the investigated culture, certainly I have 'insider' knowledge of my own social context, a context that I bring to this study. That is, I have access to resources I know the practices. For example, I am an insider of psychological research, of psychotherapeutic practice, of post-structuralist theories, of Western values and of Western social customs. In terms of autobiographical legitimacy, I qualify.

From another perspective and putting the notion of auto aside for one moment, even if the long-standing traditions of ethnography are concerned with the study of 'others' and other cultures, rather than with the study of one's own culture through one's self (Reed-Danahay, 1997), there can be little doubt, at least from the post-structuralist standpoint of this work, that 'the subjugated self' exposed to technology, the narrator of self-exposure, and the storied subjugation process, must number amongst 'others' not necessarily present in this moment. In other words despite an apparent focus upon one person's exposure to various technologies, the multiple and shifting constitution of self, the various positions and locations taken up within multiple and shifting relationships, argue for the presence of a multiplicity of 'others' moving through the time scape of both exposure and articulation.

My use of 'personal' storytelling as communication of research findings is little different to re-storying interview material presented through participant interviews (Riessman, 1993), or the reconstituting of field notes into an organised structure (Humphreys, 1999). They have the same kind of status. The narratives of exposure presented in this study are written for research purposes in the same way that, for the purposes of research, I might talk to someone else about their experience and construct a narrative representation of their experience. The context of the narratives is a research event. I am a researcher. I was researching when I entered the research site and when I constituted narratives of exposure as research material.

These strategies must be talked about in order to contextualise my approach and provide frameworks of reference, but it is useful to bear in mind that 'I' am not, in fact, the subject of the investigation. I use my person to investigate the subject, which is, the relationship between the constitution of self and psychotherapeutic technologies of domination. The stories and within them the various locations through which I may negotiate my way serve as reference points within articulated discursive material. They act as devices through which production of self can be accessed. They are not 'reality' references but serve as indicators of momentary and changing relations. Working as meaning-makers, they function to elucidate the relationship under investigation.

When discussing relationships of ethnographic standpoints, participant observation, analysis, interpretation, storied process, research strategies, researcher and researched, the debate becomes complex. For example, my strategies ask me to observe myself at

the same time as writing about 'what happened'. Such a process re-produces the ontological debate. 'Who' is doing 'what'? cannot help but hover in the margins. Luckily, I can, and do, position that particular question back within the 'zone of discursive events' where debate waits to be called into Being in some other context.

But, it's fluttering raises again the tag of participant observation, a precipice I totter upon because discussion so far suggests that I may have performed some form of this strategy, yet I suspect I haven't. I even hesitate now to argue that I have borrowed from participant observation, as I'm not sure that I have. As research strategy, participant observation has a close relationship with ethnography ascertained through its articulation as the engagement with and 'experience' of a social environment in order to advance some understanding of that setting. From both an 'insider's' (participant) perspective, and an outsider's (observer's) perspective it focuses upon describing, analysing and interpreting the details of the actions and interactions within the studied social setting. Through the researcher, knowledge of the studied environment is accessed (Barnard, 1993; Bowers, 1996; Curtis, 1999; May, 1993; Mertens, 1998).

In my strategising, I engage with cultural space as both participant and observer. As participant, I engage with the training programmes used to produce subjugation. As observer, I observe my process within the subjugation process. I do not necessarily describe, analyse or interpret details of interaction within the studied environment, although I do articulate the process through storied form. Additionally, whilst engaging in the process under study, I do not maintain clear and defined boundaries of participant and observer although the process raises the inherent problematics of this task (see Toren, 1996). One of the things I do is to notice how my attempt to 'be' participant/observer affects my process of engagement.

As research strategy, the oxymoronic juxtaposition of participant observation does present a dilemma. Plainly speaking the task is perplexing. Not only is there an object under investigation to be attended to but the researcher must juggle the affects of trying to be 'participant observer', rather than either a participant or an observer. During my exposure to training programmes, my juggling was not always up to par.

When participating I would embark as observer sharing in a process but at some point, I seemed to 'shift' to participant, and certainly my 'critical observer' if I have such a thing, fell by the wayside. During the process of observation (of my self) I encountered myriad shifting standpoints, such as academic researcher, critical theorist, group member, postmodern person, most of which/whom were not particularly interested in diverging positions. Trying to 'stabilise' various standpoints mitigated participation. That is, despite being of analytical interest and probably of intrinsic academic value, juggling and stabilising contrived as diversion from the subjugation process. In other words observing became a distraction. To expose my person to the process under study I had to let various standpoints roam at will without efforts to corral and control. This did not mean that I lost all sense of control and 'awareness'; it meant that I 'allowed' the process of subjugation, of participation. If I remembered to, I acknowledged the shifting standpoints, but I did not fret if passing time found me engrossed in the training programme. I 'became' more fluid, more multiple, more diverse, I participated more than I observed.

Hence, my claim, that traditional participant observation is not something I borrowed from, although I did participate, and I did observe. But, perhaps this is the nature of the post-structuralist study. Historic conceptions of self/society splits and boundaries between the subjective and the objective are challenged (Reed-Danahay, 1997). This allows new forms of researching, theorising and writing to be explored. Perhaps this includes new or at least different forms of participant observation.

Leaving the contextualising of methodologies behind for a moment, there is a problematic aspect to my assertions that cannot be ignored. Claiming narrative as discursive organising strategy is all very well, but this is not the only way that narrative is conceived. In contrast to the fluidity of post-structuralist narrative under discussion, through other standpoints narrative is conceptualised as a stable representation of self, as a representation of experience. Such perspectives are not compatible with those of post-structuralism and can serve to disrupt the association of post-structuralism and narrative.

For example, from a psychological perspective, stories of coherent and consistent lives are necessary for pathologising. From a feminist perspective stories of 'real material conditions' are required to locate and challenge dominant technologies. From the perspective of the lay-person, the stories that constitute a sense of unitary coherent self

are so closely linked to identity that challenge to such stability may rouse much more than stimulating discussion, and can induce grief and anger as people interpret such notions as meaning that they are no more substantial than the alphabet.

Narrative as a way of engaging with 'lived experience' is a perspective of not only narrative therapists (Freedman & Combs, 1996), and mainstream psychologists (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986), but is also articulated through various feminist psychological standpoints (Gavey, 1989). From these positions, narrative is understood as storied, or lived experience with discourses occurring within the narrative. Discourses are drawn upon in order to produce a narrative, or narratives; that is, discourses can be located within 'the story'. There are similarities here with the conceptualisation presented in this study, that is, narrative is considered as a strategy through which discourse can be organised. Some other perspectives understand narratives as self-representational pictures that we create of our selves (Riessman, 1993). Self-representations linked with talk of experience support notions of 'stability' and 'truth' under the assumption that language reflects experience independent of and prior to, language.

From this frame of reference problematics occur when aligning narrative (as lived experience) and post-structuralism. From the standpoint of this study, narrative is conceived as an articulation of experience, process, or exposure, but the articulation is experience, process, exposure in itself. In other words, experience per se is as temporal as identity, it cannot be captured, it can only be interpreted. In a sense, experience, or what we think of as experience, must always be interpretation, because experience is constituted through language rather than a world existing independently of rhetoric, embodied or otherwise. It is through articulation that we find some kind of meaning of the experience. In itself, experience has no intrinsic meaning (Gavey, 1989; Hollway, 1984, 1989, Jackson, 1998; Marshall, Wollett, & Dosanjh, 1998; Weedon, 1987).

However, the premise of 'lived experience', being part of a positivist worldview, has considerable influence and authority. So much so that it is often 'naturally' assumed that 'lived experience' and 'narrative' are synonymous. For example, traditionally a feminist standpoint will argue that when we treat "remembered experience" as "narrative construction" rather than a "true reflection" of past events the concept of experience is rendered problematic (Jackson, 1998, p45).

I argue that the premise of 'narrative construction' does not make the concept of experience problematic, particularly if we understand that 'lived experience' is neither separate, nor in opposition, to the conceptual and theoretical. That, any and all experience is constituted through the cultural (and historical) resources to hand, languaged and embodied, in the past, the present, or the future. That, experience cannot be separated from how it is talked about, conceptualised, and theorised. That, experience is always constituted through social relations. As discussed in Chapter Two, lived experience can be understood as embodied social practice. From this standpoint, narrative constructions of people's lives are as legitimate as constructions of dominant technologies. The interpretation, the process of narrative, of organising resources is as valid as the original event or experience that, from this perspective, is also an interpretation.

In other words, it is unwarranted to suggest that lived experience is in any way different from narrative construction of the 'experience'. When we are 'in the moment' with all our bodily sensations and language resources working to make some meaning, or sense making of what is happening, what we are doing is narrativising. Through interpretations, informed through perpetual interpretation and re-interpretation, we come to understand our experience, and subsequently constitute our subjectivity in any given moment (Jackson, 1998). For example, at home, in our rooms, at our computers, articulating/writing narratives - of an event - what is different? - re membering? We have talked of this before. In the moment through which my narrative is constructed, past, present and future, are entwined, as they are in any moment. That is, through autobiography/narrative we cannot help but consider the past in the present that propels us into the future. As we consider the present, we cannot but remember the past. Time cannot be severed (Lee, 1994; Howard, 1994; Spence, 1994). I tell a story of a past event, yet the story telling takes place in the present, and so, therefore does the past event.

Treating narratives as constituted accounts through which subjugation can be understood is not to deny the material context that structures our experience as it is through our socially situated accounts that we make sense of experience. When we re-member we are performing a reflexive process of subjecting our 'memories' to scrutiny. One of the purposes of this practice is to understand how we are subjugated; how we come into being

as subjects (Jackson, 1998). This is the kind of process articulated through this study. I attend training workshops and narrativise my experience in order to make meaning of my subjugation and how I come into being as subject.

Understanding narrative as constituted subjugation must depend upon theoretically understanding the person as reflexive, that is, the person is able to be both object and subject, and can, clearly reflect upon itself. Understanding our selves through this perspective argues for an, I, who remembers, an, I who writes, an, I who reflects upon both the memory and the written story, and an I within the story, and probably innumerable other, I's. Because all the I's are constituted through whatever resources they use, different stories of subjugation must be produced depending upon the constitution. In other words, subjugated reflexive self is articulated through the process of narrativising, and what's more is shown to be unstable, fluid, flexible, and capable of motion and movement.

This is in contrast to the subject/object of participant observation discussed earlier, and perhaps supports the illumination of subject/object difficulties. That is, it is not as easy as it sounds, to be both object and subject at the same time, but it is only not easy when we understand subject/object as dualist. When, as above, we understand the person as reflexive, the dualist assumptions of person as either object or subject are negated. Moreover, perhaps the person as reflexive is more than simply simultaneous object and subject, perhaps the person constituted through socially constructed contextual historical embodied discursive resources is as diverse as the resources available. That is, not binary, but multiple, continually in process as social self.

Attempts to theorise subjectivity often link the notion of social structures and humanity acting within such structures. Such endeavours keep us polarised. Within this worldview, humanity and discourse remain binary despite the assertion that the concept of 'subjectification' captures the connection (Haug, 1987; Jackson, 1998). It may well expose the subjectification, but connotations of connections also produce disconnection. This study theorises that we are subjectified all of the time, that subjectification is all there is, and that it is through articulation of subjectification that we 'do' our selves.

Narrative can be taken seriously at the same time that we recognise it as construction. Narratives articulate our political struggle, personalise the political; support, subvert, engage and expose, the regimes through which we are subjugated. Furthermore, when we understand narrative through this perspective we also begin to understand both our subjugation and our power. We are enabled to manage our selves in new ways. Narratives become devices and tools through which we can argue meaningfulness for particular persons, challenge dominant technologies and construct identities to suit our purposes.

In this study, I argue that psychotherapeutics are psychological intervention technologies of domination and power, designed to assist the assemblage of selves. I argue the contestability of those forms that have been invented for us, and offer a vision of re-invention. I choose narrative as an assembling strategy that will also expose subjugated self as politicised. In the context of research study, I have another question.

Will this study articulate, create, and stimulate knowledge, new forms of understanding, through which debate can be re-entered once again, expanding our discursive reservoir, so that we can live as we wish to live?

Perhaps?

In the meantime, the contextual map delivered through the following Chapter Six offers an interlude for reflection. It discusses my attractions and incentives for targeting psychotherapeutics and the specific practices under investigation. It serves somewhat as preface to my articulation of subjectification to apparatus of dominion, as introduction to my narratives of exposure.

## CHAPTER SIX REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS

This chapter adopts a pragmatic tone, acting both as pause in the process and contextual locator of the practices under study. As a psychologist critically examining the psychological artefacts of self and psychotherapeutic technology, I must step outside conventional and traditional psychological boundaries. The mainstream tools of psychology do not lend themselves to reflexive critical analysis and, consequently, other perspectives and influences are applied to enable challenge (Parker, 1997). In this study, a post-structuralist standpoint entwined with ethnographic participation and narrative articulation is used to address areas of concern. This particular chapter informs of the practices to which I subject my person in order to experience subjectification of self to regulatory apparatus.

In the previous chapter, I discussed, in some detail, the use of my person as research device. It is not such a strange thing to do; rather, it seems remarkably sensible. As a practitioner and partaker of psychotherapeutics, I offer a reflexively enhanced sense of the requirements for cultural membership of both of these positions. According to McCreanor (1997), the interrogation of assumptions and practices is facilitated through such “heightened ethnographic insight” (p37). Likewise, Wetherell and Potter (1992) suggest that insider knowledge of a culture and the context through which articulation arises is one of the dimensions of any satisfactory analysis. As well, if, as Rose (1990) suggests, forms of individuality are specified through technical practices, and ‘doing self’ is rendered through articulation of subjectification via the ways through which we manage, perfect, and evaluate our individuality, it makes sense as a researcher to subject my ‘own’ person to institutional practice, to experience subjectification, to articulate the process, to interpret it. As a process exposure to techniques of self government, to technologies of adjustment, is not something I can ask others to endure because I don’t know what the effects will be. I have talked of these matters previously and reiterate here simply as focus for what lies ahead. For now though, attention is turned to the practices, the techniques of subjectification under inquiry.

I choose to examine the technologies of Narrative Therapy, Gestalt Therapy, Psychodrama, and Bioenergetic Analysis. Each technology is supported through an

organised training programme and active qualified practitioners who maintain client contact such as individual or group work, either privately, or in institutions. In this country practitioners can be accessed by any individual who can afford to pay, or who qualifies for a Government subsidy. Entry to training programmes is through independent criteria, for example, training in Bioenergetics is a post-graduate programme; Psychodrama requires some previous attendance at, and knowledge of, psychodrama workshops.

A post-structuralist worldview suggests that none of these technologies are simple collections of theoretical techniques and practice. Each is constituted through discursive relationship, and even as they are constituted they constitute. Each has 'its' own contextual history, and a concurrent story within the framework of this study. All studies have a starting point, a query, a musing, a myriad of thought. This one emerged through the combination of my work as psychotherapeutic practitioner and my academic life.

If I were asked to describe my psychotherapeutic background, I would suggest that I have come through a liberal humanist perspective, tinged with some existentialism combined with a psychodynamic standpoint. Along the way I integrated some strategic, some systems and some role theory; some psychoanalysis; and an interest in transpersonal theory and accounts. A personal affinity with bodywork led me to explore bioenergetic analysis. Through this practice, I encountered a deeply satisfying interpretation of object-relations theory; the interpersonal nature of psychotherapy; and the energetic workings of trauma. Relative to these more traditional approaches the introduction of post-structuralist and constructionist thinking to my practice has been challenging, and exciting. There is little doubt that this latter introduction has added a critical and reflective edge to my work. There is no doubt that it produced the question of subjugation and its relationship with the psychotherapeutic profession.

Specifically, as I practiced and ruminated about the construction of people through discursive practices, I couldn't help but ponder the productions of various therapeutic practices. Several questions came from my reflections, including: What 'type' of self are we producing when we promote, engage in, or practice, particular psychotherapeutic techniques/models; what might be the effects or consequences of such productions; what sorts of moralities are psychotherapeutic technologies producing; how are people being disciplined as social subjects?

Rumination coincided with my commencement of a four-year training programme in Bioenergetic Analysis. Unique<sup>18</sup>, in New Zealand, as a somatic psychotherapeutic training, I was drawn to its holistic perspective of body and mind. As a practice bioenergetics has been subject to upheaval over recent years, moving from a strictly functional and prescriptive model to an interpersonal approach, where even 'soul retrieval'<sup>19</sup> is considered reasonable. My engagement with this practice and training programme served as catalyst for a number of questions instigating this study. A brief excursion into a Bioenergetic standpoint may elucidate my queries.

Founded by American psychiatrist Alexander Lowen (1958; 1965; 1967; 1970; 1972; 1975; 1980; 1984; 1985; 1990), himself a student and client of Wilhelm Reich (1970; 1972), the International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis currently has professional affiliations all over the world. It is a practice that draws upon a number of theoretical perspectives, including, Freudian, Reichian, and depth psychology, as well, as object-relations theory, self and ego psychology, various developmental perspectives, and lately contextualised relational and intersubjective standpoints. Incorporation of the relational and intersubjective qualities has moved the practice away from 'therapist as expert' and toward therapist awareness and "person-to-person" relationship (Hilton, 1998, p2). It would be fair to suggest that Twenty-first Century bioenergetics has shifted considerably from its Twentieth Century origins, and might now be understood as 'contemporary bioenergetics', however basic tenets remain consistent.

Bioenergetics suggests that body and mind are "functionally identical; that is, what goes on in the mind reflects what is happening in the body and vice versa" (Lowen & Lowen, 1977,

---

<sup>18</sup> At that time training in Bioenergetic Analysis was the only professional somatic psychotherapy training offered in New Zealand. In the last few years, a degree programme has been established in Hakomi, a derivative of Bioenergetics, plus several independent programmes, for example, Pulsing, and Skinner Releasing Techniques, have been introduced. Very recently, somatically oriented workshops have been presented by various visiting international practitioners.

<sup>19</sup> In recent trainings in New Zealand the term 'soul retrieval' has been loosely coined to explain a model for use with 'shock and trauma'. 'Soul retrieval' actively incorporates bioenergetic understandings of the psyche/soma and includes Davis' (1998) theorising of the relationship between plasmatic functioning and muscle contraction. "Understanding the role of the plasmatic response to stress and trauma also allows us to better understand the physical biological foundations of psychic armour" (p55). Plasma is understood as an amoebic like substance which is the basis for connective tissue in the body. This inclusion is particularly exciting for Bioenergetic practitioners as it presents a complementary treatment regime to Van der Kolk, McFarlane, and Weisaeth's (1996) notions of the etiologies and presentations of post-traumatic states.

p3), and, that chronic physical tension disturbs emotional health. Stress or trauma produces states of tension in the body in the form of muscle contraction. Normally the tension disappears when the stress is relieved. Bioenergetic therapists understand the body in terms of chronic tensions, or patterns, which persist after a provoking stress is removed. They suggest that such tensions, or patterns, manifest as unconscious bodily attitude or muscular set that disturb emotional health by decreasing energy, restricting motility and limiting self-expression. Correspondingly, personal history can be understood as reflected in the structure of the body and its energetic processes.

The inter-relationship of mind and body is not a new idea, although the entwining of the two has previously been more prevalent in cultures other than Western. Bioenergetics suggests that it has offered, and still offers now, a way of understanding and working with both body and mind to assist people in resolving emotional problems. A bioenergetic therapist, as well as working interpersonally, will work with energetic processes of the body such as respiration, metabolism, and the discharge and containment of energy in movement, all of which they consider as basic functions of life. They suggest that the amount of energy in the organism and the way the energy is used determines how one responds to life situations, the premise being that "one can cope more effectively if one has more energy, which can be freely translated into movement and expression" (Lowen, 1977, p3).

Of course, there is a great deal more to Bioenergetic Analysis than articulated through this account. My present purpose is to draw attention to an incongruity that pre-empted my thesis questions rather than present an in-depth treatise of Bioenergetic theory. In short, while drawn to the theories of bioenergetics, and finding that, clients as well as myself responded to and enjoyed such an approach, I also found participating in the training programme troublesome. I was engaging in a process that, despite its non-mainstream approach, presented through a bio-medical, and pathological orientation. In other words, as a practice, bioenergetics characterised and classified symptoms and disorders in a similar fashion to most traditional psychological technologies. It reified its claims. This contrasted with my evolving post-structuralist worldview. I was in conflict. Through most

---

Bioenergetic practitioners regard this complementary relationship as progress toward legitimising their claims.

of the first two years of the training<sup>20</sup>, I struggled to find some sort of ground where I could locate myself. I often found myself trying to articulate one way of 'being in the world', while being presented with a distinct 'other' way of being. In other words, Bioenergetics often seemed to present itself as stable and robust with little room for post-structuralist considerations.

It was this tussle which drew me to ponder 'bioenergetic language' and the possible 'selves' being produced through psychotherapeutic practice. From this space, this standpoint, this location, I generalised my reflections, in particular noticing the effects of various psychotherapeutic language upon colleagues and friends. For example, people exposed to psychodynamic approaches will talk about 'what they feel', as opposed to cognitive-behavioural champions who might discuss 'what they think'. The former may locate their actions as emanating from their stomach area, or heart, whereas the latter understand the world from their 'head'. Psychodramatic enthusiasts will have an investment in spontaneity, whereas transpersonal affiliations might produce a focus upon communion with God, meditative silences, and celebrating ecstasies. Gestaltist legions will promote their 'authentic self' in any given 'moment', whereas proponents of other practice may occupy themselves chatting with their 'inner child', and so on, and so on.

My questions, as mentioned earlier: what 'type' of self are we producing when we promote, engage in, or practice, particular psychotherapeutic techniques/models; what might be the effects or consequences of such productions; what sorts of moralities are psychotherapeutic technologies producing; how are people being disciplined as social subjects, all produced guidance for this study.

Initial directions led me to contemplate various psychotherapeutic practices for study. Options seemed simple until considering psychotherapeutic alliances in New Zealand. At both training and practitioner levels, there is discrepancy between mainstream and non-mainstream psychotherapeutic approaches. Mainstream approaches promoting, for example, cognitive therapy and cognitive-behavioural therapy through a scientist-practitioner orientation, are widely practised within the New Zealand mental health system. Clinical psychology training programmes orientated toward these practices are offered

---

<sup>20</sup> This conflict changed over the last two years of the training programme. I became more practised at managing my post-structuralist leanings within a modern world, plus the training, for the

through most major Universities. Some clinical psychology programmes additionally cover family systemic approaches, and lately New Zealand influenced 'Just Therapy' and Narrative Therapy (Epston & White, 1995; Kazantzis & Deane, 1998; Waldegrave, 1990), however, the primary approach has a cognitive-behavioural emphasis.

In contrast, empiricists do not consider other psychotherapeutic approaches, for example, Transactional Analysis, Hakomi, Gestalt, Psychodrama, Jungian Analysis, as commensurate with clinical psychological practices. Consequently, these approaches are not always afforded the same legitimate status as empirically supported institutional practice.

Training in traditionally non-mainstream approaches is available through various institutions including, University, Polytechnic, and private (Drewery, et al, 2000; Hermansson, 1998). Interestingly, such trainings are often oriented toward the profession of 'counselling'<sup>21</sup> rather than 'psychotherapy' although there are exceptions; for example, the training programme of The New Zealand Society for Bioenergetic Analysis is offered as post-graduate psychotherapy training. Professionalism, and subsequently legitimacy, is augmented through membership of governing professional organisations such as New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC), or New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists (NZAP). Because of their empirical paucity, 'alternative practices' are often treated as marginal by mainstream psychological practitioners. This is despite a wide consumer market. For example, community organisations, (such as Barnardo's, Manline, Parentline), personal help services (such as, Accident Compensation Corporation, Relationship Services, Methodist Social Services), and private practitioners, all services that 'manage' large volumes of clients, will use and contract counsellors trained in various approaches including mainstream. Many practitioners describe themselves as either eclectic or integrated practitioners, drawing upon multiple psychotherapeutic resources, however, there is often a predominance of one or other approach depending upon the setting (Kazantzis and Deane, 1998; Kazantzis, Deane, Patchett-Anderson, & Ronan, 1998).

---

most part, became more contextualised and holistic as it shifted into an interpersonal dimension.

<sup>21</sup> Differences or not between counselling, psychotherapy, psychology, psychiatry, and allied fields are as widely debated in New Zealand as anywhere else with consensus depending upon personal alliance and assumptions relevant to particular worldviews. For example, some groups refuse to acknowledge difference, others 'split' the groups, yet others talk of 'overlap' amongst fields (see Clarkson, 1994).

The 'rational unitary subject' of cognitive-behavioural therapy, the predominant mainstream practice of this country, is a familiar focus of academic research (Dattilio & Freeman, 1992), whereas the process of subjectification to psychotherapeutic models is not. Consequently, this study, with the purpose of examining practices through which the constitution of self is largely unknown, veered away from mainstream clinical practice toward other psychotherapeutic procedures.

In order to maintain focus and manageability a list of possible practices for study was narrowed to four accessible, popular, and reputable<sup>22</sup> practices, each of which offer prominent part-time training programmes. As previously named, the final four used for investigation are Gestalt, Psychodrama, Narrative Therapy, and Bioenergetic Analysis (commonly known as Bioenergetics).

The Gestalt Institute of New Zealand offers a programme of at least four years duration consisting of graduated modules, some of which can be accessed by non-trainees. The programme is primarily experiential, offering four or five-day group orientated workshops several times a year, but includes personal one-to-one therapy, supervision, theoretical assignments, case studies, audiotape work, and oral examinations.

The programme offered through the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association is an accumulative training through which trainees attend curriculum courses, experiential workshops and supervision in order to advance through levels of skill before completing a practical assessment and thesis study. Its accumulative composition means that trainees do not have to commit to a long-term programme but complete courses and move through levels as they are able. For example, people can enrol for core curriculum training (the first stage of the training programme), but are not obliged to continue through to intermediate and advanced levels.

The most accessible Narrative training is offered through a private institution co-directed by David Epston, one of the founders of 'narrative therapy'. Primarily a graduated educational programme in one, two or five-day modular formats, trainees can attend as

---

<sup>22</sup> The practices under investigation are categorised as reputable because the credibility of each is acknowledged by NZAC and NZAP.

many or as few workshops as they like. Recently, the Centre has expanded options and included a more formal two-year programme. The teaching approach is oriented toward didactic learning, discussion, and role-playing practice. The two-year programme incorporates supervision requirements. Training in Narrative Therapy can also be accessed through specific polytechnic and University courses.

The New Zealand Society for Bioenergetic Analysis offers a four to five year post-graduate programme, which includes didactic and experiential training, personal therapy, supervision and case study assignments. Although there are assessment requirements for passage from a pre-clinical to a clinical phase the training is a long-term commitment with little room for entry once the programme has begun. In other words unlike the other three training programmes, this programme cannot be accessed piecemeal.

At the time of selection, additional reasons for choosing these particular programmes for study were manifold. Bioenergetics was a candidate because of personal investment. I had already accessed the training, a distinct advantage, and, I had some curiosity about the 'effects' of a programme which not only influenced my research questions, but with which I was already engaged and invested.

Choosing Psychodrama was easy. It is a particularly popular practice and securing a place means early enrolment. The Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association offers a programme in my home town, which allowed me to access an entire semester of training without having to travel long distances.

When I began this research, Narrative was definitely 'flavour of the month', and in many circles is still. At that time, it was a therapeutic practice widely talked about and discussed as new, enlightening, and invigorating. It was gaining access to 'legitimate' mainstream learning institutions, yet was offering a social constructionist theoretical foundation that was not necessarily as popular as the practice itself. This incongruity was interesting, as was its theoretical challenge to autonomous self; a challenge not always adhered to either in teaching or practice. Consequently, I was drawn to take a closer look at this increasingly influential, yet sometimes incongruous, technology.

In some mainstream institutions, particularly overseas, Gestalt is acknowledged as 'legitimate' practice. In New Zealand, the Gestalt training programme is well attended despite a reputation as challenging. Currently it is the only one of the training programmes under discussion formally recognised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. This means that trainees are eligible to apply for Government funding to complete the course which is an attractive option for some trainees and enormously useful for promotion of the training programme and the practice. Its reputation, as being emotionally fulfilling, exciting, and just a little scary was another reason for its candidacy for study. Such a dynamic reputation certainly warranted further scrutiny.

With four 'objects' of study in place the remainder of the study seemed simple. A decision was made to expose myself in turn to these four practices before becoming too deeply involved in theoretical debate, writing, or developing specific hypotheses or conclusions. Prior to commencing this work I had not seriously contemplated how subjectification to psychotherapeutic technology might constitute self and was keen to have such an experience without overwhelming theoretical influences. I was aware of all I brought to the task, for example, training and practice in various forms of psychotherapy, a Masters degree in psychology, an interest and some knowledge of post-structuralism, social constructionism, discourse analysis, various life experiences and skills. However, in terms of contemporary self debate or academic responses to psychotherapy I was reasonably uninformed. I did not want to be prematurely exposed to theoretical debate that might unduly influence my exposure to therapeutic technologies, imagining that my 'naive' standpoint would probably be enough to contend with.

Consequently, I made arrangements for exposure through attending various workshops offered through each of the training programmes. The process was to be uncomplicated. I was to attend a part of each programme as participant observer of my own process and responses. I would keep a record, either verbally (that is, audio recorded), or written, and after the formal workshop, exposure experience, was over I would write a story, an exposition, of my time.

As I was already engaged in the Bioenergetic training programme, I elected to trial this first. Part of the programme consists of three five-day workshops per year. International trainers facilitate workshops and all trainees attend. As a trainee, I was required to attend

all workshops, but as a researcher, I nominated, prior to attending, a specific workshop upon which I would focus. After the Bioenergetic workshop I completed a semester of Psychodrama training, consisting of 69 hours of participation in the Core Curriculum/Intermediate training programme over various weeknights and weekends. My next assignment was a four-day residential Personal/Professional Development Experiential Gestalt Workshop. My attendance at the Gestalt workshop was as a non-trainee; non-trainees enjoy the same experiential time as trainees. This was followed in another few weeks by a five-day Narrative Therapy training. The modular format of many of the Narrative workshops allows selective enrolment.

Exposure to these practices took place over approximately 12 months. The process did not remain simple, instead it became extremely complex with problems beginning almost immediately. I had issues of conflict in the relationship between my post-structuralist research standpoint and my position as bioenergetics trainee. During all of the exposures 'participant observation' became so difficult that most of the time I was more of a participant than observer. Each training segment I attended seemed to powerfully, though temporarily, influence my psychotherapeutic worldview and way of being in the world; this was very unsettling, influencing not only my theoretical standpoint and musings, but also the rest of my life. For example, I had weeks of 'being Gestalt'. The form of the story writing required some debate, particularly in terms of what to write, what to exclude or include.

These issues were addressed, some have been discussed in the preceding chapter. Because I experienced persisting discomfort doing the Bioenergetic training alongside what often seemed an antithetical academic standpoint, I elected much later in the process to nominate an extra Bioenergetic workshop as focus of inquiry. The bioenergetic training programme ran concurrently with the entire research programme, including my exposure to the other practices. This entire study, theoretical and experiential<sup>23</sup> has evolved alongside my involvement as Bioenergetic therapist, and I had some curiosity about the influence of my theoretical standpoint upon my exposure to Bioenergetic practice, and a desire to understand more about my aggravation.

The conclusion of this process found me with five discrete narratives that retrospectively constituted a research strategy for making sense of the subjugation of self to psychotherapeutic practice. The purpose thereafter was to address theoretical debate, present the narratives of exposure, and then expose the narratives to interpretation. This was another process that declined a steady route, introducing instead, deviations and divergence.

When I began this study it was under the assumption that I was researching psychotherapy, the effects of psychotherapy upon self, and the type of self being produced through different practices. I was interested in identifying ideologies and discourses contributing to the construction of self, and was asking myself such questions as, whether psychotherapeutics adopted a role of classifying and determining desirable, appropriate and acceptable ways of conduct, and, how are psychotherapeutic knowledge and practice intertwined with social institutions and power structures. The study was to have a post-structuralist orientation and would probably involve some form of Foucauldian discursive analysis involving the examination of 'texts' with the aim of identifying discursive patterns of meaning inhabiting and informing the text.

Although I continued to maintain a post-structuralist orientation, the study has shifted, not necessarily through any design of my own, from its original outline. It was not until I became immersed within ontological and epistemological debate of self that I noticed that my reading and literature searching were revolving around the complex relationship between constituted self and psychotherapy rather than a simpler exposé of psychotherapy and its effects. This was interesting rather than extraordinary, but retrospectively was an indicator of minor tremors. For those accustomed to the multiple patterns and shifting viewpoints of qualitative work such indicators will not be unusual (Kidder & Fine, 1997).

There came a time, a point, where I needed to consider the relationship between my theoretical work and my stories/narratives, where I needed to consider the status of the stories in relation to research objects. It was at this time, at this point, that I began to understand the study in a different way. I began to understand that I was no longer doing

---

<sup>23</sup> I differentiate here between theoretical and experiential merely to demarcate the studying and writing of the theoretical chapters, and the attendance at workshops with accompanying stories. In fact, the entire process is experiential.

a straightforward linear post-structuralist accounting for self as constituted through psychotherapeutic technology. I began to understand the work as an uninterrupted infinite constitution of self in and through relationship; not only in terms of the relationships I was discussing, but also in terms of contextual time, in terms of relationships before, during and to come. I began to understand self as embodied discursive construction, as performance, as often contradictory, but as continually in motion. I began to understand post-structuralism as a means of access to the never-seen, never-known object/non-object. I began to understand psychotherapeutics as self-constructing technologies, as self-constructing apparatus of governance and power, and simultaneously as a tool, or device, through which I could access subjectification, constitution, construction. I began to understand this study as storied, as narrative within narratives with narratives within, constructing and constituting narratives, infinitely interwoven, contextualising and continuous. At this time of beginning different understandings the work was no longer about psychotherapy, it was a study accounting for constituted self in a world where self is one of the most talked about constructs that we produce.

To, many exposed to post-structuralist ideas these are not new revelations, in fact they are quite easily talked about. But, in the case of this study talking is experienced as different to doing. 'Doing' subjectification to apparatus of subjectification and articulating the process of subjectification through the theoretical narratives and the narratives of exposure produces subtleties that I have not previously experienced through talk alone. How am I demarcating talk and doing? I suggest that the 'doing' I refer to might be about exposure with attendant knowledge, about identification of my person/self/subjectification as construction and "carrier of culture" (Freeman, 2000b, p90). It might be about exposure with awareness, with reflection and introspection. I hesitate to interpret as the notion has not crystallised and maybe never will. At this stage, all I can suggest is that 'doing' seems to be more than just talking about 'doing'. Perhaps there are similarities between my talk of *talking* versus *doing* and Freeman's (2000a) discussion of the relationship between discourse and experience where he talks of the difficulties of *living* postmodernism as compared to *thinking* it. It appears there may be some distinction.

I am getting ahead of myself. The following five chapters are devoted to my narratives of exposure, of subjectification to apparatus of dominion, to psychotherapeutics as a device

of visibility. Apart from presenting as written text the 'stories' take different forms. Identifiable names and characteristics of presenters and facilitators are altered.

I don't know what your experience of reading them will be. Perhaps this will be your time as 'participant observer'. I offer an invitation to consider them as articulated process even as you articulate your own.

They were written out of an unarticulated understanding of the relationship between psychotherapeutics, narrative and self. Much, or even most, of the theoretical work to this point was incomplete when the stories were written. In a way, they are like a flashback; they are an articulated re-remembering, frozen in written form. As such they disrupt the temporal order of this study as traditional Western narrative in that they are presented as the middle of a sequence, whereas their lineal location is closer to the beginning (Anderson, 1997).

Given the theoretical standpoint of this work, presenting as it does the embeddedness of narratives intertwined with other narratives alongside the notion of orderly linearity as culturally influenced, a flashback technique is little different to the insertion of statistical data compiled prior to the development of a literature review. I draw attention to this 'temporal distortion' in order to re-emphasise review of our conceptions of temporal order (Freeman, 1993). Despite presenting the narratives of exposure as discrete events, it would be a mistake to think of them as foreclosed (Freeman, 2000a). The traditional understanding of narrative shaped as beginning, middle, and end, is disrupted through the notion of self/subjectification in continuous motion. The narratives you are about to read are only a minute glimpse of an infinite assemblage. Presenting articulated subjectification in narrative form as a series of foreclosed discrete events equals attempts to stifle and arrest self into submission. Such a presentation may serve "to constrict and delimit the scope of meaning" (Freeman, 2000a, p91). My purpose is not to subdue the process but to enable the scope of meaning-making. In order to do this I artificially constrain the process of subjectification within the confines of these pages whilst maintaining a theoretical position that constitutes both narrative and subjectification as perpetual.

The work to this point has been my imaginings of relationships between narrative and self, between psychotherapeutics and self. It has included the things that I have interpreted

other people as saying. Now, as you do, I return to these stories, wondering myself about their meaning in relationship to the subjectification of self to technologies of psychotherapeutics.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN BIOENERGETICS AND THE SELF**

I'm attending the first day of a five-day training workshop for trainee Bioenergetic therapists. Bioenergetics is 'dedicated to the practice of mind-body psychotherapy'. The workshop is part of a four-year programme consisting of 84 teaching days, 150 hours of personal therapy with a qualified bioenergetic therapist, 50 hours of supervision by a certified supervisor, a case presentation, and assessment by accredited assessors from the United States of America. Training programmes are a regular occurrence in North America, Europe, Latin America, and more recently, New Zealand. This particular workshop takes part in the second year of training. The following pages are my interpretation of the theoretical literature presented during the workshop, and subsequently, my understanding of the development of the 'bioenergetic self'.

The New Zealand Society for Bioenergetic Analysis Inc runs the programme, which is affiliated with, and which complies with the rules of, The International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis, New York. Our (American) presenter, and facilitator Dr Smith, who has extensive training and experience in Bioenergetics, is a practicing clinical psychologist specialising in the treatment of trauma and mood disorders.

The venue, a room in a building in a major New Zealand city, has pleasant views of the sea. Those attending are seated comfortably on cushions and mattresses arranged in semi circular fashion along two walls of a very large space. The facilitator sits in front of the group, facing 'the class', with easy access to a whiteboard and an overhead projector.

First on the programme is a 'check-in'. One by one each of the 12 trainees share 'how they feel' about attending the workshop, and anything that might have 'come up' (happened) for them since they last met. This process takes about half an hour. Dr Smith outlines the agenda for the following five days. The format will include lectures and experiential work. The focus of this particular workshop (as defined in a lecture handout) is described as:

‘the developmental stages associated with the development of a firm and separate sense of self in the child, and the major personality patterns and character structures associated with difficulties during these periods’  
(Johnson, 1985, 1994; Lowen, 1995; Masterson, 1985).

I feel some excitement as I hear about the topic. Having just spent 12 days formulating my understanding of constructionist theory/ideas about ‘the self’, ‘what it is’, ‘how it works’, I am now about to hear about a bioenergetic perspective of ‘the self’, ‘what it is’, ‘how it works’. The synchronicity of the themes is invigorating, although I notice a niggling of irritation at the suggestion of ‘a consistent sense of self’. However, as the first lecture begins I am all anticipation.

This perspective of the self relies primarily upon the developmental theory of Margaret Mahler and of Daniel Stern. Mahler’s reformulation of psychoanalytic theory focuses explicitly upon the infant/mother relationship (Berger, 1988) and a process named by Mahler as the “separation-individuation phase” of development (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975, px). Stern’s (1985) attention is also drawn to the infant, concentrating upon the formulation of different senses of self that emerge during the infant’s developmental process. Hailing from medical (psychiatry) and psychoanalytic backgrounds both theorists reveal an interest in various pathologies, or disruptions of formulation, of self (Kaplan, Sadock and Grebb, 1994; Stern, 1977,1985). Such interests are analogous with a bioenergetics approach, focusing as it does upon self-pathology.

Although Mahler’s theory covers the time span of birth to age three, workshop lectures concentrate upon the separation-individuation process (SI) beginning from five months to age three approximately. It is during this time, specifically from the age of five months, that Mahler et al (1975) suggest that the ‘sense of self’<sup>24</sup> develops. From a training perspective, focus upon this period allows trainees to understand characterological patterns affecting body structure and sense of self when disruptions occur within the SI process. Mahler et al describe the process as:

---

<sup>24</sup> Sense of self is also referred to as the psychological birth of the infant or, a person’s subjective sense of separateness from the world around them (Kaplan et al, 1994; Mahler et al, 1975).

“the establishment of a sense of separateness from, and relation to, a world of reality, particularly with regard to the experiences of *one’s own body* and to the principal representative of the world as the infant experiences it, the *primary love object*.” (p3)

The list on the following page, delineating the ‘tasks’ of the infant, is presented as an outline of the SI process according to Mahler (Frechette, 1996).

## SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION

### Differentiation

5-10 months

- Turns to "other than mother"
- Expansion beyond symbiotic sphere
- "Hatching" period

Subphase: Identity formation

- Mutual reflection
- Peak of manual tactile and visual exploration (6-7 months), leads to recognition of stranger as different from mother
- Separation anxiety, threat of loss

### Practicing

10-15 months

- Growing interest in inanimate objects
- Exploration, but emotional refueling seeing or hearing mother while at a distance
- Walking=giant step towards becoming his/her own person. Larger view of world
- Elation of escape compensates separation anxiety
- Attachment to father
- Capacity for self-soothing
- Transitional object
- Distance and closeness determined by child
- Beginning of dev. of secondary narcissism

### Rapprochement

15-22 months

- Growth of perceptual and cognitive faculties
- Renewed interest in mother following realisation that she is separate from self
- Fear of losing love from love object

Crisis

18-20 to 24 months

- Coercive behaviour in attempt to reestablish mother-infant dual unity (active resistance to separation from mother)
- Indecisiveness
- Transitional phenomenon (object, space or activity) to cope with absence of mother
- A new optimal distance is found towards 21 months
- Growing awareness of body through toilet training
- Discovery of sex differences

### Individuation

20-22 to 36 months

- Acquisition of well-defined individuality
- Extensive structuration of self, sense of personal boundaries
- Primitive consolidation of sexual identity
- Internalization of parental demands contributes to development of self
- Object constancy is preserved through symbolic representation of love object (internalization, mental image)
- Relationships develop through mutual exchange (giving-receiving activities)
- Complex cognitive functions develop as well (verbal communication, fantasy and reality testing)
- Beginning of a long process of formation of self-identity

SI is considered an intrapsychic process. Principal psychological accomplishments take place during this specific developmental phase however, derivatives of these early processes occur throughout the life cycle. For example, Mahler proposes that severe mental illness, adults who avoid intimacy or adults who fear independence may still be trying to achieve “a proper sense of self” and resolve the “tension of separation-individuation” (Berger, 1988, p153). This is in accord with the bioenergetic approach that suggests that unresolved infantile conflict results in emotional difficulties and tension persisting into adulthood.

Bioenergetic analysis suggests that during the SI process tension and trauma between caregiver and child abets the formation, or relates to the etiology, of character structure or ‘false self’, and consequently the sense of self that is produced. Optimum conditions are required for ‘successful’ negotiation of separation-individuation. Optimum conditions can be understood as, an environment that encourages a full range of self-expression; an environment that accurately and sympathetically mirrors those expressions; an environment that provides ‘optimal frustration’, that is, limits and boundaries, to such expression when necessary (Maley, 1998). The ‘task’ of the caregiver is to provide such an environment. Optimum environment is aligned with ‘normal’ development and completion of ‘tasks’ in separation-individuation. Normal development during the SI process is considered in terms of outcome and is oriented as follows:

“1. The “self-structure” that emerges has some of these characteristics:

- spontaneity
- the ability to soothe swings of emotions (impulse control)
- commitment (frustration tolerance)
- autonomy
- initiative
- involvement with self and others
- continuity of self perception - (ego boundaries)

2. Splitting as a defense has been replaced by repression (ability to neutralise affect).
3. There is a firm sense of a separate self developing - not yielded over to others or externally defined; not covered by a false self artificially inflated; and, not withdrawn out of fear of humiliation or intimidation.
4. The child is still in touch with the body and its sensations and able to express needs.

5. Capacity to see a person as a whole, both good and bad; have an investment in them persist in spite of frustration, and have the capacity to evoke an image of the person when they are not present.”

(Maley, 1998)

Failed environmental responsiveness and parenting patterns in which the child is used to fulfil agendas of the caregivers interrupts the SI process and produces especial characterological outcomes.

In order to discuss characterological outcomes in relation to the SI process bioenergetics borrows from object relations theory (Klein, 1952; Segal, 1964). Object relations theory provides a structured way to talk of how the principle relationships in life become internalised. In simple terms the infant, as an object relations unit, that is a psychological structure, develops an internalised image of ‘the other person’ (the object representation), and an internalised image of self (self representation). Interaction between object representation and self representation binds the two together through the emotion, or affect, experienced in the interaction. Bioenergetics asserts that characterological outcomes, specifically character structure, or ‘false self’ are primarily produced through interactions of caregiver and child. This is a complex process. The following examples may illuminate this relationship.

Focusing upon Mahler’s stages of practicing (10-15 months), rapprochement (15-22 months), and crisis (18/20-24 months) distinguishes development of the borderline, narcissistic, and masochistic character structures (Lowen, 1958; 1975), and consequently the sense of self that is produced through caregiver/child interactions when the optimum environment is lacking.

The borderline character structure is roughly attuned with the 15-month-old stage of rapprochement. During this stage the child begins to explore the environment, knows that mother is close at hand, and starts to realise that mother is separate from the child self. Tension and trauma occur when the child begins to separate or individuate and mother alternatively and inconsistently draws the exploring child back to her, clinging to the child; or, mother withdraws her attention, support, and approval. It is not difficult to imagine how such an environment can confuse a child who is trying to explore but also fears losing love from the love object. As an isolated incident, ramifications may seem innocuous. As a

recurring behavioural interaction over specific stages of development consequences and affects upon the child's burgeoning self can be considerable. Such interactions force the child to adapt in some way, to develop a 'false self' (most often a self that will appease mother) in order to maintain the love of the caregiver and a sense of equilibrium. Object and self representations are fused; the child understands its self through mother's response, the false self is preserved through further interaction and subsequently into adult relationships.

The narcissistic character structure emerges from the same stage of development but via a different behavioural interaction. Attempts at autonomy are met by the parent's need for control, engendering feelings of powerlessness and humiliation in the child. The mothering parent frustrates or manipulates the child's normal grandiosity for her own ends (Maley, 1998). This is allied with a process of seduction whereby the child is seduced into believing that they are special to the parent and above others (Conger, 1994; Lowen, 1984).

Through the 20 to 36 month stage, the masochistic character structure is formed through dominating and intrusive parenting. The mothering parent denies the child the right to say NO as a way of developing an individual identity. The child's developing independence is suppressed. The child must quell frustrations and angry impulses at being overpowered in order to maintain contact with the parent.

Several references detailing character formation are available through the New Zealand Society for Bioenergetic Analysis Inc.; the International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis; Universities and some local libraries. The simplified illustrations used above help trainees, and readers, to understand the relationship between Mahler's SI process and bioenergetics process of character formation. Relevant to the development of character and the sense of self is a deficient 'optimum environment' in which the child on the developmental journey must make adaptations in order to maintain an 'ideal', or 'love', relationship with the parent. 'Character' can be understood as 'patterns of behaviour'. It would be a mistake to assume that character formation occurs in isolation. As can be imagined, a child can experience many tensions/traumas relevant to different stages of development and thus make many adaptations to perceived parental demands.

Throughout the developing years, all character structure adaptations will influence the sense of self (Conger, 1994).

Stern (1985) talks of the sense of self a little differently to Mahler. Whereas Mahler suggests negotiation of stages leading to a sense of self, Stern talks in terms of a series of self-organising processes that begin at birth. He eschews notions of negotiated developmental phases specifically devoted to issues such as autonomy and independence. Whereas discussions of Mahler and bioenergetics describe the emergence of 'the false self', Stern suggests that it is the already existing sense of self which serves as a perspective from which to organise social experience, and which allows different senses of self to develop. He discusses four different senses of the self that each remains fully functioning and active throughout life, rather than as successive phases each replacing the other. They are "the sense of an *emergent self*, which forms from birth to age two months, the sense of a *core self*, which forms between the ages of two and six months, the sense of a *subjective self*, which forms between seven to fifteen months, and a sense of a *verbal self*, which forms after that" (p11).

*As I write I notice that I am beginning to find the content of these two theories, of which I have previously been ignorant, intriguing. They are informing my understanding of infant development differently to ideas of theorists presented during my undergraduate years, such as Piaget, Erikson, Freud, or Skinner, Rogers, Maslow (Berger, 1988). I am becoming attracted to the idea of in-depth reading and discussion of infant development including its intricate relationship with bioenergetics. I am beginning to understand bioenergetics itself as another theory of infant and human development, rather than thinking of it as a psychotherapeutic model, which for me, has meant technique rather than theory. This is not the place to digress. The workshop explaining the bioenergetic self does not explore these theories in depth but borrows those elements that best inform its own stance. Although Stern, among other theorists, is also utilised in bioenergetic discussion of intersubjectivity (Finlay, 1998), in this forum the focus of bioenergetic interest is with Stern's talk of a 'core self'. It is to this that we now return.*

The bioenergetic focus upon the inclusiveness of mind and body, a concept not unique to bioenergetics (Conger, 1994; Corsini & Wedding, 1995; Lowen 1958,1975,1984,1985; Lowen & Lowen, 1977) leads to an alliance with Stern's concept of core self. Stern (1985) speaks of the core self as "the physical self that is experienced as a coherent, wilful, physical entity with a unique affective life and history that belong to it" (p26). He aligns the 'sense of core self' with the psychoanalytic term 'body ego' while simultaneously suggesting that it is more than, and conceptualised differently than, body ego. The 'sense of core self' is described as "an experiential sense of self" that is difficult to verbalise and is

taken for granted (p26). As a transformation it occurs somewhere between the second and sixth months of life, bequeathing to infants the sense “that they and mother are quite separate physically, are different agents, have distinct affective experiences, and have separate histories” (p27).

Bioenergetics interprets Stern’s term, ‘sense of core self’, as relating to the body, in effect, ‘the sense of the body’. In other words the infant is beginning to ‘get in touch’ with their body - how it works, how it feels, plus the sensations the body can maintain. Accordingly this assumption implies that as the infant negotiates Mahler’s developmental stages the ‘sense of body self’ is existent.

This interpretation connects the theories of Stern and Mahler with the bioenergetic tenet of a “functionally identical” body and mind (Lowen & Lowen, 1977, p3). Bioenergetics considers body and mind as an energetic process; an energetic and alive body creates a feeling and thinking mind, allowing ‘optimal functioning’, ‘pleasure in being alive’, and ‘wholeness’, all of which are the epitome of ‘the bioenergetic self’ (Corsini & Wedding, 1995). Acquiring ‘a bioenergetic self’ requires an optimum environment during the SI process.

Previous discussion of the SI process has interpreted the impact of failed environmental responsiveness and anomalous parenting patterns in terms of characterological outcomes, for example, masochistic character structure. Such outcomes are not only identifiable through adapted ways of being or adapted behavioural patterns, but also through the ‘state of aliveness’ of the body. Body rigidity or chronic tension diminishes aliveness, decreases energy, disturbs emotional health and limits self expression (Lowen & Lowen, 1977). Such tensions are characterised as “blocks” (Michel, 1997, p109) and when thought of anatomically can be described as patterns of chronic muscle contractions preventing full and unified body movement (Michel 1997). Each individual is anatomically shaped relative to the adaptations made, that is the character structure/false self produced, at the time of ‘traumatic’ interaction between caregiver and child. In other words, both the body and the mind are affected/influenced by the interaction. The interpretation of the infant having a body sense is a necessary adjunct for the bioenergetic concept of “blocks” which are sustained alongside, and are considered part of, characterological development. A basic bioenergetic explanation of the formation of blocks could be summarised as follows.

The infant body negotiating the SI process is not mature enough to sustain, nor understand, over-stimulation of the body senses occurring under stress or tension. The infant body, flooded/overwhelmed with sensation is essentially 'in shock', and has to somehow maintain some sort of equilibrium in order 'to stay alive'. Chronic muscular tension acts as an adaptation against the 'shock state' by 'freezing' the sensation/energy (thus managing it), but consequently physically altering the developing anatomical structure of the infant. This muscle contracture is referred to as "blocks" precisely because the contracture 'blocks' energetic movement, or energy, from one part of the body to another. The infant body, areas of which are frozen or blocked, is unable to be functionally vibrant and alive and this 'state' is maintained through childhood, adolescence and adulthood as an adapted self. Part of the bioenergetic therapeutic task becomes re-educating the 'damaged/adapted core self', and assisting clients to 'stay with' and 'move through' sensations and their associated meanings<sup>25</sup>. Hence, the bioenergetic focus upon 'body work'.

This bioenergetics explanation of the affects of trauma/hyperarousal on the body has similarities with discussions by van der Kolk (1997) regarding the psychobiology of post-traumatic stress relative to children. Both perspectives suggest that feelings belonging to the trauma are continually re-experienced on an interpersonal level, that responsiveness to the environment is affected and pleasure in ordinary living diminished.

Essentially this exposition so far sums up my understanding of the theoretical material presented at the workshop. The bioenergetic perspective of the self seems to be largely a developmental self which if damaged during transit ceases to function at full capacity. I notice my choice of words suggests that bioenergetics derives from a mechanistic world-view (Sarbin, 1986), which should not be surprising considering the Freudian and ego psychology influences on both bioenergetics literature and the theoretical stance adopted in this discussion. I suspect the surprise I am experiencing is simply because I have never previously thought of bioenergetics as mechanistic. I feel slightly uncomfortable about

---

<sup>25</sup> As previously suggested, a child can experience many tensions/traumas relevant to different stages of development and thus make many adaptations to perceived parental demands. This also applies to anatomical structure and as children or adults, most individuals present physically as a blend of character structures.

involvement with a mechanistic process, via my training in the model and my experience as a client, primarily, I suspect, because of my academic standpoint of 'postmodernism'. I am wondering if and how I can fit the two views together. Postmodernism has suddenly become problematic. Perhaps I should change to an hermeneutic standpoint. Perhaps I shall decide that postmodernist worldviews and structured worldviews can somehow work together, maybe I can change the meaning to suit myself such as Parker suggests when discussing "*practical deconstruction*" (Parker, et al, 1995, p3). Such diverse worldviews suddenly seem to be the antithesis of each other. For some reason I am beginning to feel some hostility toward the material being presented. I am feeling drawn back to a more contextualised worldview. I suddenly don't like this mechanistic version that I was starting to believe. It is too - not real, it is too suave, and it is too slick. I don't want to hear anything more about it. Why did I start liking it?

## CHAPTER EIGHT EXPERIENCING PSYCHODRAMA

The Wellington<sup>26</sup> Psychodrama Training Institute serves the needs of trainees in the central region of New Zealand. The Institute offer programmes in Palmerston North, Wellington and the Nelson area. Training leads to certification as a role trainer, psychodrama director, sociodrama director and sociometrist. It is not necessary to complete to certification for significant learning and application to be achieved. The Institute's programme is conducted in accordance with the standards established by the Board of Examiners of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA). The teaching staff of the Institute are approved by the Board of Examiners.

The purpose of the programme is to develop capability in the theory and practice of all forms of psychodrama. These methods assist people to work with groups and individuals in counselling, educational and organisational settings. The training is also of value to those in positions where providing leadership is central to their role. Training can be accumulated by attending curriculum course training workshops, experiential workshops and through supervision. The training programmes provided in Palmerston North, Wellington and the Nelson Area each have a two-semester year. Weekend workshops are included in the year's programme. The curriculum for each programme is based on the material set out in the ANZPA Training Manual and includes practice, coaching, supervision and teaching.

Core Curriculum Training is designed for people who are either at the beginning or early stages of their psychodrama training. It introduces the founding principles of the psychodrama method using small group activity and supervised practice. Intermediate Training is for trainees who have completed the core curriculum or equivalent. It strengthens the trainees role development in the areas of directing, auxiliary work and group work. Advanced Training is for trainees who have completed the intermediate year or equivalent. Through coaching and supervised practice, trainees are developed as group leaders and encouraged in their independent application of the psychodrama method. Advanced trainees are also expected to complete reading, writing and peer group activities.

My Previous Experience: During the past eight years, 240 hours of psychodrama evening and weekend workshops.

Researching this study allowed me to officially attend Semester One, 1999, of the Core Curriculum Training in Palmerston North. This was held over three Friday evenings, six Wednesday evenings, and two Saturdays. Evening sessions ran from 7pm - 9.30pm, Saturdays from 10am - 5pm. I enjoyed it so much I stayed for Semester Two as well, but that's another story.

---

<sup>26</sup> Capital city of New Zealand, located in the south of North Island

12 MARCH 1999

FUN fun fun FUN fun FUN  
FUN FUN FUNffffffuuuuunnn  
FUN FUN

The more fun there is the less it seems like fun  
Run around run around

JUMP ABOUT

I feel like a teletubby

Be aware  
Be aware of your self

up

down

up

down

Is this aerobics or psychodrama?

I'm wasted already

After the first night of the psychodrama, the very first session,  
on the 12th of March,  
I was so engrossed in my own responses that I just about forgot to record  
anything  
it's  
- very experiential, very very active, very into getting people up and about, getting people  
'responding',  
they say understanding is great, but we don't want to be in our heads too much,  
we want to be 'responding',  
they don't say where from,  
I suppose from our guts or something like that,  
it's very active,  
they're getting people to connect with others all the time,  
movement up on your feet,  
up,  
down,  
up  
down,  
be aware,  
be aware of yourself,  
you never know when you're going to be called upon,  
you never know when you're going to be prodded,  
you never know where it's going to come from,  
it's a real contrast to bioenergetics in that way, a real contrast

it seems to be fun, fun, fun,  
bioenergetics talks about spontaneity,  
coming alive,  
energetic movement,  
being more able to be alive in the world,  
more able to enjoy,  
yet,

psychodrama is doing it  
they emphasise fun fun fun,  
life is fun,

and I can see from the people who have done it before  
they're like little children  
when they get up,  
these roles,  
they talk about 'developing roles',  
this is a place where they can be kids,  
or something like that,  
that's my impression,  
now,  
at the beginning,  
a place to be children,

mmm,  
I'm not sure about that,  
whether that's what it's really about,  
they get into fun  
I appreciate that  
but,  
what is that really  
???

\*\*\*\*\*

**19 MARCH 1999**

“We meet again”

“It’s still fast”

“Yes”

“We’re doing ‘purpose of the group’”

“What do you want out of the group?”

“I don’t know”

Talk in small groups  
Choose people to be with  
Find a place in the room  
What is your ‘purpose’?  
What do you want for yourselves?

Come back into the big group<sup>27</sup>

Choose a director

Set out your ‘purpose’

The room is your ‘stage’

‘Direct’ the ‘drama’

Recreate your ‘seed’

Develop other ‘seeds’

Some teaching?

We take ‘seeds’<sup>28</sup> with us wherever we go. We take little ‘seeds’ of ‘the victim’, ‘the abuser’, whatever has been, or has developed in our early lives. We bring and take them with us wherever we go. We recreate them wherever we are. Every role that you can possibly think of or even desire to have is within you.

“Kind of creepy, huh!”

---

<sup>27</sup> There are 15 people taking part in this core-curriculum training plus one facilitator/trainer, a qualified psychodramatist. Of the 15, six are men, and nine are women. Three of the men are practising counsellors, as are six of the women. One man, not a counsellor, has never done psychodrama before. Everybody else is familiar with the model, and has attended prior workshops. The facilitator/trainer is a woman. Ages range from about 35 to 52.

<sup>28</sup> Referring to ‘roles’

## 20 March 1999

Saturday, from 10am to 5pm, we practice, taking small slices of life, enacting them as mini psychodramas, action, action, moving, moving, warm up, warm up, stressing 'taking part', we're all doing 'the work' all of the time.

We don't have to be in a drama to be 'doing the work'.

"What is the culture? What is the culture of the training group?"

People have turns at directing, they're helped by the facilitator, they

'work through'  
a 'drama',  
where 'the protagonist', the person doing the drama,  
'sets the scene',  
sets out 'different roles',  
sometimes sets out people, 'auxiliaries', in the scenes,  
the protagonist 'role reverses' with auxiliaries,  
they are 'a part' of the protagonist,  
they respond with the words of the protagonist,  
they respond differently than how it may have been during the actual event,  
every auxiliary is a role of the protagonist.

Our 'stage' is a part of this large room. We sit on small hard straight-backed chairs, semi-circular against one wall. The remainder of the floor is our stage. We can create anything we like in our 'theatre'. We can use the cushions lying around, we can sculpt people, or we can invent things out of air. The 'director' directs, but the drama is produced by the protagonist who also plays the principal role. The group acts as audience, or auxiliaries. One way or another everyone is involved.

Some protagonists allow themselves to feel emotion - crying, screaming, distress - whatever they were unable to express at the original event,

the director coaxes: 'express yourself', 'express yourself', 'express yourself',  
'reverse', 'reverse roles', 'reverse roles', 'express yourself', 'express yourself',  
'you're in relationship to this part of you over here', 'to you over here', 'express yourself in  
relationship', 'where are you in relationship to this person', 'what is your relationship to that  
person over there'.

Sometimes it's very fast and hard to follow. The director keeps track of relationships with  
quick and snappy role reversals. Sometimes it's slow, the protagonist is 'stuck',  
floundering for words or action, new roles are introduced, the drama expands, scenes  
change, auxiliaries are 'interviewed'. A 'good' auxiliary is expected to play their part well,  
to reproduce the gestures and words of the protagonist and, at times, to creatively ad lib,  
thus augmenting the role.

After each drama,  
we all come together as a group,  
the director and the protagonist sit side by side, touching,  
we 'share'  
'what came up for you'  
'what is that about for you'  
'what does that say about your relationship'  
'whatever we say is about us', 'it is never about anybody else'  
'sharing' is our 'gift' to the protagonist.

... it seems to be commonly understood that there are 'different roles'; that there is a 'little  
you', that there might be an 'adult you', that there might be a, 'censury you', as in a critical  
you, there might be a role that tells you what to do, there might be a 'teacher you',

Roles are allowed to 'want',  
parts of you are allowed to want things from other parts of you, so if you're working, there's  
a common understanding that you work with

'parts of you that are little',

and often people go to 'little places', they reverse roles with their 'little part', and their little part often wants something from the bigger adult part or from another part, it wants support or loving or holding or to play or reassurance ...

... it seems to be commonly understood that different parts, different roles, 'have a right' to want things from other parts, and 'have a right' to have their expectation of wanting met in some way, even though it may not be met on the day, and there seems to be an idea that parts need to merge closer together, that they need to get to know each other better so that they can all work harmoniously, in some kind of consensus, or at least democratically!

\*\*\*\*\*

Sometimes it's boring. If you say so, you'll probably have to do a drama.

I feel myself flagging during the afternoon, Not only is it non-stop action, but it's also slow. A paradox! Ho hum, I guess I should develop my patience and allow people's dramas to unfold. (Sometimes I would like to tell them what to do).

\*\*\*\*\*

**14 APRIL 1999**

We haven't met for a while. The facilitator has been ill. It's three and a half weeks since we had our all day marathon on 20 March.

"Will it be different?"

"I've forgotten everybody's names"

“Except those you’ve known before”

“Yes of course”

“The room is very warm, it’s stuffy”

“Don’t worry”

The facilitator asks who is ‘warmed up’ to being director. Two people are willing to direct small dramas. She says we’ll continue looking at ‘cultural and social atoms’ ...

“Is that what we were doing?”

“Apparently”

“What are they, what does she mean?”

“Don’t worry”

... ‘cultural and social atoms’ of our families ...

... BUT ...

somebody, a person, a protagonist, a participant who becomes a protagonist,  
says that they have ‘something on top’ straight away,  
and the ensuing evening,  
revolves around that person’s drama,  
(for the entire session).

It isn’t fun anymore,  
It’s changed to serious,  
We’re ‘warmed up’ to the story,  
The protagonist chooses a director,  
It’s the first big drama,  
Everyone hopes they won’t be chosen,  
Of course it’s not compulsory,  
But, what would you do if you were picked?

The favoured director nervously accedes,  
The facilitator says she’ll help, you can pause, stop start stop start, do it your own way,

The drama is intense.

I play a major auxiliary role,  
I experience the protagonist's life, the protagonist's childhood,  
how the protagonist learned to be,  
how they are now in the world,  
how in the 'adult role' they are 'triggered' into the 'child role',  
I experience different feelings in different roles,  
I resonate with the protagonist,  
I resonate with the role,  
I am no stranger to this place,  
I like the acting,  
I like being actively involved in the drama,  
It's exciting.

After the drama,  
we all come together as a group,  
the director and the protagonist sit side by side, touching,  
we 'share'  
'what came up for you'  
'what is that about for you'  
'what does that say about your relationship'  
'whatever we say is about us', 'it is never about anybody else'  
'sharing' is our 'gift' to the protagonist.

One person thinks they might explode  
"That sounds drama tic"  
They think they have so much energy inside their body they might truly explode. They  
are tearful and worried about being an unsuitable trainee. They think they  
will have to leave the training  
The facilitator is soothing  
She enquires and dispels the myth about exploding trainees  
She talks of trainee 'roles' versus the 'role' currently 'taken up'

Reassured, the trainee sobs.

Others are variously excited or tearful,  
or simultaneously tearful and excited  
They have been reminded of their own families of origin  
They have noticed how they learned to be  
They talk of the 'roles' they have 'taken on board'  
They have 'resonated' with the protagonist  
They have been part of the drama  
Even if they were in the audience

I remember I'm supposed to be a participant observer  
I realise I've forgotten to be a participant observer  
I notice I've been a participant  
I don't think I've been an observer  
I wonder whether it's possible to be a participant observer?

## **21 APRIL 1999**

Tonight we explore 'role systems'  
Did you know that all the roles of our family of origin are within us?  
That we're constituted through these roles?  
That we recognise our own family roles in other people?  
That some people have roles that we don't have?  
That we're attracted to some people because they have a role we would have liked in  
our own family?  
That as adults we can see which roles would have been useful for us as children?  
That is, if we're doing psychodrama.

We explore our response to roles  
What do we 'warm up' to?

## Warming up to our roles is a curious business

Imagine, for example, that you're watching a drama and you think the protagonist is less than generous with themselves, in other words they judge themselves and their own actions very harshly. You recognise this because you have, in the past, harboured your own role of harsh critic. Feeling generous toward your fellow protagonist you decide during sharing to bestow your insight, talking of how you learned to be more generous with yourself and suggesting that the protagonist might also like to develop such a role.

You might assume that you have 'warmed up' to your own generosity. But, apparently, you've warmed up to your 'stinginess', to that part of you that is 'miserly'. In recognition of your 'miserly role', your adult role sallies forth acknowledging your sense of generosity. In other words you've recognised your role of 'meanness', and have contrastingly, as an adult, generated the role of generosity.

I found this an uncommon notion

Kind of topsy turvey.

Others might not.

## **2 JUNE 1999**

It could be suggested that I've been idle lately, however I suspect something other has occurred.

I confess -

I have not laid pen to paper with respect to the last Friday night, the last Saturday day, and the Wednesday that we've just had.

Three sessions -

I believe I am supposed to record them in some way

After all am I not a participant observer?

If it is a role, what kind of role is it?  
I feel like I'm neither here nor there  
But somewhere

Somewhere being in the middle  
In the middle of participant and observer  
But, am I in such a pivotal place  
Or have I merged with one

I've merged with one it's plain to say  
Participant has won the day

Clichéd poetics, but, is there a place, a point, a time, where there is a shift between participant and observer? Where does that shift occur? What or where is the place that I lose my observational standpoint? When do I become fully participant?

During the last three sessions the group has blossomed; warmth, compassion, openness, feeling, friendship, sharing, come to mind.

Is this the process of psychodrama? This bonding blossoming?

Is such emotional bonding too precious for observational eyes?

May 29 and 30, what a marvellous weekend,  
lots of talking, back and forth,  
people opening, people sharing,  
feelings, problems, personality clashes,  
practising 'mirroring',  
and 'doubling',  
all warmed up by Saturday  
for,  
drama, drama, drama, drama

I direct one  
I feel competent  
It's a bit nerve wracking,  
being on display,  
but,  
I feel good afterwards,  
- warm fuzzies.

And then,  
on Wednesday we meet again.

Straight into it,  
auxiliaries in place,  
everyone focused,  
the drama is our world.

We explore our 'systems',  
we relate to the 'systems' of others.

This seems to be a key to directing, 'looking at the system', if you understand systems you can ask particular questions, you can direct and role reverse people in particular ways.

And, we realise,  
that our group,  
is a system,  
interwoven roles,  
combining, moving and merging, separating,  
resonating, harmonising and clashing,  
but,  
always with 'good will' towards each other,  
supporting, recognising,  
roles,

that people carry,  
roles,  
wanting development,  
roles,  
past their use by date.  
There's lots of excitement.  
We all love psychodrama.

Is this the moment - when love is involved? Does life come with love? Is this what psychodramatists mean when they talk of 'being alive'? 'Being spontaneous'? 'Being in the moment'?

If I'm observing, am I alive?

## **9 JUNE 1999**

"Tonight we get more technical"

"Is that okay?"

"Yeah, I quite like the little exercises that illustrate a concept then we use it in the drama"

Small groups muddle about doing exercises designed around recognising roles. We think of an interaction we have had during the week, between us and somebody else, or even us and several others. We 'set up' the relationships. We 'actively' bring the interaction to life, choosing auxiliaries and spacing them in relationship to ourselves. We re-run our understanding of the interaction, telling auxiliaries what to say and do. We focus on 'the thinking' going on for each person involved, then 'the feeling' going on for each person, then 'the action' going on for each person. We put all those together, 'thinking, feeling, action', and name the role portrayed by the person.

"Naming roles is very important"



"We-ell (*some hesitancy*) I'm just noticing, that practically every single one of these dramas always ends up going back to 'the inner child', into - what did the inner child miss out on?, and how can we as adults now look after our inner child ?, invariably there's this "little one", that is, um, bereft, causing problems, um, the whole works, there seems to quite some emphasis, on 'the inner child'"

"And"

"Well, I just thought it was kind of interesting, you know. Are we all supposed to sort out inner children? Is everyone carrying around bleeding bawling babies?"

"It's just a theory remember, and it's not that dissimilar to other psychodynamic orientations. Look at bioenergetics, where there's an emphasis on 'adaptations', the overwhelmed infant makes adaptations and goes around in the world with an adapted self for different situations ...

"Oh, oh, oh, we might just be looking at language differences here you mean?"

"Yeah, it could be a difference in terminology, maybe we could interchange 'role' with 'adapted/false self', the bioenergetic term"

"And, maybe when we're talking about responding to oneself, you know, the roles we identify in others - is that the same as 'transference'?"

"Yeah, maybe it's just a language thing, what if ....

## **16 JUNE 1999**

It's the last Wednesday for me. Most of the rest of the group do a full residential weekend to finish this Semester, but I have a prior engagement, and can't attend the weekend. It's disappointing, it would be good to be with 'the gang' for two whole days, and a night. Semester 2 starts again in August but my research is for only one Semester.

Everybody is pumped, pumped full of energy.

We've just finished a drama, just one, for two hours!

The thing with psychodrama seems to be, or what I'm gathering, certainly from tonight it's even more clear, is that when somebody lays out their life in front of you, or a piece of their life in front of you, what they're doing is laying out everybody's life, we are all part of the drama, we are all in the drama, we can all relate to the drama in some way or other, even if we cut ourselves off from what's going on, even if we think we're angry about what's happening, we have a response to the drama and to the roles that are being portrayed because we recognise the roles as part of us. It's all totally wonderful.

And I'm just going to bask in this delightful energy, and I don't care at all about my silly old project!!

### **17 JUNE 1999**

But, the next day the sun still comes up  
emotions have cooled  
energy has dissipated  
observer comes to the fore

Some psychodramatic thoughts garnered from this training might sound like this:

We all have 'a wise adult' (role)

As 'wise adult' we express our emotions in a healthy positive way

We can be angry

We can be sad

We can be happy

Crisis situations similar to old patterns activate other roles

Not necessarily roles that we would prefer

We might be triggered into 'an angry adolescent' unable to deal with conflict

We might be triggered into a helpless child unable to be assertive

If we 'do a drama' we can go back to the past

We can discover how the role developed

We can 'change it'

That's the thing about psychodrama

In psychodrama you can do whatever you like

You can change things

You can create a different outcome

By 'building relationship' between roles

Through 'creating' relationship between adult and the triggered role

You, as 'a wise adult' can parent the role that 'missed out'

You can bring the healed relationship back to the present

And deal with present day issues, conflicts, whatever's going on

And, miraculously you are no longer triggered

You express yourself differently

You are changed

THE END

"Well, rah rah, it's all very wonderful I'm sure, but it doesn't seem any different to any other psychodynamically orientated therapy"

"No need to be sarky"

"Well, I feel cheated"

"You feel cheated?" (snigger - reflective listening)

"Yes, bioenergetics does exactly the same thing, other therapy groups do exactly the same thing, they assume that you've been triggered into some role, although they don't call it roles, psychodrama just happens to call it roles. And they also assume the triggered role is not a present adult role and look at relationships in the past and present and stuff"

"So how come you feel cheated"

"I don't know, I guess I feel surprised or something, I was expecting difference"

"Aah, your 'questing knight errant' didn't find any treasure?"

"Something like that, your role naming has not improved. Maybe I need to think about what I've got from psychodrama that is distinct, because even if I'm suggesting no 'real' differences, you know, that all these therapies are the same, I feel like we go

around in the world differently depending which one we do. After all they frame themselves differently”

“Isn’t that what this project is about?”

“Oh yeah, we forgot”

### **MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT**

“But, do you know another thing about psychodrama is that all the stories are the same”

“Huh”

“Not only are we playing everybody’s story, and always with something that everybody can relate to, every story is always the same, it’s always about relationship. Every drama has unfolded into relationship with that small part of you. Do you think?”

“Uh huh”

“Are you awake? Are you listening?”

“Go to sleep” .....

.....

.....

.....

**THE END**

## **CHAPTER NINE A GESTALT EXPOSURE**

I would describe my previous experiences of this practice as 'very little true Gestalt', although I have experienced a few hundred hours of Gestalt style group work.

Formal Gestalt training in New Zealand is based in Christchurch, a South Island city. Two stages of training are offered. Successful applicants commence their training at Stage 1. Under very special circumstances, advanced people are accepted into Stage II. Stage I is for at least one year and Stage II for at least three years. Each year's programme offers around 150 hours of training. Graduation depends on competency only and is not related to time spent in training. For both Stage I and Stage II there are three training workshops per year in Christchurch, plus various group meetings between workshops. These are held in Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton and Palmerston North. Trainees are also required to complete a number of individual therapy hours with a Gestalt therapist, in addition to written assignments. The gestalt workshop attended for the purposes of this research is a four-day Stage 1 residential workshop. It is compulsory for trainees, and non-trainees are encouraged to attend for a personal/professional experience. A non-trainee experience is promoted as part of the Gestalt Institute Training programme, and as an opportunity to explore Gestalt.

### **EXPERIENTIAL WORKSHOP GESTALT THERAPY 9 JULY - 12 JULY 1999**

#### **THE GROUP**





Sometimes it's like this for a very long time.

It's quiet ...

But things are happening ...

Let's backtrack ...

## THE START

Gestalt training opens with a ceremony. Everyone takes part. About fifty people sitting in a circle in a large room. Music plays. A candle is lit. The candle is passed from person to person. Each person thinks of what they want from this workshop. It's peaceful. I like the ritual.

We wear coloured name tags. We break into four or five groups. I'm white.

Whites go to a smaller room. Seated in a circle, beanbags, or cushions under buttocks, trainees range themselves around two facilitators<sup>29</sup> sitting side by side, both women. We are nine women and three men, twelve in all, plus the two facilitators, that makes fourteen. We will have four days together in this room, but our facilitators will change each day. Myself and another woman are not 'real trainees'. We are 'non-trainees'. 'Non-trainee' is written on our white cards underneath our names.

Starting with a check-in, we go around the circle. Each person speaks. The trainees all know each other. Since officially enrolling in the programme they have met regularly in small groups under the guidance of a Gestalt trainer. They have also met previously, at least once, in a similar format to the one we are experiencing now. They are all beginning trainees, but their experience varies. One works currently as a counsellor, others hope to become Gestalt therapists. Some have done a few years of personal work, some have done very little. Most have little experience of models other than Gestalt. Most of this information I discover later.

---

<sup>29</sup> Facilitators always included at least one certified Gestalt trained therapist, plus a Senior Trainee.

During check-in we introduce ourselves. I talk of still feeling shell-shocked after a bumpy flight in the rear end of a tiny plane. I am not a good flier. We are asked to partake in an exercise. "Go inside and think of how you're feeling right at this moment, then choose somebody in particular, in the room, to speak to of your feeling". We take turns. We name a person, speak, but they are not to respond. We are asked to continue a form of this practice whenever we have something to say within the group, that is, name and speak to someone directly, rather than to the air. The warm-up over, we sit, in silence.

One of our facilitators says hardly anything, the other speaks now and then.

Sometimes a trainee says something.

Sometimes another person responds.

The room is quite cold. The cushions are becoming uncomfortable, it's not that easy to sit on the floor for such a length of time. Apparently you get used to it, somewhat like practicing the lotus position. I feel alternately irritated, or, vaguely interested. Often when someone speaks I interpret in bioenergetic terms - I apply bioenergetic analysis and theory. I experience difficulty thinking differently. My difficulty brings to mind cultural clashes, competing models and alternate modes of thinking. It's easier to think in the way I already know.

I think of my participant, my observer, is my observer thinking, or my participant, the edges are blurry. I am unsure of what my observer is thinking. If my observer were to comment it might sound something like this, "the group is totally unstructured at the moment apart from sitting in the shape of a circle".

Apparently the first year trainees get no theoretical background, it's all experiential. They learn by example, with guidance from the facilitators. It doesn't seem to be structured, it doesn't seem to be any kind of 'thing'. There doesn't appear to be a 'how you learn to 'do' Gestalt' happening. The facilitators don't appear to be doing much. Maybe they are. They slip in statements when trainees are interacting -

"just wait a minute with what you're saying, ..... hasn't finished"

"rather than saying, "I used to get angry when you did .....", say, "you don't trigger me anymore"

My observer comes to the fore with the last directive, the typical counselling, and certainly bioenergetic way to say this would incorporate 'I' statements - "I don't feel triggered anymore", a "you" statement such as above would cause uproar.

My participant sits in the silence wondering whether to speak is useful, or to sit in the silence is useful. I sit in the silence.

Perhaps there is more structure here than I think. Whereas the group itself seems unstructured, maybe it has structure - the group sits in a circle - we have the whole, and we have parts of the whole coming out and speaking .....

THANK GOODNESS WE ARE STOPPING FOR LUNCH

## THE AFTERNOON

I don't know if I can work with these facilitators, I don't know if I can 'do' participant observation here. It's exhausting. What am I aware of - mainly an attachment to other models, which, as a participant, brings up irritation with the facilitators, the facilitators seem inept.

It's tricky. I don't know what it would be like if I wasn't 'tainted' with other theoretical knowledge/models - I can't comprehend what it's like as a first year trainee. The trainees in this group seem excited about the process. Having most recently attended a workshop dealing primarily with the body I am experiencing a process where we sit around and just talk as very difficult. Nobody moves around. Expression is via the voice. It's almost like being in an encounter group<sup>30</sup> except the facilitators stop the work before anyone moves into big feelings. When one facilitator in particular works with a trainee I experience her language as robotic. Phrases are trotted out - "I believe you" - "I understand" - "I hear what you are saying". But, it doesn't seem to me as though the facilitator believes, understands, or hears the trainee. I almost want to step in shouting "you're doing this wrong"! And yet, I don't. I sit. Increasingly frustrated. In the silence.

---

<sup>30</sup>Sometimes defined as a small group of people who spend a period of time together, encouraged, or forced, by facilitators or each other, to examine their interpersonal functioning and feelings about themselves and others.

Have I mentioned that the food is fantastic, absolutely fantastic. The workshop is residential so the meals are catered. In my experience the quality of the meals always seems to be an issue at residential. Everyone seems well pleased so far, the surroundings are nice as well, a well appointed dining hall, our own comfortable bedrooms, nicely landscaped grounds, very friendly people (in the breaks).....  
.....

I've drifted into my own reverie .....

I keep an eye and ear on the group, you never know when someone might say something to you, or when someone will ask "where are you" .....

I'm not really here, I'm somewhere else, maybe my observer self, it's hard to tell .....

I'm thinking that the Gestalt language within the Gestalt process is quite unfamiliar in comparison to psychodramatic and bioenergetic language. Bioenergetics and psychodrama have a psychodynamic/psychoanalytic orientation, they both employ a similar kind of language; they talk of triggers, of transference, .....  
The Gestalt language is different .....

Imagine you're thinking bioenergetically/psychodramatically about a client being triggered because of transference they're experiencing around another person. The client works on the transference issues and is no longer triggered, or if they are the affect of the triggering is diminished, or they have developed ways of dealing with it. A way of speaking of this process may be: "I have worked through the transference"; "I'm not triggered by that anymore".

In this Gestalt group, they are clearly adopting some semblance of the triggering/transference notion, but the Gestalt way of phrasing the scenario described

above (as scripted by one of the facilitators responding to a comment made by a trainee) is to say: "I no longer frighten myself around this person".

I like the 'nowness' of this phrasing, "I no longer frighten myself around this person", it's current, it's happening 'in the now', it's about taking responsibility, but I am struck by subtleties of the language. The language infers a distinct sense of individual responsibility, as though, for example, it's 'my' fault that I frightened myself around this person. It seems to negate experiences of life; early experiences; the idea that transference, triggering, are produced through experience in relationship with others; that triggering may be a consequence of trauma; that it might not be my fault; that this is a response to the environment; that I may need to 'work through issues' that are not necessarily of my conscious making, so that I am no longer triggered.

Perhaps it is the Gestalt 'here and now' focus which prompts people to talk about 'where they're at', or, 'what they're doing to themselves', now, in this moment. Of course other psychotherapeutic models, including bioenergetics and psychodrama, are often about what we do to ourselves, but as someone more familiar to psychodynamically orientated phrasing, I read the phrase, "I no longer frighten myself around this person", as a blaming of the self, it seems unforgiving of the self, even harsh. Within a therapeutic model that promotes itself as wholistic, that is, gestalt, it seems contradictory to promote a self-blaming individual in isolation.

It's a very introspective process, Gestalt. As I sit here on my beanbag my introspection interrupts my analytic observer. I realise I have drifted off while people are talking. Talking, talking, talking. I notice that I often drift off when others talk a lot, when they keep talking. I don't know what it means to me as a participant, when, I drift off, when people talk - they keep talking, and I know that people keeping on talking is related to people keeping on talking in the past, blah blah, and wanting to tune out to them and not hear what they're saying, blah blah blah, disappearing.....,

Does this mean this model doesn't suit me? It's been a long time since I've experienced such an inactive process, I've got used to using my body.....

..... the inactivity, the just sitting in the chairs, talking talking talking  
....., bioenergetically we would call them 'head jobs',

..... talk about making me sleepy - it just makes me sleepy .....

..... maybe it's just been a quiet day .....

## **SECOND DAY**

I noticed some time today that I was no longer observing, that I have become a participant. I don't know why or how that occurred, I don't even know when I noticed that the observer was lost.

From the time I woke up, at 7am this morning, up until now, 7 pm this evening, I have been absorbed with my own process. I don't know what heralded this shift, did emotions kick in, did I get anxious about partaking in the group? Did I suddenly start enjoying myself, and think "to hell with the research"? Am I just doing what everyone else is doing?

We have had our evening meal, no-one is socialising, it's very quiet, we have gone to our rooms, we are sleeping, or contemplating, or introspecting, or just doing nothing. We are very tired and presumably are deep in process.

TODAY we had different facilitators. Different facilitators mean a different experience.

I had a different experience with different facilitators.

There was a difference in style, there was more explanation.

It was explained that at this stage trainees don't get any theory at all, that, if this was a teaching group the facilitator would give explanations.

So, I learn that although this is a training group, it's not a teaching group. It's an experiential group. So, it's kept experiential, with no specific rules. People are supposed to flounder around, though that isn't quite the right word, and determine the process from their experience. I guess it's to promote something like 'authentic beingness', the discovering of your self, and how and who, you are. Of course few people come in 'blind'. First year trainees have already completed at least one written assignment, they have worked in their small groups, they have read literature. I have read literature and experienced Gestalt style work. I would hate to come in 'blind'. Maybe some people wouldn't mind.

Somehow, it is made clear, not necessarily overtly, that in Gestalt all you have to do is 'be yourself'. In other words the Gestalt 'culture' gives permission to 'be yourself'. Actually I think it's more like an unwritten rule - a presupposed given - you are supposed to do it - be yourself - and so you spend your time trying to do just that - and I suspect that until you do, you are not part of the culture. Much praise is lauded upon those who boldly speak out, who are 'being themselves'. But, isn't it a moot point, aren't we always being ourselves whatever we are doing, or not doing?

The facilitator told an interesting story about a trainee who had completed the four years training, and was now a practicing Gestalt therapist who loved working one on one with people, and who couldn't care less if she never came to another group again. She never ever ever enjoyed being in groups. This seemed strange to me. But I guess if she didn't want to be a group Gestalt type person then, okay, she didn't want to, she wanted to work one on one and they're saying that's just fine, mmm ...

It seems strange to do a group training to become a one-on-one therapist. If you don't like, and don't get on, in the group, how do they decide that you'll be okay one-on-one?

I'm still experiencing some frustration with the process, with the Gestalt type process, with how it's working in this group. It appears as though people get started with an issue and then it just fades out ....., we move on to something else. There is little stability, we move around a lot .....

I'm not looking for resolution here (I suspect I am), it's just that, it always seems to be up to the individual to take responsibility for their own process, which on the one hand is okay, and standard psychotherapeutic practice, but on the other hand I still experience the way they do it as self blaming. Trainees say that they're doing things to themselves all the time, but, in a 'beating up' kind of way, even though there's an emphasis on not beating yourself up, on just being with whatever is .....

Today there's more significance attributed to noticing, to noticing what's going on in the body, on being in touch with what's going on in the body. The teaching is subtle, but it's there. Yesterday focussed upon on what's happening right now, but the body was insignificant. Now this extra element is introduced.

The process seems to be about directing people to find out about themselves, to find out about their own processes, to try things out, and recognise, or not recognise, their process, to notice, or not notice, what they do. Then to leave people to wonder, or to think, about what's just happened, or try it differently if they don't want to do it like that anymore. It seems to be about developing self awareness and how you are in the world.

The process seems simple enough - I wonder about the frustration I experience. I am compelled to examine my own process, to notice my reluctance, or difficulty, in speaking out; to notice the transience of my thoughts and the dilemma of combining fleeting thought and movement so that some action ensues; observing my constant checking - is this going on, is that going on, is it big, is it anything to be concerned about-; would it be useful to speak of my frustration, I am clearly 'sitting on it'.

I'm noticing that that I don't enjoy their term 'feedback' which is the word they use - 'feedback' is given after somebody has done a piece of work or shared in the group. I am used to the terms 'sharing', or 'responding'. 'Feedback' has a different meaning for me. But to them it means the same thing.

I notice that 'they' are distinctly 'they', or 'them', that as I observe myself, my process, the group, the group process, I am separate. That they say "how did that impact on you?", another term which must be Gestalt, it's not bioenergetic or psychodrama terminology, but there's no reason why it couldn't be. But, they don't tell you how to respond, they don't suggest using 'I' statements, it's not as overtly regimented as that.

And, then, again, the frustration of sitting erupts, and my dilemma progresses, shall I sit in the silence, shall I sit with the silence, shall I make a noise, shall I stir, if I make a noise is it to deliberately make something happen, perhaps it would be better to sit in the silence, should I pick a fight, but picking fights with people just to make something happen would be just to make something happen and perhaps I should learn to sit in the silence, but I need to learn to sit in the silence without getting frustrated, and sitting in the silence feels

somehow familiar, is this what I usually do - sit in the silence and stay frustrated

.....

..... is this the way Gestalt works, presenting opportunities for insight

.....

..... it doesn't seem a very lively sort of thing, at this stage, of the training, not in this group anyway.

..... or, perhaps it is very much alive, and quite lively, just not the kind of liveness you might expect. Maybe it's not 'about' any thing, maybe it's an 'experience'.

### **THIRD DAY**

Different facilitators, different flavour. The threads of the previous two days are drawn together. We are asked to focus upon 'what's going on in the moment', and 'what's going on in our body', to be in touch with ourselves, in touch with our body sensations. Whereas these elements have been spoken of before, attention is now drawn to the concepts in combination.

I don't think this convergence is because it's Day Three rather than Day One, I think it's the different facilitation style, but I can't be sure. The energy is different today. But, we've been together for two whole days now, not to mention time during meal breaks and evenings. This morning there was some excitement about today's facilitation. Trainees know the facilitation team, there are enthusiastic expectations of energy and excitement, maybe even some music. One of today's facilitators is male. It is he who generates this ebullient response.

Several people announce that they are “ready to work”. This has been a common practice throughout the workshop so far, and is not unusual in many psychotherapeutic modalities. People announce that they are ready to work, being ready to work means that you are ready to do a piece with the facilitator/therapist, one on one. It’s a curious phenomenon, in my mind disavowing that we are doing work all the time. However, it acts as a useful signal that a trainee wants ‘special time’, and today there are numerous people clamouring for attention.

No-one is disappointed, the day delivers all that was promised. We stand up, we ‘get out of our heads’, we are ‘invited into our bodies’, we move our limbs, we focus upon body sensations. I feel extremely comfortable and greatly relieved, we have music and we dance. The day is far more active than the previous two. I find I am much more energised and much more focused both upon myself and the work of others. The ‘work’ is not light and breezy, it is a day of drama and tears, of compassion and communion.

My ‘introspective self’ seeks explanation of my own process deciding that - I can analyse until the cows come home, but it won’t get me into my body, and it won’t get me into my feelings, and it won’t get me into what’s going on with me. Analysis stops me getting in touch with myself. It interrupts the Gestalt.

I’ve noticed something else; what is happening in the room, is very precious, I believe I have recognised the Gestalt. What’s occurring in the group is a Gestalt, it is a whole, it is valuable, it is quite beautiful in its own way. I don’t know what these thoughts/noticings are about, but I get some sense that I am valuing the process.

The day is rich and rewarding. My participant is fully present.

## LAST DAY OF THE WORKSHOP

On the morning of the last day I notice that I am becoming more clear about my own process. I have thought about it through the night, and this morning. (I am a good groupie, after initial resistances I tend to adapt quite well to the model on offer).

I realise that I had expectations that this would be a teaching workshop that would incorporate a teaching component. I knew it was a training workshop, it is called a training workshop in the brochure. I expected some didactic input, in the same way that we learn in psychodrama, the Director talks and explains some terms; in the same way that we are taught didactically in bioenergetics (although I didn't think it would be quite that instructional). Here, there hasn't been a didactic orientation and I've found that quite frustrating, I think because of my expectation rather than anything else.

I think, as I move away from the group at the end of this workshop, my experience will gel into a Gestalt whole - w h o I e. My hope is that in the ensuing weeks the gestalt will become more clear. I notice a distinct separation between that part of me experiencing frustration with the Gestalt model and not knowing enough about the model, and the experience of meeting, probably the friendliest, most accommodating bunch of people I've ever met.

I imagine my warm regard for fellow trainees is related to the process. We've come together leaving our cares and worries at home. We're suspended in four days of unreality which is more real than reality. We are able to enjoy the freedom fabricated through a residential workshop, with no obligation other than to attend scheduled groups each day. Despite the fact that some Gestalt therapists choose to work only one-on-one, the training attends to process between people. This differs from bioenergetic training, also a one-on-one therapy, which takes only cursory note of group dynamics<sup>31</sup>. Gestalt seems to assume that working together in a group is a useful way to learn about yourself

---

<sup>31</sup> The current New Zealand bioenergetics training programme has attempted to incorporate group process and coordinators are insisting that 'process work' is regularly incorporated into their next training programme.

and to learn about being 'an individual'. The experiential concept is a powerful teaching model which makes didactic models appear antiquated.

But, that doesn't mean I wouldn't like some handouts, some nice photocopied sheaves of paper (sigh). I suspect this is due to research anxiety, I would like some information I can get my hands on. Psychodrama doesn't supply handouts, but they give clear verbal information, and introduce exercises to consolidate techniques. In this workshop, a few words are loosely thrown around - often very loosely in joking terms - words such as, projection, deflection, retroreflection, confluence - clearly familiar concepts to trainees, who are probably introduced to the terminology during their first group at the beginning of the year. But, techniques commonly thought of as Gestalt, for example, empty-chair work, dream work, are absent.

As I muse I notice that I am moved by the simplicity of the Gestalt. I can't quite capture what I mean, but there's something about the movement of the organism, pieces coming out and going in, there's an ebb and flow, there's a quietness to the movement, I am getting a visual of the Gestalt as an organismic movement, as a whole, and am beginning to perceive the purpose of the experiential training, almost as though they want trainees to experience the fragments coming together as an organismic embodiment.

I seem to be flooding with new thoughts this morning, this last morning. I am thinking that I'm only able to be in touch with the simplicity, with the movingness of the simplicity, with the movement, the whole, the organism, as my own being 'softens' and is accepting of the organism and the movement, as my own being allows the movement to ebb and flow through me. Perhaps my own softening relates to yesterday's work, work that I was able to connect with, that I was in touch with.

I have a clear picture of what has been happening for me during my time in the workshop. I don't feel anxious, frustrated, or angry anymore, and am aware that many of these feelings were engendered through a sense of powerlessness and mistrust in an 'alien' atmosphere. Now I feel content. But, the day lies ahead, and there is a task that I must accomplish before the workshop is over.



## The Group

Entering the group room is a delight. There is music playing, soft, gentle. Someone has arranged our unruly beanbags and cushions into an orderly circle. Next to one of the cushions sits a small teddy bear. She wears a charming pink and blue outfit. I am immediately attracted to her.

People drift in, taking familiar places in the circle. All are aware that this is the last meeting. A mood of benevolence prevails.

Our facilitators for the day, two women, enter with the same grace by which they clearly arranged the room and the music. As we begin a check in round the senior facilitator introduces the teddy bear, Fifey, as a special group member. Fifey has the ability to be whatever we want her to be, whenever we want her to be.

The 'check in' is rich with personal sharing, open heartedness, and compassion. The group is in a state not even imaginable during the previous three days. I have not been the only trainee to receive revelation and insight. My own sharing rewards me, as I finally make my own movement to stand in the middle of the circle to talk of my experiences of the past days, of my frustrations and immobilisation. I talk of my excitement in recognising the Gestalt, and my excitement is mirrored back ten thousand fold. I am met with pleasure, and finally feel my place in the group.

The unfolding of the day is astounding as trainees tap deep reservoirs of both pain and joy. The senior facilitator is an artist unfurling the canvas of people's lives, helping to frame and mould the pictures before us. Fifey is succour for many. The trainee facilitator is a poet as we breathlessly enjoy a verbal engagement between her and a trainee who

has wanted to access his feelings but could not find a way. As the engagement advances he effortlessly blends her stanza with his own.

I cannot find enough praise for these two facilitators. The group is ready to fly, and they take it. They effortlessly pilot while we swoop and dive to our hearts content. By the end of the day there is not a person who does not feel replete.

I have no thought of research, academia, participant, or observer. My only desire is to wallow within the bountiful grace of the organism, to feel the tides, the movement, the ebb and flow, my open heart blending with other open hearts as we are engulfed in the timeless infinite universality of being. We have become whole. The Gestalt is complete. Nothing else matters. This is life.

The group is over. As I wander a shopping mall, waiting for my flight home, I notice a sale trolley outside a store. Sitting on the trolley is the most marvellous bear I have ever seen. Modelled upon bears of old he wears smart brown corduroy trousers with a touch of red tartan on the cuffs. His maroon polo neck sweater, complete with applique polar bear, looks spruce underneath a grey woollen jerkin, with attached hood for very cold days. He is the quintessential bear. I pay some money and he comes with me. His name is Herm. He represents courage, open heartedness and love. He is a Gestalt bear.

## CHAPTER TEN NARRATIVE THERAPY

My prior experiences of Narrative Therapy<sup>32</sup> include reading various literature, attending a couple of one-day workshops, attending a few practice sessions with an agency I once worked for, and chatting with colleagues and newly converted Narrative practitioners about Narrative Therapy. The workshop I attended for this experience was promoted in The Family Therapy Centre Workshop Series brochure, 1999, as follows.

### FAMILY THERAPY INTENSIVE COURSE

This week-long programme will introduce participants to contemporary Family Therapy/Narrative theories and practices, drawing on the work of Michael White, David Epston and Johnella Bird.

The work will be demonstrated in relationship to the problems of individuals, couples and families by reviewing video and audio-taped sessions. In addition, trainees will be expected to participate in role-playing practice focusing primarily on the process of interviewing. A process of inquiry that focuses on externalising conversations will be discussed and practiced. There will be opportunities to explore the politics of therapy. It is recommended that those attending will have had some exposure to contemporary Family Therapy/Narrative ideas.

### THE NARRATIVE WORKSHOP

#### 6.45am

It was a fine morning. Blue skies and no clouds. My Christchurch trip proved to me that I'm no flier and I hoped it would be a fine flight, perhaps with views of snow covered Mount Ruapehu. Well, the flight was okay, but the airline food lived up to expectations; it wasn't worth keeping in my stomach and ended up deposited, discreetly, in some conveniently placed bushes on the side of the road. My taxi driver was clearly a been-there-done-that kind of guy. Not the greatest start and I arrived at my pre-booked motel a fairly dishevelled and disgruntled Auckland visitor. But, ever the optimist, I had plenty of time to freshen up, study my map and was soon heading back out the door to walk the 10 minutes to the Family Therapy Centre, the venue of my week long narrative experience. Memories

---

<sup>32</sup> In this chapter my differentiation of narrative (lower case, n), and Narrative Therapy (upper case, N) is not applicable. This story was written before there seemed a need to differentiate.

of the morning banished to distant recall, I felt quite professional, having flown, having a pre booked motel room, and a personal cassette-recorder to chronicle my copious observations. I had also brought numerous books and articles relative to narrative therapy and the resolve to study these each evening. This was my fourth exposure and for some reason I felt like a real researcher this time. My thoughts induced a chuckle, but it was a feeling that was to stay with me for the duration of the workshop.

### **9.00am Narrative Workshop Day One**

We sit in a room, a very nicely decorated medium sized room. We sit around the walls, nine people, there's a whiteboard at one end, and 'a teacher' - a woman, Peta. I momentarily experience a paradoxical irony in the teacher/pupil situation. It doesn't seem to fit with my narrative notion of mutual inquiry, that is, client as 'expert'/therapist 'doesn't know'. I remind myself that the workshop is presented as an educational programme and there is nothing unusual about such a format.

We are all women, variously from Wellington, Palmerston North, Hamilton and Auckland. We are not a diverse group, we are all academically qualified, all in middle adulthood, we all have partners, most have children, we are all European, we all work, or have worked with clients. We are all well dressed, as though attending a day of professional work. An all female group is something I have not encountered for a long time, and not previously within the boundaries of this project. The atmosphere is relaxed, though attentive. We have a whole week to indulge ourselves without taking responsibility for the running of the programme, and for out-of-towners, without the responsibilities of work, home and family. A feeling of festiveness pervades.

Despite our commonalities, I am aware of my motives for attending. During introductions, I talk about my doctoral work and people are aware that I may use narrative therapy as a focus of research. There is some excitement about my project. People are eager to support ideas about deconstruction and constitution of self. I feel some excitement myself as we easily discuss post structuralism and social constructionism, perhaps my work is not as 'goofy' as it sometimes feels. In this setting, I don't need to try and explain the history of structuralism/post-structuralism before people can understand my focus. I enjoy the

common standpoint. I talk about using my attendance at this group and writing about my experience. The response is positive. I don't discuss my participant/observer role.

Introductions over, our facilitator delivers an opening speech. It is interesting, she is very articulate and easy to understand. She focuses upon issues that inform her interpretation of narrative therapy. I interpret these as follows:

Compared to other family therapies (strategic, systemic, Milan, structural) the biggest difference is that the therapist is not neutral.

Narrative, along with other therapeutic practices, asks: Where does change occur? eg. in the session/outside the session/both places.

Poststructuralism - challenges the idea of experts and knowledge holders - it questions the 'role' of the 'institution' and the 'role' of the professional classes.

This way of working (narrative) is at the margins of institutional practice and ideas.

Narrative was, and is, developed to counteract the idea that the therapist is neutral. It asks - How do we negotiate another person's lived experience?

What creates change? What are the conditions that support change?

How is meaning shaped? How is it shaped in a wider contextual sense?

We learn that these are not necessarily generic issues, but are issues that Peta brings to the work. They may be compatible with others' working within narrative therapy, but 'narrative', or 'narrative therapy' are not terms that we can casually use to encompass one genus.

This is a surprise to me, and I realise I have come to the workshop with preconceived ideas about narrative therapy. I have assumed that as a model, it is a particular practice encompassing a range of skills and techniques, and that narrative therapist's work similarly. I find that within 'the field' are various factions, which is not dissimilar to many schools of thought. I clarify that in the training programme we are learning about Peta's perspective of narrative. She agrees but is uncomfortable with my use of the term 'narrative'. She reiterates that she cannot talk about narrative therapy as an ontological entity, but only in terms of her perspective, her standpoint. We all agree that if any of us use the term to ask questions, or to discuss issues, it is on the understanding that we are naming 'narrative' as such for ease of reference only and that when we do so we are

referring to Peta's conception of 'narrative' as a practice. I get a fleeting glimpse of how Peta's vision and the narrative therapy I've read about fit together and admire the way she is 'living' social constructionism. The glimpse is gone.

I recognise some further preconceived notions and irritations I have developed through my readings of narrative practice. In particular, I recall an authoritative stance in some of the narrative literature which has seemed at odds with the idea of 'client as expert'. I raise this issue and am happy to accept the response:

"The therapist does not 'know nothing' - the therapist brings all that they "know" and use their knowing, or make it available for challenge or change - this is respectful practice".

I appreciate the acknowledgment that the therapist does not enter the therapeutic relationship as an empty vessel, albeit a vessel which is going to be a part of the therapeutic encounter rather than neutral. I feel myself warming to Peta. I'm enjoying the compatibility of our views.

I challenge the seven points mentioned above arguing that many therapeutic practices ask the same questions and that narrative is not the only marginalised practice. I have heard people talk about the storied nature of narrative and its ability to externalise the problem - I suggest that the majority of psychotherapeutic practices 'story' issues, and there are other therapies that externalise, or concretise, 'problems'. By now, I feel quite confrontational but my resentments are in the room and interfering with my ability to accept Peta's points of view.

Peta responds that narrative (therapy) is more than storying, with which I agree. It appears to me to be a practice that needs to be understood within the context of its origins, that is, post structuralist theory, and that some counsellors adopt it as a practice with little understanding of a social constructionist worldview. In this light, it becomes another technique (exclaimed about for its newness) which involves particular types of questions which allow a client to restory their life. Peta agrees, stating that not only is narrative therapy not new, but it is not simply about storying. Her suggestion is that:

"Narrative is about a way of engaging with people's lived experience

and how this is shaping their lives”

and that

“The technical abilities are core to what is different about this therapy”.

I feel very comfortable with the idea of engaging with people’s lived experience, and, now, more comfortable with the idea of narrative therapy than I’ve been through my previous experiences. Now that I have my foibles out of the way, I feel more able to engage with the rest of the programme. The other women seem comfortable, accepting and interested in my questions, and Peta’s responses. I am looking forward to the rest of the day.

During a morning tea break, we get to know a little bit more about each other. Very little knowing of people’s ‘other worlds’ has occurred during the other workshops I’ve attended. I notice now that the tendency during the other workshops has been to stay in the moment and with whatever is going on for people at the time. This is particularly relevant to the gestalt and psychodrama workshops where people seem engrossed in, and concentrating on, ‘personal work’. I briefly wonder if ‘the storied nature’ of narrative encourages strangers to find out about each other. Are naturally inquisitive people drawn to the idea of ‘engaging with people’s lived experience’? Do narrative people have more curiosity about people’s lives (stories) than people who follow other models?

There are several school counsellors in our training group, one of whom tells me, “narrative is taking Wellington by storm”. All of the school counsellors have done narrative training before. A visiting clinical psychologist is trying to get in as much narrative training as possible before returning to her homeland, where narrative resources are not as accessible. An occupational therapist who hasn’t formally attended previous narrative workshops talks of the difficulties of working within the current health climate<sup>33</sup>. It is a convivial tea break, but, when hailed by Peta, we’re happy to reenter ‘the classroom’.

The late morning discussion/teaching focuses upon ‘the power of totalising language’, and how the therapist utilising narrative therapy uses it to disrupt and challenge pathologising discourse. ... I am briefly sidetracked by Peta’s choice of words. It seems quite different to say ‘I utilise narrative therapy’, as opposed to ‘I am a narrative therapist’. Something

---

<sup>33</sup> This workshop was held during September 1999 under a reformist National Government.

to do with identity - I don't stay with that thought as I'm missing what she's saying ... she's talking about traditional challenges to pathologising, for example,

- pathologising makes a problem of any sort the total of you, you are bad, you are sensitive.
- pathologising locks people into either wellness or pathology.
- naming something as something creates exclusion and inclusion.
- if people are totalised they have to argue against it - they must blame the other for not seeing correctly.
- if we just talk about totalising problem discourse that's all we will get - people will feel hopeless, helpless, and obliged to hand authority over to professionals.

Peta suggests that the narrative therapist looks for ways to manage this totalising of being, in particular by attending to the ethics of the therapeutic model. In this instance the narrative ethic becomes: "move away from totalising discourse". But, she rhetorically asks - when our entire society/culture is based upon a totalising model - how do we do this?

In this training workshop a beginning movement away from totalising discourse identifies 'listening' as a technical skill, with the emphasis upon noting what it is we are listening for. That is, if we listen for problems that is what we will hear. We are asked to observe a therapist client role-play<sup>34</sup> exercise - Peta acts as therapist with a volunteer as client. We are to listen for resilience, strengths, and language that move outside totalising language, and in particular for questions that expand the client's world. The idea is that constant renaming allows reshaping, makes the constructs open for inquiry, and looks at how the constructs are shaping interactions. In narrative terms, the role-play exercise is demonstrating the linguistic structure of questions with the therapist positioned with interest, rather than 'knowing'. I do briefly wonder if such a task simply produces another kind of totalising discourse. I also recognise some similarities between the 'narrative listener/question crafter', the psychodramatic 'interviewer role', the psychodynamic practice of 'gathering the story', and the bioenergetic suggestion of 'building up health'. But I don't have time to ponder. The role-play continues. For those of us observing it acts as a listening exercise as we note those questions that reflect an enquiring stance on the part of the therapist.

---

<sup>34</sup> For the purposes of confidentiality, role plays are not included in this story.

## LUNCH



Lunch is rushed. Most of us puff up and down several hills to a cafe where we hastily gobble mediocre sandwiches. The talk is lively; it is unanimous that Peta's session was interesting, engaging, and stimulating.

### **After lunch**

The afternoon continues with the same theme. As therapist, we are listening and selecting out language that appears to have significance. Our inquiry becomes - what does the selected language mean? Another ethic of narrative emerges - it involves a search for meaning.

Peta explains that language is the medium for change in this therapy, but the major issue is meaning and negotiating the meaning. This negotiation can take many forms, for example, action, drawing, sandpits etc, but the issue is always what is the meaning? She suggests that use of the therapy requires a passion for words and clearly demonstrates her own passion in the fluidity and lucidity of her teaching style. I wonder if I could ever speak as clearly about a subject, recalling the many fumbling explanations I have attempted about my research, and have some admiration for Peta's clarity. I am also struck once more by the ethical similarities amongst narrative, bioenergetics and psychodrama. Many other therapeutic models enquire about meaning. Some don't. Contemporary bioenergetics therapy and much of psychodrama focus upon the meaning that the client brings to a therapeutic session. I wonder if I could work as a therapist who was only interested in their own worldview, without any curiosity about client's worldviews. I don't find the narrative focus upon meaning new or controversial, and have to remind myself that narrative sets itself in opposition to mainstream institutional practice, rather than to other therapeutic models which also clash with mainstream models.

We move into a demonstration exercise. Peta invites a participant to talk about something 'new' that is taking place in her life. The object is for us to notice Peta's use of questions that are developing a knowledge of something new. When questioning the therapist is researching "what supports learning something new?"

As we observe this exercise I experience the questioning techniques as very similar to the basic listening skills used when training telephone support workers for a crisis line agency I once worked for, for example, paraphrasing, reflecting, summarising. I feel some irritation at again noticing similarities with other techniques. A light bulb goes on and I realise that I get annoyed when 'narrative' does not acknowledge other models, or other ways of working with clients, that have some correspondence with 'narrative' or 'narrative ethics'. This is the same annoyance that I often experience when reading 'narrative literature'. Some kind of prima donna or star billing status is produced when keen narrative users talk about narrative therapy and techniques. It's kind of like 'narrative is the greatest'. I realise that this 'self-importance' surprises me because I assume modesty from a model that acknowledges its social constructionist heritage. This in itself is a bizarre assumption. Acknowledging your construction doesn't mean you are not dominant. But, anyway, why should I be surprised, or annoyed by my interpretation of narrative as big-headed. Presenting one's work as unique or special is not unusual, it is common practice. I wonder if my familiarity with other models has a bearing upon my vexation, and that perhaps, I simply don't find narrative unique, and am surprised when others find it so. My assumption is that others know what I know (an ethnocentric position), but my experiences in various workshops over the years, including those under study now, are showing me that many people are well versed in only a few approaches rather than many ...

Before I take this train of thought further Peta interrupts my internal diatribe with a reminder, and an emphasis, that we are comparing narrative with pathologising models rather than 'alternative' models. Synchronicity in action. A comment (which I missed) from another group member has prompted Peta's remark. I resolve to keep uppermost in my mind that any comparison made by narrative is to pathologising models, and that I don't even have to consider knowledge I have of other therapeutic standpoints. On the other hand, I could simply notice similarities without getting annoyed. We move on.

Peta talks about promoting 'client agency' and 'relational externalising'. Client agency is similar to, or the same as, the idea of empowering the client, or 'empowerment'. Both terms indicate a client, rather than 'an expert', in control. A key narrative question would be: "Has there ever been a time when this has not been a problem in your life?" Identifying such times allows for agency over the problem. Relational externalising has some similarity with psychodrama's idea of 'concretising'. In both instances, the client/therapist dyad is reflecting on the relationship between self and something else. For example, the relationship between 'self and ideas', 'self and cultural ideas and practices', 'self and gendered ideas and practices', 'self and shame'. The talk is about "the shame", "the fear", "the worry, "the strengths", always in relationship to the person. An object is created out of something seen as belonging to the person. One prescription<sup>35</sup> looks at the problem and the relevance to the person, one prescription looks at the problem and when it wasn't there.

The narrative therapist is continually researching the relationship between the person and the attribute - always developing a contextual understanding. Somewhat similar to the psychodramatist's 'naive inquirer' role, the narrative therapist takes 'an enquiring stance', and enquires about: the history of attribute; the development of attribute; the gender of attribute; the culture of attribute. Some things strengthen attribute, some things undermine attribute. Peta suggests that the narrative literature is preoccupied with the style of questions, but that it is 'the listening' that supports the questions. Her comment is interesting and I talk of a moment in a narrative practice session when we all clamoured for lists of questions we could practice in order to become fluent with the narrative style. Other group member's nod and smile, apparently this is not uncommon. Peta recalls an Australian workshop where a participant insisted that all he wanted was a list of questions and had little interest in what else was on offer. She stresses this is not a way of speaking that you can just pull out of your kitbag every now and then; a list of question styles and techniques won't work. For it to work you need to speak like this all the time, to practice this way of talking, otherwise you will continue to adopt the dominant paradigm. I guess put in those terms it does sound revolutionary!

The therapy exposes the political and another narrative value is unveiled: all counselling work is political. Peta is referring here to the context: that which is under exploration. The

---

<sup>35</sup> This is Peta's term referring to something like 'one way of talking'.

narrative therapist is always oriented toward non-pathologising discourse. For example, when seeing a couple, or parents about their children, the therapist might enquire: "What would you like me to know about this relationship in order to appreciate it?"; when seeing a child: "What do you think teachers don't know about you?" I begin to think it is a bit like doing a puzzle, or walking a maze with many paths, I briefly wonder if narrative might appeal to puzzle unravellers.

Peta moves towards closure, we are nearing the end of the day, a very full day. My interpretation of her closure goes something like this - The self is constructed in relationship to: ideas, practice, cultural ideas and practice, gendered ideas and practice. You can't internalise attributes and externalise problems - the self is relational, both are externalised. The problem is the problem in relationship to the person; the attribute is the attribute in relation to the problem.

I flip into my modernist/observer/realist/analytic researcher 'self' having noticed, in this moment, that a consistent self produced throughout narrative (therapy) discourse (today) seems to be 'the relational self'. The narrative therapist and client consistently explore the relationship between self and other. In order to do this there must be a self which is in relationship, or a self which relates, that is, a relational self. As I cast my mind back over the day I also notice 'the agentic self', that self which has some control or agency over the problem. I wonder about this unitary notion of 'narrative selves'. Does this conflict with narrative's theoretical perspective? More than one self fits nicely with a postmodern approach, however identification of selves immediately moves from this realm and into a more positivist view. Perhaps narrative might suggest that the selves are all in relationship with each other and that without the relationship there is no self, nor no other. Perhaps they may say that these selves are not necessarily unitary, but are a self in relationship with something else - no that would be too simple, because what, or who is 'the self' in relationship with something else. Perhaps I don't need to go there right now! If I take up a deconstructionist position, I can stand outside the positivist and postmodernist debates and merely identify any selves I see produced through the language. Phew, that feels much safer!

The day ends with a reminder from Peta that when we talk of narrative therapy we must keep in mind - whose narrative therapy are we talking about - Karl Tomm's, Michael

White's, 'Peta's', Johnella Bird's, David Epston's etc etc, they are all different. I wish I'd read more, I wish I was one of those people who read and easily retain all information so that instead of thinking I need to go and read all the various narrative perspectives in order to notice difference, I could immediately recall, in response to her comment, the variances amongst the narrative perspectives. But I'm not one of those people so at the moment I'll just take her word.

### **9.00am Narrative Workshop Day Two**

We all arrive on time, myself and another participant having walked for 15 minutes from our motel, the rest arriving by car, and our facilitator, Peter, by bicycle. We are all keen for another informative day, and excited that Peter, an 'experienced narrative therapist', will be passing on his knowledge of family therapy narrative style.

Peter opens the day with a short talk emphasising that "with narrative we have a different kind of experience , a therapeutic orientation which asks us to critique, to question ...", and the interesting point, that "English doesn't have a language of relationship - we have to invent a relationship language."

People ask questions, in particular about working with families and couples, as they are specifically attending the workshop for information in this area. Peter explains that the title of this workshop is a bit of a misnomer - its meaning relates to narrative therapy being positioned in opposition to traditional family therapy models - rather than a specific type of narrative work lending itself to family interventions. Some people aren't pleased with this response - they've done narrative workshops before and they've been drawn to this workshop by a promise of gaining skills in family work. Family and couples work is clearly perceived as being different to working with individuals.

There is an air of disgruntlement. I am relieved that a family orientation is not my primary focus although notice a sense of disappointment that maybe I won't learn some marvellous technique which puts all other family therapy models to shame. It seems that despite yesterday's enlightenment I still hanker for a quick way to learn to 'do it'.

Peter changes the subject asking people to tell him (and the rest of the group) about their experiences of narrative therapy to date, where we hail from, what we know. In a similar fashion to the day before we dutifully go around the room. Some of the school counsellors have attended many workshops over the past few years and two of them regularly attend weekend groups facilitated by both Peta and Peter. They comment that they have difficulty finding 'narrative supervisors'. Peter expresses his pleasure at seeing them again, but also some surprise that those who have already attended many workshops are coming to another. The response is that the promise of finding out about working with families seemed worth the expense. A recent immigrant comments that narrative is taught extensively in universities of her country but this is her first workshop. She works extensively with children and families. I talk of the two one-day workshops I have attended and about my research. Peter expresses interest and excitement in my project. I am a little overawed by his enthusiasm, he has several ideas but is a little disappointed at the stage of the research which leaves little room for new directions.

We break for morning tea. Not everyone is happy about what seems to some like a dismissal of narrative family therapy, and some are distinctly annoyed about not getting what they expected. The gaiety of yesterday is absent.

There is more disgruntlement after morning tea when we are invited to watch and comment upon a video tape and corresponding transcript of a live session. Several of us have seen the tape before, some more than once. Peter apologises but suggests that it will still be a valuable exercise. We are allocated individual tasks while watching; my focus is "to look for a clearly defined sense of identity in the language used by the client".

In particular, I notice how the language used by the therapist offers other possibilities to the client and an interruption in the client's usual way of thinking. The client is positioned as consultant and an expert in their own life. The questions are consistent with a 'researching' attitude, asking for information genuinely unknown by both therapist and client. The client is invited to evaluate rather than being evaluated, and is allowed to make decisions. The session becomes collaborative. It is a long session, but both client and therapist seem happy with the outcome. I remind myself that we are opposing traditional models and feel satisfied with the usefulness of the session. Without this reminder, I

notice my previous discomfort at the similarities between this session and other alternative ways of working.

We discuss our findings in small groups, then as a large group, trading what we've noticed, what we're curious about, what we thought of it. Including afternoon tea, it takes all day.

### **Narrative Workshop, Day Three**

Upon awakening, I wonder about my accounting of the first two days, noticing that my notes and musings take a different form to my gestalt and psychodrama stories. I wonder if the experiential component of gestalt and psychodrama lends a different quality to my experience.

So far, we've had two days with two different facilitators. Different facilitators make a difference, as I found in the gestalt workshop. In summary, the first day of this workshop served as a framework. It was very clear, easy to understand. I felt at home within the context of a social constructionist framework speaking of language, self, occurring between people, in relationship. I was aware that there are 'questioning techniques' involved in this model. In particular, both facilitators emphasised the externalising techniques. Narrative texts imply that these are not major techniques, however my experience of the past few days, combined with reading of some narrative texts, indicates that the major thinking concerned with narrative therapy does seem to be externalising and expanding the story, albeit via a social constructionist framework.

Both facilitators have been careful to emphasise that narrative sets itself up as challenge to traditional models. There has been no acknowledgment that many of the values championed by narrative are held in many alternative schools of thought, for example, humanistic, existential. So far we've touched on techniques and issues that seem very similar to psychodramatic ways of thinking, without actually doing dramas, role reversals, or talking about what we're doing as role theory. Instead of suggesting that the narrative therapist and client are developing roles, the suggestion is that they're doing something like expanding the self. Yesterday it was suggested that normally a therapist would be censored for suggesting that a person has more than one self; that you could be criticised

for 'disintegrating the self', and should be 'integrating the self', rather than 'splitting it up' and 'disorientating the self'. I guess traditional therapies might not like the suggestion of more than one self, but most therapies I know spend most of the time dealing with all the different selves. Suggesting censorship seems naive.

I like the way narrative is positioned, by Peta, as a therapy that must be criticised from the inside as well as the outside<sup>36</sup>. In other words, narrative therapists must be critical about the model and what they are doing. The theoretical orientation means it must not be allowed to slide into stasis. However, the training model, so far, seems fairly traditional. It is very much a teacher pupil kind of training model, although in adult form, with break-out groups, exercises and discussions.

What I find of major interest is that both facilitators are consistently articulate, in fact very very articulate. This is relevant to Peta's comment that 'a love of language is essential for this therapy' and clearly this is very much a language orientated therapy, rather than for example, a sitting silently in the moment type of therapy. I wonder whether articulateness is a requirement to practice, or whether it is learned through practice of the narrative craft?

### **9.00am**

I've arrived at the venue. Still in a questioning vein, I begin the day by asking Peta<sup>37</sup>:

"Where do different therapies connect, where do they differ, what do you make of the difference?"

The question comes from my frustrations with sameness and difference and I realise as I frame and ask it that I am putting forth a thesis question. This is one of the things that I want to know, this is a purpose of the research, this is a question for me to answer, not Peta. Her answer does inform me however, as she replies that she is not familiar enough with many of the other therapeutic models I mention to give me an answer. I am reminded afresh, that the knowledge of practising therapists doesn't necessarily encompass several different theoretical and practical models, that many, possibly the majority, of therapists practice within a specialised context. It seems to be my good fortune to have been given

---

<sup>36</sup> Clearly this is consistent with my own interest in deconstruction and critical analysis.

<sup>37</sup> Peta and Peter facilitated alternate days.

the opportunity to sample and research more than one therapeutic model. I feel pleased. I've always assumed that 'therapists' know more than I do. I'm discovering that my research process is producing knowledge - that I am finding things out.

Peta spends the first half of the morning going over typical issues arising in counselling practice, for example, gender/ethnicity differences, clients who have been 'sent' to therapy, clients who think therapy is useless. She talks of negotiating these issues with clients and setting the scene for collaborative therapy.

After a buoyant morning tea spent animatedly chatting in the sunny and nicely landscaped backyard of the rooms (clearly spirits have lifted) we return to discuss an aspect presented in the literature as a key feature of narrative therapy. That is, 'the unique experience', sometimes also known as, 'the unique outcome'.

Despite it's heraldry this is a relatively simple concept used consistently within many 'alternative' therapeutic models, although without such a distinctive appellation.

In brief: Imagine a client approaches therapy with a stammering problem. During the session they happen to mention, - "Once three years ago I stopped stammering" - it is this which is 'the unique experience', that is, the time they stopped stammering. The narrative therapist wants to look at the relationship between 'the problem' and 'the unique experience/outcome', and a typical question in relation to the problem may be: "Has there ever been a time when this issue has diminished in your life?". It is the time of diminishment that becomes a location for inquiry. For example, if someone has a problem with 'lack of trust' there will also be an experience of 'trust'. Research of the trust will inevitably include damage to trust; naming a problem with anger means they know when anger is not a problem; if someone is talking about 'fear', they know about times of 'no fear', and so on. Of course, in a therapeutic session a client may not recall unique experiences and locating such times is not necessarily an easy task. However, the language of 'the problem' sits within a construction of the problem. The client has a knowledge of the construction and exploration of this is another way to bring forward unique experiences.

The narrative focus here is about strengthening resources, for example, if a client is complaining of 'lack of love' - if we research 'lack' we find 'lack', if we research 'love' we find more; if the issue is 'fear', build a resource against fear first.

I still can't help but make fleeting comparisons. For example, Bioenergetics, among other models, emphasises a similar approach though uses more positivist language to describe such actions, for example, build the container so the client has the strength to look at fear/lack of love, build health first rather than pathology.

Everyone in the group, including myself, thoroughly enjoys this explanation of an issue that is sometimes obscure in the literature. We are very keen to practice finding 'unique experiences' and spend the rest of the morning engaged in role play activities before breaking for lunch.

By now, we're all pretty relaxed in each others company and those of us who have brought our lunch spend a convivial and animated hour in the sunny backyard.



The afternoon brings more excitement as a common misnomer about narrative therapy is dispelled - 'narrative therapy is not about getting people's stories'. I am interested to hear this as such a concept is one I often hear bandied about by enthusiastic 'newcomers' to narrative therapy. As all therapeutic models rely upon 'getting people's stories' I often find such a statement both asinine and perplexing.

Peta doesn't leave us in suspense, but continues, by telling us what narrative therapy is about. "It is about a way of engaging with people's lived experience and how this is shaping their lives"

At this point, I notice how much I am enjoying the language we are using today and wonder if I am being seduced by narrative therapy, or the facilitator's parlance, into

enjoying this model precisely because of its innovative and descriptive phrasing. How much more interesting and meaningful to say

“It is about a way of engaging with people’s lived experience and how this is shaping their lives”

than to say, “it’s about getting people’s stories”. It seems more lyrical somehow. I begin to appreciate the love of language brought to the work by Peta and Peter, noticing that this challenge to the traditional paradigm produces a more vibrant and expansive world. I appreciate also, a statement by Peta that the language is not something to be picked up and put down as a technique, but is something that is lived, used and thought, all of the time. Such a stance actively encourages, at least, a transitional worldview, and an alternative ontological location.

Peta adds to this statement by suggesting that narrative therapy looks at the meaning making of ‘the stories’, how they are shaped, how they are supported, and that this is done in collaboration with the client. In collaboration, ‘we’ want to make sense of ‘the strategies of lived experience’. However, none of this is a narrative therapy innovation, rather the narrative story is borrowed from poststructuralism and the notion that we have only so many discourses to make sense of our lived experience due to our enculturation, hence exploration and scrutiny of these is possible.

Something triggers me here into my own internal diatribe, whether it is my delight in the language, the narrative use of stories, the excitement of an ontological shift, I’m not sure. I suspect a combination of these has produced an ideological shift of focus because I am plunged suddenly and intensely into thesis mode; a raft of queries and thoughts tumbling into my mind.

*Perhaps there aren’t that many ways of doing therapy but “it” (the process) can be allied with differentiating theory - meaning the practice is always similar, very similar, but the theory is different. Hence, we think the practices are different. Question: is the construction of ‘the self’ in the practice or the theory, are they entwined? Does the therapeutic talk - that which takes place in the room and lives on with the client (and the therapist) - have its own life, is the talk the process, or are the talk, the process, and the*

*theory all different discourses affecting - what - the relationship? Do the discourses produce 'the relationship', or 'the outcome'? Are relationship and outcome the same thing? Does the relationship produce 'the outcome'? This comes back to a major narrative therapy question - where does change occur; a major bioenergetics question - what heals?*

No new questions here of course, although this is my first tangible inkling of the similarities between the therapeutic practices I am studying, and the similarities between the ones I am studying and others I have come across in my therapeutic travels. I am pleased also, to experience questions being raised as this always engenders some excitement and energy around my research process.

Just as we are about to practice role-plays giving us the opportunity to 'find' unique experiences, and look at relationships between 'the problem' and the construction of the problem, a most interesting question is raised by a group member, in relation to 'grief work'. "How do you generate unique experiences when your client has experienced a tragedy and is in grief?" For example, if someone is in deep mourning for the loss of a child, it is inappropriate to explore times when they felt differently about their life. Peta responds easily to this challenge by proposing that the generation of unique experiences may not be the issue here and as therapist we would want to look more at how the client relates to the grief. At some stage during the therapy 'we' would acknowledge the occurrence of the tragedy, but also begin to look at how the client can reclaim life in view of this.

Another question is raised: "Isn't going into the past to find unique experiences just the same as psychodynamic therapy?" I find this question particularly interesting as for a postmodern therapy narrative does seem to spend a lot of time rummaging in 'the past', and 'the unique experience' is often presented (primarily in the literature) in such a way that you don't realise that you are looking at past influences upon a person's life. There is a conciliatory answer for this query. Narrative moves into the past in order to discover the person's agency around the problem rather than working through an Oedipal complex. Now, in the present we have 100% problem, in the past the problem was 60%. Narrative wants to know about the 40% when it wasn't happening. This is the difference between

psychodynamic and narrative. It's interesting though, that she's presenting a postmodern theory which includes agency.

I notice a desire to debate as I relate the issue of agency to bioenergetics theory, which is clearly a psychodynamic and more pathological approach, but there's not enough time. We move into a couple of interesting role plays both relative to the issues we've been discussing today. This takes the rest of the afternoon, and we seem a tired but content group by the time the day is over.

#### **Narrative Workshop Day Four**

I awake feeling tired, I feel overloaded with information that I'd just like to go away and think about. The three days have been full on. As I stroll to the venue with my fellow trainee I find she is just as tired and we are greeted with similar stories when we arrive. Our facilitator however, seems to be bursting with energy and enthusiasm; he invites us into the room to consider some information he has written on the whiteboard.

"In my view we begin with a narrative that already contains a beginning and an ending, which frames and hence enables us to interpret the present. It is not that we initially have a body of data, the facts, and we then just construct a story or theory to account for them ... the narrative structures we construct are not secondary narratives about data but primary narratives that establish what is to count as data".

We dutifully copy it down, although most of us are too tired to think deeply about it. I briefly consider that the statement serves to legitimise the narrative therapy style of working, that is, a talk therapy working with the discourses present in the therapeutic context. Peter launches into a talk about letter writing. This is a familiar narrative technique much promoted in the literature. It involves follow up letters written to clients after, and in between sessions. Apparently, Peter has spent most of his time this week letter writing and after talking about the process, and commenting that he is still in written contact with some clients years after their therapeutic sessions have finished, he reads one of his most recent letters.

As I listen, I experience being both spellbound and startled. The letter includes a barrage of observations and questions which, if I was a client, would leave me quite confused, if not shell shocked. I am surprised at my response because I have read examples of these types of letters in case studies without experiencing the same reaction, although I have wondered how the therapist thinks of so many things to say. In response to a question about the usefulness of such letters Peter comments that some clients who have been asked about the efficacy of therapy have indicated - therapy 100%, letters 40%. He likes to share any questions arising after a session with the client, and if he notices that, he “got lost in the session” this also goes in the letter. I imagine many clients would find the letters supportive and in bioenergetic terms, they might act as ‘a container’, having some similarity with the idea of transitional objects given to the client to ‘hold’ them between sessions.

During morning tea break, I discover my response is not dissimilar to that of others. Everyone is talking about the letters, what it would be like to receive one? when do you get time to write letters to all your clients? are they compulsory? wouldn't the letters be overwhelming rather than helpful? ...<sup>38</sup>

We put our discussion aside as morning tea subsides and Peter introduces a video tape and corresponding transcript that he would like us to work with this morning. He remarks that “we're going to look at it thoughtfully and methodically”, and, “you'll find the work very difficult”. Becoming more and more attuned to the language we are using I am struck by these statements. Not only is Peter letting us know that we will need to take some time over this process, but he becomes positioned as someone who finds the work easy and is good at it. He is positioned as the expert here, and we are not colleagues, nor even pupils, but people who will struggle, and who clearly don't know. I found this interesting in terms of both power relations and possibly even gender relations, as it was not something that occurred with our female facilitator.

The video credits roll. Our focus is to study the transcript, noticing how the idea of agency, that is, giving the client agency, is developed through the therapist's questions. Agency does seem to be some kind of ‘goal’ of the practice. The process takes up the rest of the

---

<sup>38</sup> We do discover the following day that although letter writing is promoted as a narrative technique, not everyone uses it. Peta never, or very rarely writes letters after sessions, although she and the client will sometimes craft notes and letters together in the session which the client will take away with them. Peter, however, finds that letter writing suits his style.

morning and after a while I drift off into my own reverie some of which brings forth the following ideas.

I wonder, is narrative therapy, out of all of the therapeutic models, the most powerful agent for 'social change'? The reason being that it undermines the language; it actively undermines institutional discourse and construction of the self. Because it follows the covenant that language is a form of social action it fits with social constructionism. Other therapies try to change the self and the individual in relationship to whatever is bothering them, for example, change of behaviour, development of a role, release of withheld trauma, so that in relationship with the problem the self/individual can be different. Narrative tries to change the language, which in turn must effect social change. This is powerful stuff. Many of the therapists I've ever spoken to are 'in the game' because they want to effect societal change, so they laboriously work with individuals and groups, therapising and educating, and working on individual 'shifts', personal growth, personal development - all from the inside out. Narrative works from the outside in. When people begin to speak alternatively, when dominant discourse is challenged, society changes.

But questions arise: Where does the body fit in all of this? How do thoughts about the body, for example, bioenergetic thoughts, fit with narrative? What about the tentative conclusions being drawn by trauma workers, for example, van der Kolk, about the ways in which trauma is held in the body? How does this fit with the narrative worldview? Does narrative have a body? I still can't get over the similarities between psychodrama and narrative, the major difference<sup>39</sup> being psychodrama locates the issues within the person, eg. within the system, even though the system is supported by beliefs 'taken on board' by particular roles ...

The afternoon brings more of the same, we look in detail at another transcript. Going over transcripts can be a useful exercise, but it becomes tedious, and on a day when we're all feeling some lassitude we don't evaluate or raise as many questions as we might. We finish the day by developing questions to be asked on the final day. We are each allowed to ask one question. Peter writes them on the whiteboard. I press to have more than one because suddenly I have several, but, no, definitely not, I can understand that there will be no time. These are the questions I would have liked on the whiteboard:

---

<sup>39</sup> At this stage I have not examined these two models sufficiently to be sure that this is a major

- 1 What kind of clients come to a narrative therapist? Borderline, abusing mothers, PTSD, medicated clients, how does narrative work with such clients?
- 2 Would you suggest that narrative therapy is more problem orientated than personal growth orientated? Is it geared toward problem solving, rather, than, say, suggesting ways of parenting?
- 3 How does narrative fit with deep trauma work - ideas of Briere - Van der Kolk - body/mind/spirit as one.
- 4 Working with a transference model creates need for boundaries? How does narrative deal with boundary issues? Does narrative acknowledge the idea of transference?

I am allowed question 1, as this is the first question I spoke about, but I would really really like to discuss the others. You never know, perhaps I'll be able to slip them into a gap in the conversation.

#### **9.00am Narrative Workshop Day Four**

The day begins with a question about letter writing. Although Peta uses the technique differently to Peter she emphasises the power imbued through a letter telling us that it is very powerful for people to receive a letter/summary that is different to the usual pathologising letter. In particular when working with children, it is important to write letters directly to them. Several of the school counsellors nod in agreement. Why is it important? Because of the power relations with the family/social setting. Writing a letter privileges the child. In families, people leave sessions with a multiplicity of meanings and the meaning that will dominate will be that held by the most powerful member of the family. A copy of the letter is always sent to the parents.

Peta's preferred way of using the technique is to write joint summaries within sessions. She writes a summary, and the client writes a summary, they then compare notes. Alternatively, she will tape a summary or the end of a session (which is usually a summarising) and give it to the client. The letter writing technique is about finding

---

difference, however at this time during this workshop, this is how it seemed.

numerous ways to help people take with them what they discovered during the therapeutic session.

I like the idea of privileging the child, it's another example of narrative work being supported by the theory, or vice versa. Power relations are acknowledged and addressed. On the other hand, the contradictions I experience around narrative therapy are again evident. I perceive the joint summary idea as very directive. Sometimes narrative therapy seems like the greatest thing since sliced bread, adhering to its theoretical origins, and producing a workable social constructionist model, the next minute it seems little different to traditional models. It suggests that its not pathologising but it certainly is constructing a self, albeit one which creates and constructs itself. It is still the therapist who 'engineers' the narrative self - it is the therapist who chooses and directs the type of language to be used within the therapeutic relationship. What I wonder now is, because narrative is producing a social constructionist self, how does this fit with the post structuralist self I have written about in Chapter Two. Is the narrative self the same as the post structuralist self - are there similarities/differences?

Someone asks a question about working with sexual abuse clients that flips into a comment about working with the body. I am all ears - 'the leaving out' of the body in all of the models under research, except bioenergetics, has begun to puzzle me.

Peta describes the body as a location where dissonance shows itself, and an area of working which she is keen to develop. She suggests that if we engage the person in the sense of their body experience we can work to find connection with the meaning that can be made. But, I am still left thinking - what about the body, and the story it tells? Before I can go there, I see an opportunity to slip in my question about transference. Working with a transference model creates need for boundaries? How does narrative deal with boundary issues? Does narrative acknowledge the idea of transference?

Peta likes my question, and others are also interested. She suggests that the traditional way of viewing boundaries creates a detachment between therapist and client, and that narrative walks a different line with connection and relationship. Narrative walks very closely with the issue but not in it. Rather than a boundary being drawn between therapist and client, thus creating separation, the narrative boundary sits around therapist and

client, in a sense enclosing both, with ethics and obligations within the relationship/encounter.

I begin to think that this issue clearly deserves some time and discussion, being that it is a central debate of many models. Certainly when I operate from a transference model, I experience transference and countertransference. I have not thought before about it simply not being present in a different worldview, indicating that I have thought of transference/countertransference as a real phenomenon. I would love to hear a narrative and a bioenergetic therapist discuss it. On the one hand Peta's explanation sounds reasonable, that is, the transference discourse produces particular boundaries and ethical issues relevant to the discourse, that is, transference issues are produced in relationship through the transference discourse. Narrative boundary discourse constructs the notion of 'connection', and barriers to connection if transference 'sits between' therapist and client. As far as I can ascertain narrative doesn't acknowledge a transference discourse, although does suggest that the therapist in a connectful relationship does have ethical obligations. In other words, it is a worldview which does not produce/include a transference discourse. Now I do know of therapists who have also upheld this notion and run into some serious boundary problems - is this because these particular therapists have also not acknowledged their ethical obligations. And, what does this idea of 'no transference' mean relative to all the literature written about transference and countertransference. Such issues can be explained away as discourses occurring within a particular worldview, but do we then have to look at other explanations for therapist responses to clients (and vice versa), and does narrative have a response to the countertransference and projective identification discourse ...

To entertain the transference/countertransference debate is not my focus so I stop my train of thought here. However, such a debate must have a significant bearing upon the constitution of the self. Constitution through either transference or non-transference discourses must produce a different ontological positioning of/in the world.

We move through various other questions including working with Borderline Personality Disorder, researching wellness, agency, the symbolic meaning of events, and exploring externalisations. Peta introduces the idea of 'inquiry over time', which appears to be a key narrative concept. She explains it in terms of Past Present Future.

Therapist and client explore the relationship between the past and the present. People need to be in the present reflecting on the past. From the present we can also reflect upon the future - how life would be if certain things were in place. Time oriented inquiry creates a context of movement. Whenever there is movement in language there is change. Whenever there is change there is the potential for unique experiences. So we are always interested in the relationship between Present Past Future. Future orientated questions frequently start with "If". They tap into people's imagination, creativity. If you can imagine something, you can begin to have something. What is the something?

I realise the inference here is that the narrative worldview invests in 'the imaginative self', 'the creative self', alongside 'the relational self', and 'the self that can have'. The constitution of the narrative self is beginning to emerge.

Our time with Peta ends at lunchtime. We are all sorry to see her go. She has been an excellent facilitator, patiently and pleurably sharing her expertise. We are also in high spirits, we have a lot to process, a great deal of information has been packed into the five days, but, the course is nearly over and soon we will be able to go home. For lunch, we all go to a nice cafe and have a delicious meal. There is a temptation to linger, it's been a great week, a great day, and great company, but we still have an afternoon session with Peter, albeit a short session so that people can catch flights and drive home. With some reluctance, we wander back to the rooms.

Peter is still exuberant and we soon settle back into trainee mode. The afternoon is light-hearted. After some more questions and brief discussion, Peter introduces a simple exercise designed to leave us on a high note. In pairs as therapist/client, we are to research special abilities of our clients. One of our number has left at lunchtime in order to drive back home, so we are short one person for a pair. I take the opportunity to ask Peter if I can work with him. After many years of therapy with different types of therapists, I am dying to know what it is like to be on the receiving end of an experienced narrative therapist. During training, both in this workshop, and previous narrative training experiences when acting as client, I have often felt interrogated and noticed myself becoming defensive under the auspices of a practicing narrative therapist. I've assumed my notions of interrogation are due to the enthusiasm of beginners to master the questioning techniques which often seem so much a part of the narrative literature.

My session with Peter is not only therapeutic but also highly enjoyable. Although I am only partaking in a simple exercise, I am delighted. I experience an enlightening reframing of an early childhood issue that many other therapeutic models, more specifically psychodynamically/psychoanalytically orientated models continually construe as 'a terrible thing'. I am impressed with the way the session starts with a simple question about special abilities I might have had as a child and evolves into an exploration of childhood issues. The manner of the therapist is of an interested and curious investigator who reframes all past issues as positive, bringing them into the present as special abilities that compliment my life. I find the session extremely useful, not only in terms of personal work, but also as an experience of a 'working' narrative encounter.

This exercise ends our week and while we are still closing the taxi driver arrives to take myself and another participant to the airport. Our goodbyes are hurried and it is a strange sensation to be sitting in a cab driving through the streets of Auckland after a week engrossed in the world of narrative.

I ask my friend if she got what she wanted from the workshop. She replies that in a roundabout way she definitely has. Having previously attended several narrative workshops, she came this time to learn more about working with families. She enjoyed this workshop, but it will be her last for a while. What she has learned is that she has done enough workshops and that it is time for her to just go out and do it, that there are no secrets waiting to be found.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN A STORY ABOUT BIOENERGETICS

For a while now Bioenergetics has been the proverbial thorn in my side. It isn't that I don't like it, but being around it brings up conflict. I'm talking about conflict in me, Bio isn't bothered. My first contact with Bioenergetics persuaded me that I really was on to something, something alternative. A way that departed from Cartesian dualism, and talked of body and mind as united. A way of working with 'the body' no less. I know now that I was naive; carried away by my own idealism I saw only what I wanted to see.

I saw a psychotherapy that 'embodied wholeness'. It talked to me of 'free flowing energy', 'fully present', 'fully expressive', 'releasing old behavioural patterns', 'spontaneity', 'creativity', 'emotional well-being', 'joy', 'more capacity for pleasure', 'full sexuality', 'full aliveness', 'authenticity', 'connection'. I was attracted, who wouldn't be. There's no doubt that I got some of these things, but I also got more than I bargained for.

I had a few niggles in the early days, but I went along with them. Bioenergetics mostly made so much sense. Relying on early childhood developmental theory that all could relate to, Bio was magically entrancing, inviting and cajoling with new thoughts about childhood interactions. Object relations theory became a standpoint from which patterns of relationship could be viewed. Even the idea of character structure, although no longer a central Bio focus, became feasible. Bioenergetics offered a very structured understandable worldview alongside the enticement of holism – body-work combined with mind work. Occasionally even 'spirit' was mentioned which usually assuaged any qualms I had about it not being as holistic as suggested, or too structured for my liking.

From time to time I raised my voice, querying objectifying language, contesting cultural indoctrination, resisting interpretations, but for the most part my voice was quiet, after all Bio wasn't that negative, nice people were involved, it was often fun, I was frequently happy.

When I did speak up, I noticed my difficulty. Formulating objections was laborious. Return arguments seemed to make more sense than my arduous languaging of indistinct uneasiness partly fuelled by vague recollections of academic notions, or some nebulous

affront to my personage. Often unable to form a coherent sentence that would scintillatingly reveal my dissatisfaction, I tended toward quiescence.

Believe it or not, years rolled by. Sure, I gained a bit of a reputation among peers for disgruntlement, after all I often played the same refrain. I wasn't entirely alone though, from time to time, others too had scepticism, queries, or resistance. Such positions were tolerated; Bioenergetic culture entitled us to 'our own stuff'. Occasionally, I'd raise issues in personal therapy, talking of the clash between Bio's structured, almost mechanical, approach and my post structuralist concerns and desires for something outside tradition. Raising such issues was never a problem, my therapist was open to my ideas, Bio was willing to listen. Everyone was patient.

Fourth year began. Our first workshop of the year, February 2000, was a much heralded 5-day. Much heralded because Bio had persuaded two well respected, very knowledgeable, and highly regarded international trainers to interrupt their busy schedule and pay us a visit. This was 'out of the norm'. We always had international trainers, but our new visitors held the status of royalty.

Still, I didn't expect this workshop to be very different from the others. Usually I tried to be open to concepts and the programme, and, this time, although feeling slightly jaded and still troubled by pernicky language issues, I also had a little excitement about meeting the nobility. They were bound to be expert practitioners.

The first couple of days were fun. It was good to be with the training group<sup>40</sup> again, we were all friends by now. Our focus, sexuality in the therapeutic relationship, and in particular, transference and countertransference<sup>41</sup>, was enticing whether it brought up anxiety or excitement. We're all sexual beings and it was a topic with relevance for everyone. The facilitators were splitting their time by spending two and a half days each

---

<sup>40</sup> By fourth year, the Bioenergetic training group is much smaller than when the training began in 1997, and consists of nine people, six women and three men.

<sup>41</sup> "Transference refers to the feelings that a patient 'transfers' from an earlier important person (primarily in childhood, and most commonly a parent) onto the person of the therapist. ... Countertransference refers to the equally irrational feelings of the therapist toward the patient which derive not from any real qualities in the patient, but from the therapist's own past" (Masson, 1994, p36). "Transference refers to feelings the patient projects onto the analyst and countertransference the ways in which the analyst is influenced by patient's projections"(Corsini & Wedding, 1995, p100).

with us. This meant we had Cate for the first half of our training workshop and John for the second half.

Like starving kittens, we lapped up Cate; by the end of our time with her, we were all in love. She engendered such feelings of safety, trust, and competence, that we embraced sexuality issues as though we were on a marvellous adventure. Our explorations included group exercises where we scrutinised transference and countertransference via body sensations and thoughts, and group sharing where we talked of times, as either therapist or client, where sexuality had been problematic.

On the second day I did notice some inner confusion, and annoyance, when I briefly considered transference and countertransference in relation to the narrative therapy training I had attended. Talk about 'chalk and cheese'! In one model, transference/countertransference doesn't exist, in the other I experience a myriad of body sensations telling me that not only is it real, but it changes in different situations and with different clients.

And, then, as always happens when wearing my 'postie hat'<sup>42</sup>, I found myself wondering if body sensations are a manifestation of the language we use? For example, if I was in a 'narrative' setting would I experience the body, are the sensations really there?

I left that particular space of thought as fast as I could. The workshop was too much fun to linger in such a quandary. For the first time in a long while I was enjoying the idea of working bioenergetically with clients; I could feel a stirring of interest in the way the transference/countertransference model was being presented, and I had far more invested in maintaining such agreeable feelings than delving into predicaments and problematics, however piquant the notions! In other words, I let the niggles slide.

After two and a half days, with much regret, we changed facilitators. Mournfully waving goodbye to Cate we adjusted to John, who was to teach of using our various selves as a 'countertransference tool' in our therapeutic relationship with clients. There was some restlessness at first, Cate was missed, but John was good, very good. Within hours, we

were all mates, and for some trainees John became the kindest and most amazing man on Earth. He reached into their psyche with the deftness of a brain surgeon. Spilling their lives onto the floor, he artfully snared and rearranged childhood memories, somewhat akin to offering succour in the wasteland of psychic conflict.

Such delicate excision was not for me though. Oh, I joined in the exercises, supported catharsis, and endured teaching explanations, but ...

Niggles have a habit of creeping up on you. They don't exactly go away, they tend to hang around somewhere in the nether reaches. Sporadically and unobtrusively gliding into hailing distance, they wait, generally stationary, until you mistakenly glimpse their shadowy form.

And so it was with mine. But, they were more than sporadic, they hounded me. I tried to resist. I knew there were aspects of transference/countertransference that I liked. I liked the idea of my own body and my own mind helping me, as therapist, to be fully and authentically present with my clients. I liked the idea of bringing the transference/countertransference into the therapeutic relationship, of using myself as a barometer. I liked the therapeutic challenge, the skill required, the striving for 'full authentic connection', the 'realness' of it all.

I knew why I liked it; Bio was giving me what I wanted. But, by the afternoon of day four I had gone quiet, something was wrong.

On the morning of day five, I knew I was in trouble.

*I am in a dream. I am in a room full of people, but they all speak a different language to me. Why is everyone so enthralled with these psychoanalytic assertions and explanations? Why does the transference/countertransference model now seem so problematic to me, yet others are uncomplaining and accepting of such notions? How can our facilitator sit there neatly filing people's issues into psychoanalytical boxes and believe what he is saying is true? Why do some of his stories sound plausible, and why do some*

---

<sup>42</sup> Referring here to the poststructuralist standpoint/worldview that effects my thinking from time to time, and which is usually heralded by a raft of difficult questions that are almost impossible to

*people seem particularly relieved and satisfied with his interpretation of their issues? Why do his descriptions make me feel ill? Why can't I find any words to address my questions? Why do I feel like a foreigner in my own group?*

In my dream I sit, in my own world. Who am I? What is my angst? What does it say about me? As I ponder my self the voices of the others fade out. My niggle has grown out of proportion to the 'rambling's' of a man from America. I feel my displeasure consume me, until I'm really annoyed, almost angry.

The contradiction I see between a structural transference/countertransference model and a poststructuralist idiom of constructed 'realities' drives me nuts! While doing workshop exercises I can feel the transference or countertransference in my body, I can feel it in my head. *If I can feel it, can it be just some Freudian construction? How can it not be real?*

Doesn't narrative suggest that the transference/countertransference model produces a barrier between therapist and client and that narrative has no barrier because they don't adhere to the transference/countertransference model? *How can they just drop it? Does that mean it's not there? I am experiencing it in my body, so how can it just be a social construction, a theoretical construct? It's crazy making. How do I coherently discuss it, how can I make sense of it?*

*Is it a theoretical construct? If I feel it in my body, am I only feeling a construction? We interpret sensations of illness by naming. Is transference/countertransference the same? Am I interpreting a sensation in my body as connected with the transference/countertransference model? Am I really experiencing it in my body?*

I feel depressed and disturbed at the same time, and realise how incensed I am with this contradiction bleating in my head. When the contradiction lurks I am sensitive to anything psychoanalytical; and when John uses psychoanalytic explanations for our ways of being in the world, for our psyche, the contradiction swells in the back of my mind; I see others enjoying his oratory while I resist such explanations. I get irritated; and I realise I'm irritated because I'm 'out of synch' with my group. I have no way to challenge the talk and the others' 'compliance'. When he talks of 'uncovering layers of the self' I grasp for

---

answer.

academic challenges, but they are elusive; so I sit with this irritation, with this niggle, with this contradiction, knowing that all is not well. If all is not well I can't 'buy this' stuff; and because I can't buy it, I can't have it, like the others are having it.

*I feel like a crazy woman. But, it gets more crazy ... as I continue with transference/countertransference and think ... I can trust my body, but can I trust my mind. If I come from a social constructionist position I can't trust my mind, but surely I can trust my body; I can trust the sensations in my body. But, can I trust the sensations in my body, can I be sure, or does the body manufacture in the same way as the mind? Is anything real?*

*Maybe if I don't try and interpret this I can have the body experience. It can be an experience with no questioning of the mind, that would be alright, I can leave the mind out. Yes, that would be good, comforting, to have an experience with no need for analysis - our minds are too imprinted anyway, shaped and moulded from birth, they're not even our own ... how do I get out of this?*

*I don't know if any of these thoughts are mine, or if there is any such thing as 'my own thoughts'. How can I explain my feelings of aversion when I hear John's psychoanalytic explanations, that seem so finite, yet so feasible they fit just about everything. This psychoanalytic approach suggests that the self is a finite thing, a thing we reach at the end of uncovering our adapted selves, our primal selves, our rageful selves, our whatever selves, and then, voila, the real self appears. Surely our lives can't be so finitely explained, surely there must be more than this. But are these my thoughts, or are they engendered through my academic readings, through other theoretical explorations antithetic to Freudian origins. Do these feelings of distaste come from my body or from my mind? Are the words I'm using engendering the feeling in my body or is my body engendering the words in my mind? How did I get here - mind/body, body/mind - which first? I can never know the answer to this - I definitely need a way out of here.*

A pathway appears and I take it.

*Perhaps I'm simply grappling with a credibility issue. What a relief that would be. Maybe I'm not interested in dusty Freudian rhetoric served by someone historically steeped in a*

*psychoanalytic worldview. Not that John is strictly Freudian of course, in fact he's probably spectacularly eclectic, but in this workshop his unpacking of our selves and sorting of our childhood miseries sound excruciatingly psychoanalytic. Why do people go into psychoanalysis anyway, what goes on for people that they choose psychoanalysis, what draws them to such a worldview? Some people, even these days want to do psychoanalytical training; there are so many other more relational 'ways' to choose, why psychoanalysis?*

*I pause and breath, wondering, if some people are comfortable explaining themselves psychoanalytically, what talk do I use to explain my self? What does my quandary say about me? If I struggle with psychoanalytic explanations, how do I do it? How do I make sense of my world? What resources do I draw upon? What discourses do I utilise?*

Recognising that there is little room for such questions within this psychoanalytic worldview I laugh as I notice I've returned to my thesis. What resources do people use to make sense of the self? of themselves? How do we construct the self, how is it constituted? How do different therapeutic standpoints construct the self?

I no longer feel quite so insane. The rest of the day doesn't bother me quite so much. I don't raise these issues. From time to time I drift off, but I've found my feet again, the atmosphere is pleasant enough. I'm pleased to finish though. Hugs and kisses to everyone, we've all had a marvellous time. Let's go home.

## CHAPTER TWELVE SPEAKING SUBJECTIVITY: ENGAGING WITH SELF

This study is a process of inquiry, of engagement. Correspondingly, this chapter acts as commentary upon the articulated subjectification constituted through the narratives just read<sup>43</sup>. It requires suspension of conventional doctrines of the analytic. The point of commentary is not the assertion of 'correct' interpretation; within particular traditions, all interpretations can be correct. Seeking information of processes of subjectification this chapter solicits knowledge. Hoping for an expanded array of possibilities it offers other ways of seeing, of understanding institutional arrangements and relational forms. Through a range of interpretative strategies, it offers commentary and interpretation as resources, as additional points of reference through which people can understand their lives (Gergen & McNamee, 2000; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Matters of self and subjectification are often abstruse. As articulation the term 'self' is constraining, it is insufficient. I use the term subjectivity to signify the complexity of

---

### <sup>43</sup> Chapter Twelve(a): A Retrospective Guide

Alongside the commentary of Chapter Twelve there is another commentary, the one you are reading now. This commentary is written subsequent to other readings of the text. It is produced in response to readers of this work. The intention is to intermittently produce a split-page commentary, demarcated through typeface, that articulates the retrospective voice of the writer commenting upon 'the work' produced through Chapter Twelve. Taking into account conversations I have had with other readers of this chapter, all of whom have read the chapter differently, it can be thought of as adjunctive, that is, it is a type of meaning-making device; it can be thought of as a type of meta-commentary, as a guide to how some of the inclusions of this chapter might be read. Interestingly it fulfils in some way one of the ambitions originally held for this work. Because I understand this work as an ongoing production, past present future never ending; at one stage I searched for a way to manifest the multiplicity of this notion. I wanted to illustrate the symbiotic influence of the work upon readers and readers upon the work. Possibilities ranged from: including examiner's reports within the final bound manuscript; inviting reader's to contribute a chapter; or, enabling readers to contribute their responses to the stories. Each option was eventually discarded. Doctoral dissertation requirements constrained possibilities. Invitingly, it now seems that I am given the opportunity to contribute readers requests, albeit through my own lens. My position might be described as 'a retrospective academic voice that has an invested interest in the study'. This meta-commentary is not compulsory reading. In the sense that the study is infinitely ongoing the meta-commentary is part of the study, it cannot be independent, yet it is simultaneously distinct. It is written 'after the fact'. It can be ignored. It is designed as a reading guide. It does not attempt to analyse, to embroil theoretical standpoints, or to produce another version of Chapter Twelve. Rather it serves as retrospective commentary, offering signposts and guidance through the imbrication of 'interpretation/discussion' produced through Chapter Twelve.

Chapter Twelve begins by introducing the purpose of commentary and re-addresses the problematics of a contextualised being,, that is, myself, attempting to interpret my contextualised subjectification through the constraints of 'my' contextualised language practices. This is an incessant issue throughout the work. Discussion gradually moves to the need for interpretation, focusing upon how this might be accomplished.

relationships and arrangements between people and practices, also acknowledging that people, culture, self, are produced as they simultaneously produce. Sometimes I cannot help but still talk of self, my positivist history supports the customary recurrence of this term; but when I do, what I mean is something like 'subjectified'. Moreover, even when articulating subjectification as relational and momentary it is easy to slip into the notion that, 'I am done to', 'I am acted upon', 'I am exposed', 'I undergo a process', 'I am produced through technologies, apparatus...'. It is not hard to preserve the notion of a 'me', an intact 'me', a stable part of me, that will bear witness, that can observe, that, actually, secretly, I do have a self, a stable self that I know very well, as me. Even while trying to remain consistent with the standpoint of this work slipping and sliding along the route problematically occurs.

For me, this problematic has occurred now, after my re-reading of the narratives. They appear as independent and circumscribed accounts contained through beginnings and endings, through talk of time and place, through the presentation of 'a person's experience of a legitimate practice'. Through this lens, the narratives indicate stability and veracity; notions of momentary multiple meaning making are temporarily by-passed. That is why I re-iterate at this point that this work is complex. For example, psychotherapy and self have been artificially discussed as independent separate entities, although we know that they are so entwined as to be inseparable. The process of subjectification sometimes seems simple, yet prior chapters have indicated its complexity. Even the use of narrative can be understood "as entailing an imposition of literary form upon that which is ostensibly formless" (Freeman, 1998, p27).

As a person of Westernised descent, I have to remind myself that the narratives of exposure are not articulations of stable yet different selves, but that each is articulation of a process of subjectification. Yet, none are distinct processes. They are contextually entwined. They are not entwined in terms of 'the same subject', 'a single person', experiencing exposure to different apparatus. They are entwined because apparatus of subjectification are contextually entwined with each other, and with 'the subjectified person', and all are entwined with humanity ad infinitum. There is no natural separation. When I enter the artifice of the subjectification process, I enter as 'a historico-contextualised embodied being'. I am a production of innumerable regimes that

accompany me into the process. We take for granted the boundaries and disconnections that our talk produces.

As experiential narratives, the accounts are stable and veracious only in so far as they are understood as capturing a moment in time. Although I use these narratives, these snapshots in time, specifically, subjectification constituted through these articulations is ephemeral. We know that apparatus of dominion constitute subjectivity in such a way that access to alternative discursive constructions is constrained. In this study, I am working to enable; to disenfranchise the government of our subjectivity and to access other forms of power. The narratives serve two purposes: illustration of a meaning-making process through which we make sense of our subjectification, and illustration of relationships between technologies of subjectification and the process of subjectification.

The relationship between psychotherapeutics as self constructing technology and constituted self has been theorised as symbiotic. Through the constitution of subjectified self we understand the context of our lives and it is psychotherapeutics that serve as constituting technology and apparatus of understanding. Through psychotherapeutics, we constitute versions of identity, and through our speech and our conduct we identify our selves. It is through these apparatus that we regulate our selves under the norm of autonomy and the illusion of freedom (Rose, 1990). Therapeutic practice is positioned as a situated product of historico-contextual discursive practices of technology and power. Through a post-structuralist orientation, this work offers re-conceptualisation of psychotherapeutic performance upon persons and the prospect of access to a different kind of power, to a different rationale of choice. The narrative metaphor is heralded as a discursive strategy for making sense of the impact of psychotherapeutics upon self. Narrative acts as a device of articulation through which we can engage the technology through which we are subjectified. I have theorised that, as meaning-making strategy narrative will make subjectification and power visible, thus enabling new ways of self management. To this end, narratives of exposure, of subjectification to apparatus of dominion, to psychotherapeutics, are offered as a device of visibility. In this study, the narratives are understood as movement toward articulation of the unspoken, as generator for some understanding of the assemblage of selves produced through psychological intervention technologies.

At this point, I am dislocated through my unarticulated expectations. As a process of exploration, and despite previous suggestions that interpretation of narratives of exposure is part of the study, where I have arrived seems slightly adrift of where I thought I would be. Through a desire for clarity and ease of reference my technique of articulating concepts and processes independently seduced me into imagining narrative as a simple meaning-making strategy, as a simple device through which subjectivity and relationships would be transparent - for all to see. I expected the visibility to be apparent, for the narratives by themselves to illustrate through their articulation the relationship between technologies of subjectification and the process of subjectification. I expected the constitution of self through psychotherapeutics to be explicit, that the stories would represent meaning-making.

Although the narratives of exposure are a way of making sense of the process of subjectification, meaning is not explicitly produced without articulated interpretation. That is, meaning is not self-evident. The narratives are accounts of how I make sense of my time at the workshops, of my exposure to psychotherapeutics. If they were read, at or as part of a psychotherapeutic workshop listeners may be asked to comment about what the stories mean for them, or they may be left with their thoughts to make of the stories what they may. These are not unusual psychotherapeutic techniques. In this study, even if left unarticulated, readers will interpret meaning as I do, silently. Silent interpretation is not an expectation of this study. As a process of inquiry, of engagement, of doctoral thesis, it is not enough to leave meaning implicit. Making meaning of narratives of exposure requires explicit articulation, that is, new narrative form produced through interpretative strategy.

The process in which I now engage, an interpretive reading of my stories is again a process of articulation, or re-writing, of giving fresh form to processes of subjectification (Freeman, 1999). However, the form or framework of commentary/interpretation is not necessarily obvious.

Analytically, the theoretical standpoint of the study does not lend itself to the use of tools such as traditional discourse analysis or the identification of narrative thematics and structures. This point is debatable and some might consider such devices an option. I suggest that recourse to such analytics will serve to stabilise and objectify that which is unstable, thus compromising the integrity of the work. For example, if I spend my time

identifying discursive resources or narrative thematics, the complexities and multiplicities of relationships between, for example, the body, emotion, discipline, the technologies I am constituted through and the articulation of that constitution will be obscured. That is not to suggest that the way I present my interpretation of the stories will successfully illuminate these relationships, but an intent is to try and accommodate and convey the temporary and transitory qualities that constitute subjectification and the contributing arrangements.

Despite prior grand ambition, my original purpose, of necessity, becomes more modest. Promises of visibility may have to be cast aside. As mentioned previously I do not enter the space of exposure as a blank slate. I enter already constituted, not necessarily stable, nor consistent, but with purpose and resources to hand. Despite my participant tag, I enter also as 'researcher/person performing knowledge inquiry'. I am constituted through many technologies before I arrive. I do not leave my constitution at the door. There is no one-to-one corresponding relationship between the psychotherapeutic technology I am exposed to and the subjectification that is produced. Correspondingly, it would be misleading to suggest that interpretation will produce a totality of experience, a comprehensive articulation, or concisely make visible the apparatus at work.

Moreover, I cannot render the process of subjectification definitively explicit both because I do not have the means to do so; the language to which I have access and the scope of this study are not sufficient, and because the subjectification process is not, in this context at least, absolutely explicable. In order to make in some way articulate my experience of subjectification and some of the power relations I understand as currently implicit within the stories, what I can do is apply, as tools of interpretation, burgeoning vocabularies of critique and interpretation about which psychology has speculated. For example, language of resistance, authority, legitimacy, subject positioning, and the introduction of some other kinds of psychological talk to which I have access will produce a form of interpretation, a reading of the narratives, which will make some meaning of implicit relationship and process.

My purpose is not to persuade. Within this interpretative process, this inquiry, this knowledge making, I cannot be precise, I cannot assume the veracity of my argument, I cannot attest to 'how it is'. I can suggest, and offer, interpretative versions constituted through my imaginings of possibilities and of how things might be. In this regard perhaps I

am aligned with Freeman's (1999) talk of the shifts from a reliance upon *argument* "based on clarity and precision, the logic of theoretical postulates" (p249), toward suggestive visions based upon the "evocative textures of the narratives in question" (p249). Despite the illusive stability of the narratives, the process is not discrete and the constitution of subjectivity within the narratives is not 'scientific'. In seeking to interpret this process of subjectification, which is not constituted through scientific text, I may need resource to more than the language of academic psychology, to language that is more than scientific (Freeman, 1999 (see also, O'Connor, 1996)). In other words, my interpretation should be produced through resonance with the narratives I read and interpret.

To this end I draw upon enabling vocabularies and focus upon my 'object of study', that is, the relationship between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist assemblage<sup>44</sup>. In particular, I draw attention to some of the issues which have maintained prevalence throughout this study and in which I am particularly interested. They are embodiment, multiplicity, constraint, and positioning. They are articulated through power relations, questions of authority, and of legitimacy. They are intertwined and inconsistent. Talk of embodiment includes talk of the body and emotion. Talk of power relations incorporates the disciplining and rigours of exposure to psychotherapeutics.

When referring to the narratives I will call them Bio1, Psychodrama, Gestalt, Narrative, and Bio2, respectively. Interpretation is straightforward. I discuss first impressions accompanied by the introduction of a new vocabulary, a 'language of the body' included to enable discussion of relationships between embodiment and constitution of subjectivity. I then read and talk about the narratives consecutively, beginning with Bio1 through to Bio2, ending this chapter with a short summation before moving toward closure of the study.

Clearly, there are differences between these narratives. They use different language, they take different forms. If the narratives are understood as representing articulated subjectivity this suggests that the process of subjectification, the exposure to

---

<sup>44</sup> At this point, I commence a transition toward practical aspects of interpretation. From the point of view of conventional understandings of analysis, it may seem as though I am going to analyse the narratives, whereas my purpose is to produce an interpretative reading, that is, commentary upon the lived experience of exposure to psychotherapeutics as produced through the narratives. Such a process still requires some conventions, including structure; hence, I refer to particular areas of interest. Commentary focuses upon these areas.

psychotherapeutic technologies has produced, in the moment of articulation, particular constitutions. This difference, in itself, is interesting, particularly if curious about effects of various practice, and the fluidity of subjectivity. However, rather than focusing upon issues of contrast and comparison I suggest that discussing the complexities of relationships amongst the body, emotion, discipline, the technologies I am constituted through and the articulation of that constitution warrants a more unencumbered account. That is, the explicit inclusion of oppositional practice risks losing touch with the prevalent issues I have identified as meaningful in this study<sup>45</sup>.

A broad impression of my reading suggests relationship between the form of the narratives, embodiment and productions of power. I refer here to power produced through the presentation 'style' of particular technologies. In articulation, the presentation style that I experience appears to produce a particular form of narrative and particular constructions of subjectivity within the narrative, all of which are informed through an embodied response to the process. Multiple relationships are entwined amongst other multiple relationships. Movement amongst relationships and the construction of 'new' relationships bears comment. 'I' appear to 'shift around' in order to accomplish different things, for example, in order to access alternative discourse. There are also times when I meet my own resistance, resonant through my body and my languaged articulation. I variously position and am positioned. There is an undefinable rhythm within each narrative that I suspect is related to form and power, and the type of language through which each psychotherapeutic technology is constituted, and through which I correspondingly constitute my self.

In order to talk coherently of my constitution there is a vocabulary to which I need access that I have not introduced<sup>46</sup>. Interpretation needs to incorporate some sort of language of

---

<sup>45</sup> Here I work to manage the many differing interpretative versions that could be produced through my reading. Despite being attracted to identifying the possible 'selves' constituted through various psychotherapeutic practice, I am trying to maintain my focus upon the multiplicity and instability of relationships and the ways through which meaning is made through the narratives. A major interest of the study is processes of subjectification; how I am produced through subjectification to psychotherapeutic apparatus, rather than 'what type of self might be constituted through psychotherapeutic approaches'.

<sup>46</sup> I was concerned for some time about how I might introduce the idea of somatic response into the commentary. Throughout the study I have not obscured the 'role' of the body, and issues of embodiment have been raised a number of times. As I comment upon the narratives, I become more aware of how I articulate relationships with my own body. I notice how my body produces barometric responses to circumstances and wonder how I can convey this to readers without becoming embroiled in debate that may well instigate interesting new aligned studies concerned with body boundaries, living social bodies, or in-

embodiment. Rather than simply taking as a given that we are embodied discursive beings with all that we know and do produced through the body I need a way to talk of my experience as embodied. In order to do this I must articulate some kind of relationship with the body. In the case of these narratives, I need to articulate how the relationship I have with my body is produced through the exposure to psychotherapeutic technologies. In resonance with the narratives, it seems timely to introduce the language of the body which I access through this process of subjectification.

I am reminded of my embodied assemblage as I resonate both verbally and somatically with the narratives I read. My resistance to the psychoanalytic kernels of both Bio1 and Bio2 are embodied through a taut rigid jaw, released from strain only after I articulate my dream during Bio2. Psychodrama produces dynamic excitement coursing through my veins, a big energetic charge and gargantuan strides pace me majestically through the world. Gestalt is as a blossoming bloom, the cavity of my chest opens, skin, layers are peeled away, my body, my eyes, soften, soft soft. As the Narrative articulation begins, I grow tall, my body lengthens, I walk proudly with peers until I notice my questing and I shrink until I resemble a small ball.

Whether 'real' or metaphorical this is how I articulate somatic sensations occurring at the time of exposure and during reading. There are other ways some are similar. For example, people might say: I feel a prickling around my heart; my chest feels warm and my belly is cold; I feel all squishy inside; my guts hurts; I notice a black dense area in my head, it is dark and thick; the energy in my legs is like molten silk, hot, smooth, caressing my bones; my hands are tingly; I feel funny. We articulate happenings to do with our body in the same way as anything else, through the discourses, the technologies, that we are exposed to and enabled to access.

Attunement, or relationship, with the body is often a learned technique through, for example, Bioenergetics, athletics, professional ballet, any number of complementary medical technologies such as naturopathy, reflexology, or magnetic healing. Exposure to technologies introduces particular ways of speaking of the body; however articulation of somatic sensation can be constituted through many resources. For example,

---

depth theorising of bodies and embodiment. Within the context of this study, I choose to focus on the idea of 'somatic sensation' and the types of descriptions that I might apply to my experiences. Hence, I introduce an

Bioenergetics speaks of, 'energy', 'vibration', and 'streaming' and teaches trainees to 'read the body'. Not all Bioenergetic therapists will necessarily use such terms to articulate their own or their client's somatic sensations. They might access 'other' resources that they have been exposed to during their lifetime.

Relationships with bodies are varied. Some people have no relationship with their body other than to fuel or restore it when absolutely necessary. Yet others will severely discipline their bodies through rigorous dieting or exercise. Others have relationships articulated through pain or pleasure, for example, via ill health, or savouring enjoyable sensations. Health practitioners, such as chiropractors, osteopaths, or medical doctors, are trained to look at bodies in various and particular ways. Many mothers, especially, have the opportunity to become very familiar with their children's changing bodies instantly recognising affect from a posture or gesture, even in silhouette.

Some people notice bodies, some people don't. Bodies speak to some people, others don't hear, or maybe their bodies don't talk. Some people have a well established affinity, some people learn attunement or 'develop' relationships. I'm a learner. I was attracted to bodywork via Bioenergetics because of my enjoyment of bodily expression, through dance and physical activity, but I had little understanding of somatic sensation other than strange inexplicable occurrences during meditation classes<sup>47</sup>. At first, I was reasonably sceptical however years of exposure to body orientated work helped in constructing a 'language of the body'. As I learned to 'read the body', my vocabulary expanded. Both my body and the bodies of others could be interpreted as signifiers. It is interpretation rather than understanding that is significant here. I access interpretation through various 'body talk'. Consequently, I assume relationship with my body and enjoy reasonably easy access to the naming of somatic sensation and to satisfying interpretation of what these sensations might 'mean'.

The ontological status of somatic sensation, whether the sensations are 'real' or imagined, how 'they' are constructed or constituted, is moot at this juncture. I do not intend to debate the constraining or enabling constitution of somatic technologies, but to stress their

---

example of my articulations, followed by explanation and discussion of 'my language of the body'.

<sup>47</sup> The eyes shut trying to get to nirvana type of meditation. OK - so now I'm trying the academic route. This study can be understood as another way of attempting the same thing, that is, scholarship as another form of embodied discipline.

resourcing aspects. In relationship to exposure to technology, there is a before and after in terms of access to resources. I have access to a vocabulary of the body and it is articulated through my narratives. My vocabulary assists in making sense of my subjectification.

Theorising embodiment, that is our selves as embodied discursive beings with humanity proscribed through our bodies, requires vocabularies through which embodied status can be articulated. Somatic sensation vocabularies are probably only a part of embodiment discourse and only one aspect of somatic technologies. They serve in this study to articulate the subjectification of my body, my embodied being, my person, to processes of subjectification.

Of necessity, the issue of languaging the body must have some relationship with our prereflective engagement with the world. The metaphorical status of 'internal sensation' often described as 'feelings' is a component of this engagement. Our 'feelings' tell us something about our connection with the process. Until we reflect upon them, we are frequently not aware of what they tell us, or of the ways through which we make meaning or the meaning that we make. The act of reflecting does not necessarily indicate that we will have words or means of expression. We may well remain mute either through constraint, lack of resources, or perhaps, for various reasons, because we don't want to look at what we are doing (Butt, 1999).

My body does not serve as passenger train routing me through the various technologies of exposure. It is a full participant and responds accordingly. It speaks of its disciplining, its rigours and joys through my articulation. Without access to somatic/embodied vocabulary, it would be silent and a different narrative would be told. I enter the space of exposure, the training programme, through my body and experience the workshop as embodied relational subjectification. I suggest that my body plays a part in the forms of articulation I present, but it is a part constrained through the meaning-making device that I employ. In other words, I could make meaning through, for example, photographic mediums, sculpture, painting, dance, or music. All these devices have the potential to produce various articulated expressions of embodied exposure. I am constrained in this study through the artifice of doctoral thesis as language text. Within this configuration

linguaging my experience inclusive of the body can only be enabled through relationship with resources or vocabularies that I can access.

In the past I have largely articulated relationships between my self and my body rather naively and simplistically as some kind of reciprocal symbiosis. The status of such relationships are not the focus of this study, however, issues of mind/body united, or mind/body as Cartesian tango partners are ontologically problematic. This ontological debate is more appropriate for wider discussion, but I will talk very briefly of the difficulties in talking about such entwined relationships. Specifically as I articulate my body/mind relationship in this context I talk of them as dichotomous, despite being unconvinced either way of this status. In order to interpret and make some meaning of their relationship, both in my narratives and to subjectification to psychotherapeutic technologies, I must talk of them as independent phenomena in order to make some sense of their relationship. This is frustrating, but issues such as this have been apparent throughout the study and are consistently problematic when working at the borders of conceptual change. However, they are not the focus of this study. Currently I'm focused upon articulating the ways through which I respond to the response of my body, or vice versa, because these responses seem to effect my articulation of subjectification. A somatic sensation vocabulary can be considered as an interpretative resource, an enabling vocabulary, in the same way that talk of resistance, authority, legitimacy, and subject positioning are employed. Introducing somatic talk embellishes interpretation with a dimension that is not always articulated.

Bio1<sup>48</sup> is interesting in that I seem to spend a considerable amount of time talking about the body. For example, 'characterological patterns affecting body structure' (p94), 'in touch with the body and its sensations' (p97), 'the sense of the body', the infant 'getting in touch' with the body, 'the sensations the body can maintain', 'the sense of body self' (p101), 'the 'state of aliveness' of the body' (p101). Yet, reference to my own body seems to be absent in this story apart from a couple of early references to 'a feeling of excitement', and 'a niggle of irritation' (p94).

---

<sup>48</sup> Body/embodyment discussions lead directly into the first narrative, Bio 1. I am interested in exploring and commenting on the way exposure to this somatically orientated psychotherapeutic practice seems to have produced a 'non-body position'. I am taken with the notion of 'suppression of embodied expression through exposure to authoritarianism'. In relation to subjectification to disciplinary power, such suppression is not unusual. However, in relation to Bioenergetics and the subtleness of some somatic sensation this is a new idea for me.

The pedagogic didactic style of this narrative resonates with the teaching style of the technology. Exposure takes place during an early part of the training programme. The presentation is attuned with early traditional Bioenergetic practice<sup>49</sup> which offers therapist as expert and client as treatable organism. Articulation through the narrative mirrors this practice. The narrative is informative, but the style is a more traditional instructional type of articulation. I suggest that the style has some relationship with the taut rigid jaw of resistance mentioned earlier. This is not to suggest that all work of this style is produced through clenched teeth, but that the authoritative standpoint of the original presentation produces an authoritative narrative with little room for embodied expression or personalising. Because it is my articulation I am obviously in the narrative, but at the same time, the style of articulation removes me from the narrative. I have trouble finding my self in it until I realise that in articulation the process of subjectification to this workshop produces me as authoritative/expert/opinionated author. To some extent I am regurgitating from the standpoint of 'one who knows'.

I am talking about more here than elementary notions of discursive positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990). I do not simply take up a position of authoritative author, or find myself positioned as student subscriber/regurgitative learner. The authority of the expert practitioner discourse dislocates my somatic awareness and stifles articulations of resistance. I am lured by the practicalities and obvious benefits of Bioenergetic productions of self and in the process lose access to alternative vocabularies. At one stage (illustrated below), I shift to *italics* in order to talk of my response to the narrative I am producing.

*'As I write I notice that I am beginning to find the content of these two theories, of which I have previously been ignorant, intriguing'* (p100)

This suggests that my storied articulation is constrained within a particular type of talk. In order to articulate my intrigue, in effect an embodied expression of excitement, I produce a narrative within a narrative. I move from a position of authoritative author, I step 'outside' the boundaries of the narrative, demarcating this movement through the use of italics.

---

<sup>49</sup> As opposed to 'contemporary' Bioenergetics.

Within the authoritative narrative there is no place for this kind of 'personal'<sup>50</sup> expression, hence it must be produced as distinct.

Whenever this 'personalised' type of shift occurs, it is accompanied by embodied expression. For example, '*I am becoming attracted...*' (p100), I feel slightly uncomfortable', 'I'm beginning to feel some hostility' (p103), (emphasis added).

Certainly, during this articulation my embodied responses are constructed as subtle and quite simplified. For the most part my body has little recognisable resonance with this exposure. I refer to articulations of intrigue and attraction as embodied responses because as I articulate and read them I notice an energetic shift in somatic sensation. The articulation of adjectives such as, excitement, irritation, intrigue, attraction, discomfort, hostility, either produce or are produced through an energetic shift in my somatic awareness.

Academically such a concept may sound meaningless. What is an energetic shift? As description I might say, a squiggle in my tummy complete with a lurching surge of electricity down my right side. Rather than trying to describe equivocally, at this point it seems more useful, for this narrative anyway, to use 'energetic shift' to articulate embodied response. At this stage of discussion, I am avoiding pedantics. My focus is to try to garner an overall sense of what might be happening through these articulations.

One of the things I notice in Bio1 is that empathic somatic responses engender some kind of alliance with, or legitimacy of the technology. I begin to understand it as an acceptable way of understanding childhood development. On the other hand, antipathy, depending upon the degree (for example, 'I feel slightly uncomfortable', 'I'm beginning to feel some hostility', p103) produces resistance, often articulated through a lack of identification with the process. Of particular interest is the way that I am jolted out of the authoritative articulation of the process through the startling surprise that bioenergetics might hail from

---

<sup>50</sup> 'Personal' here refers primarily to the use of the pronoun 'I' attached to resources, or discourses, that are constrained through particular conditions. In this case the authoritarian Bio1 subjectification process constrains access. On reflection and through this meta-commentary I am thinking about this 'stepping outside the boundaries' as a useful rhetorical technique. The use of 'I', as a 'combative' authoritarian symbol, enables access to 'my discourse of response'. This is not the place to ponder the power of pronouns allied with positioning status, but such talk does raise the possibility of future analysis and discussion of insider/outsider status in relation to subjectification processes.

a mechanistic worldview (see page 103). This conflict produces access to powerful somatic sensation, that is, hostility, and, seemingly correspondingly, the articulation of the alternate vocabulary of contextualism, and some earnest disclaimers, for example, 'How come I started liking it?' (p103). It appears that the authority of the expert practitioner discourse is disrupted through a striking somatic response, prior to which the body was held, largely unprotesting, in thrall, or hiatus. This somatic interruption appears to have some relationship with the accompanying, or now accessible, articulation of resistance via discourse of contextualism; body and language are articulating harmoniously<sup>51</sup>.

Relationships of power transform and shift depending upon the technology. For example, in Bio1 I become the expert and take the authoritative standpoint. A précis of the narratives under discussion illuminates Psychodrama, with its benevolent 'gift-giving' Director, as firmly grounded in royal position, whereas movement in Gestalt tends toward empowerment and merger. Gestalt trainers, although positioned by trainees as expert, are invested in synthesis. Once achieved anyone is entitled to navigate. In Narrative, I am always 'the pupil'. Despite peer acknowledgement, the position of novice is cemented through the experience with Peter as therapist. His 'enlightening reframing' (p169) of a previously trussed issue certainly positions him as expert practitioner. Bio2 is interesting because it involves considerable resistance and consequent floundering until I am able to articulate what I understand as my voice. This transit to embodied articulation situates power in my camp. With both Bio1 and Bio2, power relationships seem to be a consistent site of struggle. Power is produced through articulation and is never absent. In articulating processes of subjectification relationships between the form of the narratives and the power of the technological practice are illuminated. Specifically, the shape of each narrative appears to be influenced through the constraining or enabling of discursive resources and the effect of embodied response.

Perhaps it is the sovereignty of Psychodrama that delivers a 'child-like' quality in the articulation of the psychodrama narrative. There is little doubt that Psychodrama is big,

---

<sup>51</sup> Having 'identified' these notions of somatic accessibility/non-accessibility, somatic interruptions and so forth, I am eager to apply these thoughts to the other narratives. This produces a pause in proceedings as I stop to consider my 'findings' in relation to the other practices. My excitement briefly leads me ahead of readers as I quickly précis my thoughts, outlining the ways through which power might be operating in the other narratives. I am attracted to exploring relationships between embodied response and discursive resources amongst the other narratives, and proceed through commentary on Psychodrama.

energetically and loudly. It strives to make people bigger than they are; its humanistic leanings and reliance on role theory seek to actualise potential and encourage the development of roles. Psychodrama Directors' have different styles but whether bombastic, or quiet and subtle, each in their own way pushes and prods until protagonists and auxiliaries are performing in the way Psychodrama intends. Maybe it is this relationship that produces association with royalty; subjects do as the good king wishes, and there is little rebellion to be found. Subjects have few objections because the more they perform the more bounty they receive; the good king is as the good father, the children can play to their hearts content.

This allegory of Psychodrama is analogous to the process articulated in the narrative. Not only does Psychodrama produce an embodied response so charged with enlivening energy that it can barely be contained, but it also produces a narrative of cadential prose that can be associated with verse, nursery rhyme, or the repetitive chant of children's storybooks. Even as I interpret Psychodrama I can feel an energetic response that makes me want to laugh aloud and jump up and down. I sizzle inside. I have to wonder<sup>52</sup> if this is solely an effect of reading the narrative, or if it is an effect of also undergoing the process of exposure? If, for example, I was reading interviews, or the stories of others, would I experience the same, seemingly consistent, embodied responses? In articulation, does something of the experience change somehow? In terms of constituting subjectivity, are 'experience' and articulation - different? If I use narrative to make sense of my experience and constitute my self, but have constrained resource/vocabulary access is my life constrained through my understanding of my self? Is there any way that I can ever be unconstrained? These are not necessarily the kinds of questions that I will try to answer, but are the kinds of questions that are raised through this type of work.

---

<sup>52</sup> As is typical with this type of work, questions hover constantly. Even a brief foray into relationships with Psychodrama produces a raft of questions that are too important to remain unsaid. As a Foucauldian resistance to separation and reduction, the imbrication of discussion/commentary, the focus on 'everything happening in the present moment', and the production of a commentary embracing the articulation of multiplicity theorised through the study, tends towards a document of some complexity. Although I am reflecting here on structure, the ideas being worked with can also be complex. This makes me wonder if readers find various detours into discussion, or the raising of questions, as opposed to direct commentary, disruptive; as an interruption to their reading of my reading of the narratives. Signposts produced through this meta-commentary are designed to elucidate the route. This doesn't mean that ways through which such complexities might be managed, for example, experimenting with 'plain' language, the use of various overt headings, perhaps even the incorporation of diagrams or pictures, shouldn't be considered as a focus of some future study.

In the Psychodrama narrative I vacillate between wanting to enjoy the expansive energy that I'm exposed to, and wanting to know what Psychodrama is 'really about', which, perhaps, unsurprisingly, is part of the questioning position I have just described above. I suspect this vacillation is produced in part through my participant/observer position. My observer, or researcher, is not content to simply enjoy an experience, although there are times when my participant does an excellent job of disavowing all knowledge of the 'real' purpose of this investigation, preferring to just have a good time. For example, during the first session of Psychodrama I talk of being so 'engrossed in my own responses that I just about forget to record anything'. Perhaps this is to be expected as the first night focuses upon 'responses'. Clearly, the psychodramatic techniques are effective. They work well that night and continue to do so. I confess on 2 June 1999 that

'I have not laid pen to paper with respect to the last Friday night, the last Saturday day, and the Wednesday that we've just had' (p115)

This is a time when I question my participant observer position within the process wondering, because of a powerful 'emotional bonding' (p116) occurring within the group, whether my tardy observer has been abandoned. 'Emotional bonding' articulates an embodied response that I have in relation to the group. Through this embodied energetic connection with the process, relationships appear to shift and change. These changes appear to be something that occurs over time.

Although the first few pages of the narrative articulate an observer role, that is, I am recording and informing my reader of my understanding of psychodrama, Psychodrama has also, somehow, given both my participant and observer permission to 'play'. Playing occurs through the form, the shape of the narrative. My observer articulates through cadential prose, but, very quickly, by the second night (see 19 March 1999, and below), there seems to be an adoption of role theory articulated through dialogue which takes place between more than one articulator.

"We meet again"

"It's still fast"

"Yes"

"We're doing 'purpose of the group'"

“What do you want out of the group?”

“I don’t know”

My reading suggests that this is not necessarily a conversation between participant and observer, although I hesitate to suggest ‘who’ is doing the talking here. It could be interpreted as ‘internal dialogue’. I suspect it is more aligned with the persuasion and permission engendered through the psychodramatic method to understand self as constituted through the development of various roles. In articulation, it appears that either there are now two people talking part in this process or I am talking to my self, and later it becomes, for a heartbeat, three people. Rather than absolutes, this turn to dialogue raises questions. Am I hearing voices? What do I make of subjectivity articulated through dialogue? How do I understand my self in this process? I am certainly larger, more, than I thought I was. I might be construed as having special abilities, such as, the capability of conferencing with ‘several people’ at once, without the use of technology, and while I am the only person present.

These notions are extraordinarily potent, and I wonder now about the relationship between the newly discovered immenseness of my articulated subjectivity and, as previously articulated in relation to my embodied expression of Psychodrama (see page 184), the ‘big energetic charge accompanied by gargantuan strides pacing me majestically through the world’. When transformed through Psychodrama do we live an embodied configuration of subjectivity which empowers itself through its own magnificence, or grandiosity? As technological practice, Psychodrama teaches that ‘every role that you can possibly think of or even desire to have is within you’ (p108). This suggests that anything is possible, there is no limit to what can be achieved, that we are all rulers of the kingdom. However, there appears to be one King of Kings. Psychodrama will assist if you’re having a little trouble with your role development.

Despite constitution as creators of our own realm, we are charged with personal accountability. ‘Sharing’ (see page 110) schools us in the art of self-responsibility, ‘whatever we say is about us’ (p110). Psychodrama bestows its magnificent gifts but teaches us to be of similar magnanimous spirit. Through sharing we gift to others a part of our selves, revealing in our humanity that we are all alike, that we strive to be generous and charitable, harmonious, democratic.

The psychodramatic values are barely covert, there are no hidden agendas. As I re-read my narrative I understand that I am so blinded by the brilliance of Psychodrama's generosity that I adopt the roles, the values, and begin my own gift-giving programme so rapidly that I don't realise my conversion. Psychodrama liberates through its benevolence scheme yet constrains through its value system. Compliance produces considerable benefits, non-compliance, presumably, a poor performance.

Through its articulation of role theory Psychodrama legitimises the articulation of a constrained multiplicity. I constitute my psychodramatic self as a person of many facets, all of which are desirable, even if I have no wish to acknowledge, for example, 'my wanting roles', 'my stingy meanness'. They're all a part of my 'system'. Psychodrama indicates that to 'fully' understand others and ourselves we need to be au fait with the entirety of our system, and that it is vast. Perhaps it is not surprising that it seems to take years and years to qualify as a Psychodrama Director.

Within this narrative, attempts at resistance take articulated dialogical form. Initially they seem almost futile. A possible uneasiness about bucking the system reduces a tenuous response of boredom (p111) to self-evaluation and the possibility of exploration through the drama. A later attempt, still dialogical (p119), echoes some concern about appropriating some of the theoretical concepts, 'do you think we should buy it?' (p119), yet clearly it is difficult to contest a technology which has such attractions. Still, there is some persistent resistance, not precisely articulated, attempted through a form of theoretical evaluation (p120). It quickly fizzles out. I wouldn't like to suggest that these 'resistances' fizzle because of complete conversion, or from concern about loss of benefits, because they may well arise through a different source. One possible explanation is that 'my' psychodramatic self-responsibility role has reminded me of my participant/observer/researcher role. Such a reminder may have generated attempts to revive an academic position, however, the lure of Psychodrama appears too dominating while I am constrained within the process. It is not until the 'end' of the training programme, and the narrative, when articulating my subjectivity as produced through the technology, that I am able to maintain some sort of resistance position for a short while at least. Throughout the narrative issues and questioning clearly arise, and such forms of

resistance are consistent. However, when resistance is articulated through a dialogical process a united and sustained offensive seems to require collusion from all parties.

Sustained resistance during Bio1 required a unity of mind and body. That is, I was unable to articulate resistance while my body complied with the technology. Psychodrama, on the other hand appears to require the complicity of the various roles directing the dialogue - if indeed, roles, are what they are. It seems that within both of these narratives the constitution of constructions of articulation and various resistances are influenced through the dominion of the technological process. This may be meaningful in terms of governance. It appears that I enter these exposure conditions with fluid and multiple resources, with a multidimensional mobile subjectivity, yet embodied within the process I am constrained, it seems, to articulation representative of the process.

One of the intriguing aspects of the Psychodrama exposure is that it is experienced as a fully embodied process. From the very first session participants are invited to 'be in their bodies' and to 'use' their bodies for expression throughout roles as auxiliary or protagonist. Yet the technology is so effective and the action so energetic (even in the slow times) that there is barely time to articulate embodied responses. Psychodrama, as a practice, appears to encourage articulation and dialoguing, including rapid role reversals; processes of the body, despite active engagement, become a blur. This is a generalisation and will not always be the case, either in method or for other participants. The process of subjectification articulated in this narrative assembles a subjectivity attached to an active body yet with little articulated relationship with the body. A contradiction perhaps. Another possibility, of course, is that the psychodramatic relationship with the body is fully articulated but I am not quite understanding the language.

Interpretation of both Bio1 and Psychodrama suggests that constitution of subjectivity is constrained and enabled in particular ways produced through the power of the technology. In articulation, I make meaning of my subjectification through resources that I can access at the time<sup>53</sup>.

---

<sup>53</sup> Having been engrossed in commentary upon the Psychodrama narrative I move now to demarcate the end of focused commentary and to re-address problematics of separation and reduction that are inevitably produced through the constraints of the written word. I cannot be split. The experiences I have lived through and the current commentary cannot be produced separately. Yet, when commenting, I am continually reminded that to talk about some thing ceaselessly produces a subject/object split. I feel compelled to remind both myself and readers that I am aware of this disconcerting effect produced through 'gazing upon

One problematic occurring through interpretation is that while earlier suggesting that I cannot offer definitive relationships, discussion tends to produce discrete designations. For example, Psychodrama as 'sovereign'. I suggest that despite my naming of diverse positions such as authoritative author, or playful subject, the 'who' called into being in any designated moment of discursive articulation, is not consistent. Even when variously referring to 'I' or 'my', 'who' or 'what' is producing the articulation is not conclusively distinguishable. In one moment I can articulate participant, in another researcher, in yet another pre-resourced observer, yet all the time there are other authors who must variously and always be constituting all of these 'positions' including a myriad more. For example, I no longer have a clear idea of 'who' is articulating this study, other than I take up various standpoints in order to try to introduce some clarity and meaning about the ways through which we produce our selves.

Each standpoint is infiltrated through multiple resources producing consistent shifts in subjectivity. Multiplicity is the only constant. Positions are fleeting and not necessarily limited to, for example, the position of either a speaker or a listener. Despite suggestions that we cannot be simultaneously positioned and that the range of possible positions is limited (see Tschuggnall, 1999), I suggest that the notion of multiple resourcing correspondingly constitutes a notion of simultaneous positioning. In other words I cannot always discern the 'who' because 'the who' barely, if ever, 'occupies' a stable position. I am consistently in relationship not only with the psychotherapeutic technologies but also with the embodied discursive resources that I access, and probably also with those I am unable to access. After all, it is unlikely that I will articulate resistance without some relationship with technologies of resistance even if unable to access those resources at the time.

The text does not necessarily exist between other texts; it only looks as though it does. We are multidimensional beings. It is the Westernised demand for an integrated centre of being that produces the idea that we can only be in one location, or have one emotion, at a time (Sampson, 1983).

On the one hand, if we want to understand our articulated subjectification through, for example, a positivist standpoint, such ideas make it extraordinarily difficult to find out what

---

the data'. I manage this reminder by movement into discussion of 'the problematic' before sliding into commentary upon the Gestalt narrative.

is going on. On the other hand, they substantiate the argument that we are continually in relationship and that it is through relationship that we 'discover' our selves. An advantage in this study is that it takes account of multiple exposures, but as articulated through one person. Thus, even though it sometimes appears that I have a particular relationship with one technology, through exposure to various practice my emotions, my body, my disciplining and my resistances can be understood as multirelational, precisely because 'one person' is articulating subjectification and constituting subjectivity variously. In a way reading and interpreting the narratives serves as an opportunity to 'observe' multiplicity.

In relation to my person Bioenergetics has been identified as 'having' some mechanistic leanings, whereas Psychodrama relies upon understanding the system, primarily through role theory, a concept replaced in many academic circles with the advent of discursive positioning (Davies & Harré, 1990). Both Bioenergetics and Psychodrama are constituted through a humanistic orientation indicating movement toward integration and actualisation of some kind of 'whole' being, and some kind of relationship with organicism (Sarbin, 1977). These humanistic arrangements are also constituted through Gestalt therapy although if comparing each of these practices it is often Gestalt that seems more overtly organicist. That is, exposure to Gestalt suggests a view of the world as an organism and events within that world produced through organic process.

'Finding' the form of each narrative was a unique process in that each exposure experience almost articulated itself. It really was a case of sitting at the keyboard and seeing how each narrative emerged, how meaning of the process was produced. Perhaps the most curious process of articulation was the Gestalt narrative. I sat at my keyboard for a long time, probably a couple of days, and 'nothing happened'. At some point I realised that in Gestalt nothing happening is something happening and that the narrative was in fact articulating itself similarly to the other narratives. The apparent blankness of the first few pages is part of the process of subjectification to the Gestalt technology.

Subjectification to Gestalt seems, on the one hand a subtle process, and on the other, confrontational and at times leaning toward disagreeable. Unlike Psychodrama, Gestalt doesn't overtly offer gifts that can be imparted to others as part of a process of personal growth or of 'inviting others on board'. It has more of an investment in assembling the entire group in unity simultaneously. Hence, each separate group member, as part of the

possible whole, is nurtured equally until synonymous union is realised. No one escapes because without synthesis, the group doesn't actualise and a state of nirvana, which feels pretty good but requires the extinction of individuality, is forsaken.

I have an immediate affinity with the Gestalt process articulated through my enjoyment of the opening ritual. Being amongst fifty people all performing a formal rite is a powerful demarcation and heralding of movement from one way of being into another. As the Gestalt process is entered, the other world is put aside. Because this is a residential workshop, the opening rites are somewhat akin to those that symbolise the entering of a cloistered space. During the workshop, we see and speak to no-one but fellow participants. The ritual constructs an expectation from the outset that 'things' will happen; it suggests that participants are already 'in the embrace of the Gestalt'. This partial handing over of our selves serves almost as acquiescence to the forthcoming process.

The process of exposure is constituted through a number of explicitly ritualised behaviours. For example, when sitting or standing in 'the group room', participants habitually form in the shape of a circle; particular types of seating, such as bean bags or soft cushions, are traditionally used. Participants often attend with 'their own special bean bag' used only for these gatherings, and not for loan. In comparison, although Psychodrama participants tend to sit on chairs circumventing an open area used as a stage, their seating arrangements are not as formalised. Seating at Bio1 and Bio2 would probably be considered unconstrained and rather haphazard, for example, a blend of chairs, cushions, or mattresses.

During the Gestalt exposure, ritualised forms of expression are carefully explained, for example, in order to speak the naming of a focus listener must first occur, you are not allowed to speak to no-one. In some situations, listeners must not respond. 'Going inside yourself', is often mandatory and always encouraged. Within this process, it is possible to spend an extraordinary amount of time with your self despite being in a room filled with other people. These ritualised forms of expression are not punitory. As a participant I barely notice them occurring, to the extent of articulating in the narrative, for example, that 'the group is totally unstructured at the moment apart from sitting in the shape of a circle' (p130); 'there doesn't appear to be a how you learn to do Gestalt happening' (p130).

I do notice their presence, not through articulation, but through my embodied response. Somatic resistances are swift. Discomfort (see page 129) is associated with irritation, only vague interest, and in particular, finding comfort through easily accessible discourse. That is, through the application of 'bioenergetic analysis and theory' (p129).

This form of resistance accompanied by articulation through alternate resourcing bears some relation to issues discussed earlier of governance and constraint. My body does not legitimise the Gestalt process, in fact, quite the opposite. Through this embodied disclaimer, I am enabled to access vocabularies in contrast to Gestalt arrangements. This suggests that I am not fully governed through the Gestalt encounter, although for some reason I do not leave the process entirely. Perhaps my resistance is symbolic of my governance. I continue to sit in the room, and I continue to 'stay inside my self', that is, my verbal articulation is silent. This suggests that in some form or other I am legitimising the process, despite suggestions to the contrary.

This vacillation is typical of articulation in the Gestalt narrative. In fact, I am not forced to sit in the silence. I would be just as much an accepted group member if I were verbosely articulating my discomfort and displeasure at the constraints I imagine are imposed upon me. But, in this, more than any other of the training programmes I feel like a visitor; a foreigner who has yet to learn the language. I wear a label that demarcates me from regular and 'real' trainees. I enter a group that is partially formed, they have met before. I am a stranger. None of these aspects are permission giving, they are not enabling. So, I articulate my subjectivity through ways that are enabling, through my body, and through familiar discourse. It is possible that I readily access bioenergetic discourse because my resistance is articulated through my body. I am well versed in articulating my embodiment through bioenergetic language. In this time of stress, I appear to legitimise bioenergetics but I also articulate that I am enabled to access bioenergetic language quickly and easily because I have only recently attended a bioenergetic workshop. It appears I am still dominated through its influence.

My resistance is accelerated through comparison of various practices (see page 132). 'Unable' to actively express my embodied response I construct and position myself variously as a 'minor gastronome come tour guide', commenting upon the food and general surroundings and as an 'analytic observer' able to intellectually offer comparisons

of contrasting theory. The latter position in particular allows me to position facilitators and Gestalt as incompetent. Without the mobile use of my body, such as during Psychodrama, and without the containment of the concordant hiatus during Bio1, I am constrained through an energetic embodied charge which has no place of discharge other than vociferous, though noiseless, verbal articulation. Through this process, and as illustrated below, I consistently position and re-position my self barely pausing to notice where or how I am placed. I understand my process as inactive, and ironically, as quiet.

It's a very introspective process, Gestalt. As I sit here on my beanbag my introspection interrupts my analytic observer. I realise I have drifted off while people are talking. Talking, talking, talking. I notice that I often drift off when others talk a lot, when they keep talking. I don't know what it means to me as a participant, when, I drift off, when people talk - they keep talking, and I know that people keeping on talking is related to people keeping on talking in the past, blah blah, and wanting to tune out to them and not hear what they're saying, blah blah blah, disappearing .....

Does this mean this model doesn't suit me? It's been a long time since I've experienced such an inactive process, I've got used to using my body .....

..... the inactivity, the just sitting in the chairs, talking talking talking ..... bioenergetically we would call them 'head jobs',

..... talk about making me sleepy - it just makes me sleepy .....

..... maybe its just been a quiet day .....

(pp133-134)

What is fascinating about the interpretation of my relationship with the Gestalt process are the myriad ways through which my constitution is actively and constantly in motion. Shifting subjectification is apparent through my dialogue. Even in the first four lines of the first paragraph of the above example, I shift from 'analytic observer' to 'introspective participant' to 'process commentator' to an 'analytic questioner', and so on. Imagine though how I might have replied if asked at the end of this day, through a different context, about what had happened, or what the experience was like - I may well have replied, 'I can't tell you anything about the process because nothing has happened'. Yet through interpreting the ways I have made sense of my exposure a different picture emerges. It seems that a great deal was going on.

As the group continues my various articulations of frustration, contemplation, theorising, digression, and questioning persist, similarly to Day One. There is a subtle shift in my comfort levels as I learn more about the rules. As I learn more about 'how to behave', articulated as 'finding out about myself', 'learning to be authentic', 'learning to be my self', my foreignness decreases and I am slowly assimilated into the Gestalt process. For example,

'... perhaps I should learn to sit in the silence, but I need to sit in the silence without getting frustrated, and sitting in the silence feels somehow familiar, is this what I usually do - sit in the silence and stay frustrated ...'  
(pp137-138)

I suggest to myself that I may need to think about constructions of silence in a different way, and that doing something different may produce some 'insight' into my process. I am starting to articulate a Gestalt subjectivity. This is followed by a fresh articulation of the Gestalt technology.

'... is this the way Gestalt works, presenting opportunities for insight .....

'... perhaps it is very much alive, and quite lively, just not the kind of liveness you might expect. Maybe it's not 'about' any thing, maybe it's an 'experience'.

(p138)

It is curious that of all technologies under study, the practice of Gestalt, a process devoted to empowerment through wholeness and authenticity, articulated through the graceful and subtle metaphor of organicism, and constituted through values of nurturance and tenderness, produces such an explicit articulation of the constituted discipline of the body and domination of the mind. And, furthermore, that the subjectification produced through exposure is synonymous with the technology of subjectification. Subjectification is produced simply and sweetly. I enter with resistances, I am influenced through the exposure, I reframe my resistance aligned with my new understandings, and I am captivated.

The reframing of Gestalt as an 'experience', and perhaps a little bit different to what I might have been expecting (illustrated above), is pivotal in reducing resistance to the dominion of the Gestalt process. Ally this with empathic embodied responses that I experience the following day, and, as with the empathic responses of Bio1, I am fully converted. Full conversion brings immediate disclaimers of my previous resistance. For example,

'Analysis stops me getting in touch with myself. It interrupts the Gestalt' (p139), 'what is happening in the room is very precious, I believe I have recognised the Gestalt' (p139), 'I realise that I had expectations ...' (p140). These articulations are quickly followed by the extraordinary experience of the last day and 'with my consent' governance is secured.

Domination is all encompassing. After the completion of the research task, I was 'Gestalt' for weeks and weeks. I took my Gestalt bear, Herm, nearly everywhere with me, in the hope that its presence would keep the Gestalt alive. I didn't recognise that issues of context had played a part, for example, the residential, hours and hours in the company of the same people, subtle facilitation, guidance, and very good food. I laid my conversion at the feet of Gestalt and remembered only the rapture of the final day.

Reading through these narratives illustrates the power of the subjectification process and the usefulness of interpretation<sup>54</sup>. When I understand how I am produced and how I produce my self whether through this particular technology or any other I am no longer positioned to be unknowingly swept away. I position myself as discriminating. It seems that I have more options, more choice about how the sweeping, or not, might occur. The simplicity of this conclusion is, of course, deceptive. Complexities, problematics are immediate. For example, such understanding could be immobilising through producing 'enhanced' self-reflection. People might be unable to determine any action because they are obsessively evaluating their positioning status.

This exercise in interpretation is beginning to produce arrangements of subjectification, that is, some similar assembling strategies amongst narratives. Multiplicity, fluidity, and relationships between embodied response and articulation, are constituted similarly through each narrative, although power relations are influencing the subjectivity produced. For example, the blossoming softness of Gestalt doesn't at first glance appear to have any alliance with the authoritative author of Bio1. They are, however, in congenial relationship, both through constitution and blood. That is, they are constituted through a similar process of exposure and articulation through the same embodied presence. There

---

<sup>54</sup> Closure of the Gestalt commentary is signalled through suspension of commentary followed by musing and gathering of thoughts upon the reading so far. This produces an interim for reflection. The Gestalt commentary has surprised me almost as much as the experience of being in the Gestalt group took me by surprise. I pause to momentarily recognise commonalities amongst narratives not necessarily apparent prior to my reading. This interlude also serves to shift focus to the Narrative story. Embodiment issues are re-located through a social constructionist standpoint which is allied with Narrative technology.

appears to be an impactful relationship between the body and the process of subjectification. This is particularly interesting considering the psychological debate generated through issues of body and embodiment. For example, materiality issues, bodies as abstract rhetorical entities, embodiment as epiphenomenal to language, gendered bodies, the disciplinary constraints of located bodies, and so on (Burman, 1999; Cromby & Nightingale, 1999; Henwood et al, 1998; Hollway, 1984; Nightingale, 1999; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999; O'Connor & Hallam, 2000; Schrag, 1997; Stam, 1998). Interpretation of relationships of embodiment, discipline, articulation and subjectivity produced through this study may contribute to and enhance such debate. In the meantime, I have some interest in understanding how these relationships are produced through the narrative articulating exposure to Narrative technology.

As a practice, Narrative is constituted through a contextualised position with various post-structuralist and social constructionist origins (Drewery et al, 2000; Freedman & Combs, 1996). It must be acknowledged that there are 'Narrative practitioners' who decline Narrative's naming as a definitive technology preferring to understand 'it' as narrative of ideas and practice (Bird, n.d.). The Narrative colony, as with many other psychotherapeutic technologies supports some diversity in theoretical positioning. My curiosity about relationships of embodiment and Narrative technology is produced in relation to contemporary social constructionist debate concerning the failure of social constructionism to adequately consider the influence of embodiment.

In continually either ignoring the body or treating it as mere metaphor or text, social constructionism obscures and downplays the significance of its functional, physiological, hormonal, anatomical and phenomenological aspects.

(Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p10)

Contemporary social constructionism acknowledges subjectivity as embodied; however, a particular concern seems to be understanding how subjectivity is constituted through embodied interactions (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). I raise these issues here because of the relationship between Narrative psychotherapeutics and social constructionism. It seems that embodiment standpoint deliberations are in the process of constitution. They

may or may not be articulated through the Narrative story<sup>55</sup>, but as I read and comment upon the Narrative story, they could be worth bearing in mind.

The form and shape of the Narrative story is more like a traditional story than the previously discussed narratives. That is, there is a predictable series of events in terms of, I did this and I did that, then I did this, then she said, then I spoke about this, then I thought that, then he did this, and so on. I wonder about the relationship between my story and the Narrative relationship with stories and storied selves. A general notion of Narrative as only about techniques of storying is apparently a myth, but myths do have a tendency to linger. Even the naming of the technology as Narrative Therapy may have some relationship with the form of my story. Traditional narrative is relatively orderly; events are usually chronicled progressively. Perhaps subjectification to Narrative technology has produced a 'recapitulative narrator' who sets the scene with a little personalisation at the beginning of the story, then proceeds to linearly relate events, with some detail, more or less, as they happened.

This type of form produces a story of some simplicity. Unlike the Psychodrama and Gestalt, which although not challenging may take some readers by surprise, the Narrative story requires little 'work' from the reader. It does not articulate the authoritative author of Bio1, yet it is still informative, providing a good deal of information about what participants might expect if they were to attend a Narrative workshop of this kind, alongside a personal articulation of one person's experience of the workshop. It is straightforward and uncomplicated. So, if this story is to be understood as a process of subjectification to technology of dominion how might it be understood?

From the outset, articulation in the story is of interest. I suggest that the recapitulative narrator is positioned throughout the narrative as 'teller of the tale', but this does not mean that various other movements are absent, quite the contrary. My somatic interpretation of Narrative talked of my body lengthening and growing tall as I walked proudly with peers, but shrinking to a small ball when I noticed my questing. Interestingly, this embodied response acts as analogy for the process of subjectification to Narrative.

---

<sup>55</sup> Although I have been using the term 'narrative' to designate my accounts of exposure to technological practice, in interpretation of articulated exposure to Narrative technology I shall use the term 'story', simply to avoid confusion which may arise over the use of, for example 'the

I articulate my entry into exposure as through this 'elevated space', feeling like 'a real researcher' for the first time. This is enhanced through the festive atmosphere constituted through the gathering of a group of purposeful women taking time out for themselves - for important work. I position my self as serious doctoral researcher, staking my claim as post-structurally informed. In turn I am acknowledged and positioned respectfully as peer, colleague, co-creator, partner, equal, as are we all in this social constructionist arena. It is pleasant; my empathic response confirms that the setting and Narrative are agreeable. I am disciplined almost before we start. This is not to suggest that empathic responses and 'liking something' produce immediate domination alongside constraint and disempowerment, because it doesn't necessarily work like that. I am disciplined through my positioning and response because I am under the impression that I am maintaining a position of 'co-creative researcher', whereas immediately following my 'agreeableness', and through the 'beginning' of the programme articulated on page 148, '*Introductions over, our facilitator delivers an opening speech*'<sup>56</sup>, I am immediately positioned as 'student/learner/non-expert', and I don't notice. For some time I continue to articulate as recapitulative narrator assuming that, I am co-creative researcher.

This is complex because on the one hand I am co-creative researcher, co-creating the story in relationship with the Narrative exposure, the people at the workshop, including the facilitator, and with the recapitulative narrator. On the other hand, I am positioned through the didactic format and a 'not knowing' position as 'non-expert'. Whereas the facilitator who was co-creator, and still is, is also positioned as 'expert', and probably innumerable other positions simultaneously, including 'woman', because gender appears to have an overt stake in this articulation.

It is possible that these rapid shifts in positioning status are relative to the contextualised origins of Narrative therapy. That is, during an exposure that acknowledges, supports, and

---

Narrative narrative'. My use of 'story' for interpretation of this particular narrative has no relationship with the common notion of Narrative as a storying practice.

<sup>56</sup> Through the meta-commentary I have variously introduced italics in the commentary of the Narrative story. This is for no other reason than clarity when differentiating between commentary and illustrations in the story. My re-reading has re-introduced me to the complexity and density of illustrating through examples from some of the narratives. In particular, the Narrative commentary uses multiple examples that are

promotes language, as a form of social action and constitutor of our selves and our lives, is it to be expected that I will interpret the story in this way? In contact with each narrative am I disciplined afresh, and so, interpret accordingly? Enmeshed now, within this interpretation of Narrative, am I enabled or constrained in accessing, for example, my melodious Gestalt? Am I enmeshed at all, or am I just articulating my subjectification to the process of interpretation? How is this new narrative re-producing my self, continually, ad infinitum? Do I access the same processes over and over? Am I enabled through relationship with my body? In order to be the person that I dream of being do I articulate myself into being that self? What does this multidimensional positioning mean in terms of subjectivity? Certainly, interpreting it feels like I'm being thrown all around the room. Yet, at the time, it doesn't feel like that at all. Which is probably why articulating our selves as the people we might want to be is not as simple as it sounds. In myriad relationship, complexities abound.

My interpretation of positioning produced through the first few pages of the Narrative story seems indicative of the Narrative exposure and the worldview through which Narrative is constituted. I move around a lot. I offer thoughts and interpretations. There is no sitting in the silence during this exposure. Resistance is verbal, in the form of questioning, and deconstruction. I reflect and enact the technology. Other than for clarification, questioning is invariably accompanied through discomforting somatic sensation described, for example, as 'irritation' or 'resentments' (see pages 147, 151). My co-creator legitimises my verbal seeking despite concurrent positioning as 'Narrative interrogator', Narrative gives permission for some other voices to be heard even if they question and challenge. I am pleased with responses compatible with my worldview. Such compatibility produces emphatic somatic responses, '*I feel myself warming to Peta*' (p147) and I swiftly renegotiate my irritations and resentments as 'foibles' (p148).

Throughout the story, I am consistently, though intermittently, constrained through my expectations and preconceived ideas of narrative therapy as a range of skills and techniques. This arrangement constitutes a positivist type position of 'earnest seeker'. From this position I am convinced that Narrative therapy is a discrete bounded

---

sometimes obscured in the complexity of discussions. I found the introduction of italics helpful for my re-reading, so have maintained them for the use of readers.

phenomenon and I want to know, I want to find out, I want to be taught, to be told what Narrative is, and how it works, for example, see page 166, '*I am all ears ...*'.

Collegiality is reinforced during breaks, such as morning tea or lunch. At this workshop which focuses on '*ways of engaging with people's lived experience*' (see page 159) participants find out about each other, trading personal information in a way that rarely occurred in the more 'introspective' worlds of Psychodrama and Gestalt.

With the end of a break storied as a return to '*the classroom*' (p148), I get a fleeting sense of my 'student status'.

As the teaching pace 'picks up', resistances are stifled, as with many didactic processes there is a lot of material, there is little time for dissension, but plenty for absorption.

There is a great deal happening in this apparently simple story, all of it interesting. That is not to suggest that the other narratives are not saturated with textual description, relationship and exchange, because they are. However, when reading the Narrative story through the position of interpreter, the textual interchange of relationship seems to explode through every paragraph. Within the confines of this study, I cannot translate all that I see occurring, but even as I attempt to remain within the artificial boundaries of this work, I am induced to mention that there are some extraordinarily rich stories within the Narrative story that could claim my attention. In particular, relationships produced through the interaction of participants, the women of the group, including issues of gender and alliance constituted through change of facilitators seem unique to this story<sup>57</sup>.

I have spoken of the festive atmosphere constituted through the gathering of a group of purposeful women taking time out for themselves; the collegiality constituted during tea and lunch breaks; and suggested that gender appears to have some stake in the Narrative

---

<sup>57</sup> Of all the narratives, the Narrative story is the most overwhelming in terms of 'data that leaps off the page'. In another context, this accessibility invites some scrutiny and investigation of the idea that the Narrative worldview, or the particular storied form of the Narrative story, enables social constructionist and post-structuralist inquiry. Certainly, it has been effortless to apply notions of multiple positioning. In the context of this study, management of the array of stories produced through the Narrative story leads me to locate an aspect of the entwined multiple relationships. The impact of gender and alliance continually draws my attention, particularly as an overtly consistent production compared to the other narratives. To put it more plainly, it seems interesting and I'm keen to explore it further. Over the next few pages commentary attends to exposition of gender and alliance productions before concluding the Narrative reading and moving on to Bio2.

story. This is the only narrative through which relationships between gender and exposure to technology overtly play a part in the constitution of my subjectivity. That is, part of the process of subjectification to this exposure produces me as 'a woman'. As well, I suspect an alliance I understand as occurring amongst the women of the group enacts some of the ethics of Narrative psychotherapeutic technology, such as relational conversations; allied participants, that is, co-creative therapeutic relationships; and narrative boundaries which endorse encompassing relationships rather than divisional. I will take some time to talk briefly of this production.

The Narrative story makes specific mention of some similarities amongst group members. For example, 'we are all women, we are all academically qualified, all in middle adulthood, we all have partners, we are all European, we all work, or have worked with clients, we are all well dressed' (p145). Although in the Gestalt narrative I articulate a cloistered atmosphere engendered through the residential workshop, within the Narrative story I specifically talk of women being relieved of various burdens of responsibility such as 'work, home and family', and 'the running of programmes' (p145). This release from 'obligatory' positions is encapsulated through 'having a whole week to indulge ourselves', 'a feeling of festiveness pervades' (p145).

The Narrative workshop is a didactically-orientated group process<sup>58</sup> yet the commonalities articulated above produce a bond, or group melding during exposure to this technology much more quickly than during exposures to Bioenergetics, Psychodrama or Gestalt. Commonalities and professionalism focus the group immediately upon a mutual purpose, that is, learning about Family Therapy Narrative style and the taking of knowledge back to respective communities and responsible lives. Good money has been paid and sacrifices made in order for women to attend, such as arranging childcare, organising partners and families to fend for themselves, and during work absences leaving colleagues with extra workloads. The festiveness is pervaded with an expectation that the programme will deliver. The positioning of this group of women as responsible, earnest, and hard working is more than simply a part of the Narrative exposure. It also tells a story of women's lives and the importance of values such as capability, reliability, efficiency, and productivity.

---

<sup>58</sup> As opposed to a group where the training offered is primarily, or totally, orientated towards personal experiential process work. For example, although all relationships are experiential, the Narrative workshop is presented in more of a pedagogical style than the Gestalt workshop that is specifically advertised as an 'experiential training workshop'.

The mixed-gender composition articulated through the other narratives, alongside a blend of ages, occupations, and reasons for attending the training programmes, for example, some trainees are 'in training', some are attending for personal reasons, others are 'just having a look' is in marked contrast to the composition of the Narrative training group. Consequently, in the other training programmes a common focus is not always evident directly from the start. In Bio1 and Bio2 the articulation is more or less solely about relationships of the individual, that is, my person with the technology. As Bioenergetics is a psychotherapeutic practice, which trains therapists to work with individual clients perhaps this is not surprising. And, although both Psychodrama and Gestalt are technologies that encourage group process, narratives of exposure to these practices do not discuss the idea of common purpose. Although, group melding occurs through the other narratives it is produced through other means.

Commonalities produced through the Narrative story are reinforced through the presence of a female facilitator who is held in high esteem, for example, 'it was unanimous that Peta's session was interesting, engaging, and stimulating' (p150). Unanimity of the group is sustained through various concerted articulation, such as, 'we all agree' (p146), 'the other women seem comfortable, accepting and interested in my questions, and Peta's responses' (p148), 'we're happy to re-enter the classroom' (p148), 'other group members nod and smile (in response to a comment of mine)' (p152), 'we are all keen for another informative day, and excited' (p154).

Emphatic somatic responses articulated through expressions such as, 'unanimous agreement', 'happiness', and 'excitement', contribute to feelings of camaraderie and connection. What is interesting in this story is that antipathy articulated during the first session with Peter as, 'some people aren't pleased with this response', 'there is an air of disgruntlement (p155), 'not everyone is happy', 'some are distinctly annoyed', 'the gaiety of yesterday is absent' (p155), is constituted through the concerted group. I am not articulating my individual response, but a group response. Furthermore, and for example, unlike during Bio1 where antipathetic somatic responses produce resistance and lack of identification with the process, in the Narrative story antipathy doesn't disrupt domination of the Narrative technology. Rather, antipathy appears to support resistance and lack of

identification with the presentation of the male facilitator who is, albeit unwittingly, positioned as responsible for diminishing our keenness and excitement.

This claim is supported through articulations during the third and fourth days. For example, on Day Three, facilitated by Peta, 'after a buoyant morning tea spent animatedly chatting in the sunny and nicely landscaped backyard of the rooms (clearly spirits have lifted)' (p158), 'everyone in the group, including myself, thoroughly enjoys this explanation', 'a convivial and animated hour', 'the afternoon brings more excitement' (p159).

Then during Day Four, facilitated by Peter, '*I discover my response is not dissimilar to that of others*' (referring to being both spellbound and startled) (p163), and the positioning of us, that is the group, as '*people who will struggle, and who clearly don't know*' (p163).

I am comparing and contrasting here, but it appears that there is a distinct difference in responses to the exposure depending upon facilitator gender.

This is not the first time that I have talked of differences in facilitation, for example, changes occurred in both Gestalt and Bio2, however through this Narrative I claim the notion of gender alliance which dominates relationships and articulates a group subjectification to the technology. Indeed the alternating empathic responses continue in the same vein as the story continues. Further indications could be claimed through the voluminous storying articulated when facilitated by Peta, compared to the more succinct storying during Peter's facilitation.

This is not to suggest that Peter or his presentation is flawed in any way, clearly neither he nor his practice are doubtful, as articulated through my impressions of his therapeutic work as impressive, enjoyable, delightful, and extremely useful (p169). Rather, this circumspect interpretation is identifying process through which, certainly, in this instance, relationships of alliance, gender and subjectivity are produced, and are entwined, among the myriad relationships articulated through this story.

As far as embodiment and Narrative are concerned, Peta declares her own position as interested in the meaning that can be made through a person's engagement with some sense of their body experience. She 'describes the body as a location where dissonance

shows itself and an area of working which she is keen to develop' (p166). Otherwise, the body and embodiment are a part of the process of subjectification to this technology, but not a part of the teaching programme per se.

Interpretation of exposure to Narrative re-situates the complexity of the subjectification process. It is messy; there is no one to one correspondence. There is always - interference, if you like, in any kind of straightforward relationship. If you imagine - here's the self, or here is the person, here's the psychotherapeutics, here's the relationship which is only accessible through this form of articulation - these possibilities are always interrupted, through my participant/observer, through my multiple positioning, through my prior constitution, through the multiplicity of relationship. Constitution is not confined either to 'inside' or 'outside' the workshop experiences. For want of a better description, it spills about, messes around and consistently changes.

I continue in this story to rapidly shift and maintain synchronicity amongst positions of 'interrogator', 'moderator', 'compliant and studious student', 'recapitulative narrator', 'earnest seeker', 'co-creator researcher', 'inadequate initiate', just to name a few, all co-constituted through a somatic system which vacillates between 'feelings of warmth', and 'niggles of irritation'. Through this turmoil Narrative seems an 'innocent accessory', independent of my positioning process, a lateral event. It seems that I am positioning myself, that responsibility lies with me, that I am accountable for my 'fate'. Yet it is through the Narrative exposure that I am articulating this relationship, this process of subjectification. Where is the power? Invitations of camaraderie are enabled through positions of authority. Power relations in this story are subtle indeed<sup>59</sup>.

In each of the narratives under interpretation, I am constrained in more than one way; whether, through the disciplining of my body, through taking responsibility for my own positioning, through legitimating dominating rhetoric. What happens to my authority? How might I be enabled to articulate my self differently when exposed to dominating technology? I will use the final narrative to look at these issues of power in particular,

---

<sup>59</sup> Issues of power and authority draw me to my exposure in Bio2. Momentarily putting the Narrative story aside, commentary moves toward addressing specific elements of power that I am articulating through the narratives. Bio 2 articulates a particularly uncomfortable engagement with dominant discourse that at the time does not seem easily managed, and that, on reflection seems to be adroitly managed. The ensuing commentary and discussion explains.

followed by a discussion about the power of constraint that I understand as occurring through each of the five articulations of exposure.

Bio2, in particular, articulates constraint and enablement in relationship to issues of authority and power. This narrative does not articulate the authoritative author of Bio1, nor the student subscriber/regurgitative learner. From the opening sentence, resistance is articulated through laboured, archaic and cliched storytelling. If I was to argue a location I might suggest that I articulate my subjectification through a position of 'frustrated novelette writer' complete with cumbersome prose and moth-eaten analogy. For example,

Niggles have a habit of creeping up on you. They don't exactly go away they tend to hang around somewhere in the nether reaches. Sporadically and unobtrusively gliding into hailing distance, they wait, generally stationary, until you mistakenly glimpse their shadowy form (p173)

I describe my discomfort as 'niggles', but I suggest now that 'niggles' is not sufficient description. My embodied responses appear trapped within inefficient transcription. As description, 'niggles', informs only vaguely. In articulating my discomfort, it appears that I have resource only to the cramped elocution of a cheap paperback suspense story.

The articulation of Bio2 makes for uncomfortable reading. As the workshop 'proper' commences there is considerable diversity of response and movement all of which is worthy of comment. However, with a focus on illustrating the impact of specific power relations affecting subjectification I am currently drawn to comment upon the sudden and dramatic shift produced through intense conflict of interests later in the narrative (see page 173).

These are not new conflicts. In relation to Bioenergetics, I have mentioned them previously. On the one hand, both 'inside' and 'outside' the narratives<sup>60</sup>, I produce my self as someone who is unconstrained through bioenergetic language and who enjoys the concepts. On the other, I simultaneously articulate tension and conflict produced through a conflicting position of post-structuralist researcher/person.

---

<sup>60</sup> Here I refer to 'inside' and 'outside' in order to manage referring to positions within the narratives and positions articulated in the remainder of the text

As articulated in Bio2 these conflicting positions appear to 'come to a head' (see page 173).

Caught in this dilemma I am rendered, seemingly, inarticulate. I have no recourse to vocabularies of resistance, for example, '... by the afternoon of day four I had gone quiet, something was wrong' (p173).

Without vocabulary, my resistance is expressed through a position of apparent repose. This is certainly how it might appear to an observer.

What occurs next is quite remarkable and synonymous with the occurrence of shifting to italicised articulation during Bio 1. That is, I produce a narrative within a narrative in order to accomplish something. In Bio2 the significance and affect of this 'shifting strategy' is more marked and powerful than during Bio1.

I am 'moved' to 'take up' power in a most interesting way, that is, through 'a dream'. I articulate a position of authority, not of dominion, but of 'personal'<sup>61</sup> governance, through re-locating my self and my body outside of the exposure. In order to access an enabling vocabulary I reconstitute the conditions of exposure.

My reconstitution is enabled through somatic sensations described as 'almost angry' (p174). With reference to 'almost' I suspect that I was angry yet was constrained in that moment from articulating an embodied response that might appear inappropriate. There is a twofold irony in my new position. I don't realise that I have found a place of comfort from where I can begin to voice my frustration. That is, I don't realise I am articulating a power position and, that in order to enable this 'new voice' I have to articulate my location as '*in a dream*' (p173).

---

<sup>61</sup> The use of 'personal' is an interesting misnomer here, albeit illustrated with single quotation marks to indicate that it is not quite a correct term. It is interesting because if I didn't understand, that in this context, what I have done is found a way to access an enabling resource, I would think that I am taking back/asserting some personal authority/governance – that is what it feels like - hence my description of the process as 'personal'. Such use highlights once more the ways through which speaking of self consistently indicates a stable identity even when the study in which we are engaged argues for inconsistent multiple productions and performances. The question: 'Is there any way around this problem?' might be a useful starting point for future study.

Through my new position, I articulate my position as 'crazy making', through which 'I can make no sense of my positioning'. I feel 'depressed and disturbed', 'untrusting', yet it is through articulation from this 'new position' that I am making sense of some of the frustrations, the niggles, that I have experienced throughout exposure to bioenergetics and this study. Through this new position of 'self-translator' I am enabled to articulate my dilemmas, including my elusive attempts to ensnare competing discourse that I hope will enable me to challenge the dominion of psychoanalysis. For example, 'I grasp for academic challenges, but they are elusive' (p174). I variously shift to a bargaining position articulating 'my stuckness' and trying to invent 'ways out' of the apparent trap in which I find my self. I articulate my self as shifting and floundering yet through this persistent self-interrogation, I articulate my subjectivity as 'personal knowledge maker'.

It is through this process of articulating narratives within narratives, of accessing new resources that I feel enabled at last to access resources that feel empowering. As 'personal knowledge maker', I am able to legitimise competing worldviews. This standpoint produces feelings, and thoughts, of liberation from subjectification to psychotherapeutic technologies of domination. That is, because I feel powerful, I feel liberated.

One of the reasons I find this shift in subjectification compelling is because it is the first time throughout the processes of subjectification that I articulate authority. And, the shift is enabled through a dramatic embodied response. My body plays an integral part in the production of this shift. Some of the discourse I access, the voice of my thesis in particular, an academic voice, enables another technology of dominion to participate in the exposure and it is interesting that it is through the competitiveness of two dominating technologies that I find relief. I am referring here to the powerful dominance of psychoanalytics, and the powerful dominance of academia.

The impact of discourses in opposition and the effects of such discourse on processes of subjectification can be illustrated through an 'in hindsight' interpretation of the processes occurring in the Bio2 narrative.

I suggest that while I was sitting in the group listening to 'psychoanalysis talk' I became bereft of 'voice'. I balked at explaining my experience and my self in psychoanalytic

terms, I wanted another way to negotiate both. The explanations on offer outraged me in their simplicity compared with what I understood as my complexity - I am made of many facets, I cannot fit neatly into embellished drive theory, can I? This is a story that goes a little bit like this<sup>62</sup>:

I find myself in psychoanalytic culture, wanting another way to negotiate my experience, but I can access no other way. While immersed within the psychoanalytical talk I cannot recall or formulate another way of speaking. My voice is smothered, certainly silenced. The self being produced is a psychoanalytical self, the culture is psychoanalytical, the talk is psychoanalytical, and I am completely overwhelmed.

Through this position, I have no ground from which to challenge, and no voice to call my own. I am stranded in some kind of post-structural no-man's land where psycho-speak is the only known language and I cannot make myself heard. Attempts at recourse, usually prompted through 'niggles' are continually doomed to failure. My insurgence is smothered in dominant psychotherapeutic rhetoric and feeling overwhelmed, my desire is to disengage as quickly as possible. I have no retort. My cultural challenge withers under the well-versed familiarity of psychoanalytic talk.

In order to make some sense of my experience I take it from one culture into another, different, culture. Within 'a dream', I validate my experience through a more post-structurally oriented encounter with my self. I deconstruct what is going on for me. Through this process, I access 'academia', a solid and dominant institution, a cultural match for psychoanalysis. I enjoy 'feeling better', but still leave as quickly as possible.

A few days later<sup>63</sup>, I have the opportunity to talk of my experiences with some bioenergetic colleagues. They are happy for me to negotiate my experiences differently and wait expectantly. Within the bioenergetic culture, I find I am still unable to access alternative

---

<sup>62</sup> Some consideration was given here to how to best illustrate the impact of competing discourse in a tangible way that did not simply repeat the Bio2 narrative, or what I had already talked about. Because constraint/enablement/access to resources is emerging as a potent producer of dominance through subjectification it seemed important to reflectively interpret the process within the Bio2 narrative. Access to resources was a powerful process that I wanted to convey clearly to readers. For this reason, I chose to narrate the process of reflecting on occurrences in Bio2, not only for clarity, but also to re-emphasise the ways that we make sense of our selves through our stories.

<sup>63</sup> The potency of this experience a few days later and its relationship with the process of subjectification led me to include this moment.

language. This is despite my dream experience and previous accessing of academic discourse. I begin using 'bioenergetic talk' to describe and explain and 'my ground' slips further away.

I am troubled. It appears that when exposed to one culture I have difficulty accessing the language of another. What happens to my self in cultural exchange?

What happens is that I dynamically experience my self positioned against dominant cultural discourse whilst having few resources with which to challenge such discourse. I sit in a psychoanalytical culture that seems suspect, I begin to doubt and I want to question. Psychoanalytical discursive users are practised. There is wide acceptance of the discourse and a long history. The talk often makes good sense to me. I, also, am steeped in the psychoanalytical discourse; it dominates our society. Such dominance undermines my suspicions and I am not practised in the vernacular of the challenging discourses that I would like to introduce. I don't feel theoretically sound, I'm hesitant, I have no certainty. I am as an innovational foreign speaker arriving in an ancient and dominant civilisation.

I look for resources but they always have more. Instigating provocative and validating discourse is difficult because my post-structuralist talk is almost as new to me as to those whom I challenge. Historical psychoanalytical dialogue rolls off my tongue just as effortlessly as for my antagonists and I am already swayed. Challenges are easily disrupted through historical weight and authority. The psychoanalytical discursive field is extensive and I am as a footnote in a foreign phrase book. I am enabled 'to join', while opposition is constrained. Adaptation is the 'easier' option<sup>64</sup>.

In the end, such issues of cultural exchange come down to arrangements of domination, of how I am situated in relation to power, of how I am assembled, of how I am enabled or constrained to assemble my self. For example, interpretation of the Narrative story suggests that verbal resistance is enabled through Narrative's ethical standpoint of co-

---

<sup>64</sup> Although discussion continues, it is at this point that the process of reflecting upon Bio2 ends. I have provided my self with a satisfactory interpretation of what happened, and at this juncture I think I have done the same for readers. But, I have some curiosity about how this 'new' understanding of domination relates to the other narratives. Accordingly, I move to re-consider power relations produced through exposure to the other technologies.

creative relational conversation. Narrative dominion is more subtle than that produced through the psychoanalytical exposure of Bio2. In the Narrative story it appears that resistance is enabled, however, being positioned as 'student/learner/non-expert' or 'inadequate initiate' suggests otherwise. The power relations produced through the Narrative articulation are not necessarily transparent. Interpretation of the Narrative story has focused primarily upon multiple positioning and the construction of a cohesive group. In a further study, if I was to explore, for example, the proscribed rituals articulated in the Narrative story as 'ways of relating to people and clients', relationships of domination and subjectification may be explained differently.

Psychodrama produces a dialogical strategy to enable resistance. That is, I have conversations with 'myself'. In relation to the isolation I experience in Bio1 and Bio2, a 'psychodramatic' position as a juggler of many roles feels surprisingly supported and secure. It is good to have company. Resistance fizzles when dialogical partners are not in accord. Resistance to Gestalt is temporarily supported through the strategic use of a discourse more dominant than gestalt discourse. That is, I use bioenergetic talk to disrupt and explain the discomfort of my experience. Even this is cast aside as I am slowly and subtly enabled to 'learn the rules' of Gestalt, leading to assimilation of the exposure process and the constitution of Gestalt subjectivity<sup>65</sup>.

As a process of inquiry, as commentary upon the articulated subjectification constituted through the narratives, and as post-structuralist study, the interpretation produced through these pages must at some stage draw to a close. It seems that interpretation has produced narratives that constitute, through articulation and form, a process of subjectification governed through relationships of power and strategies of engagement. The constitution of subjectivity has been understood through language of resistance and authority, through subject positioning, and the impact of embodied response upon all of these relationships. From the standpoint of interpreter it has become clear that both the narratives and interpretations are an extraordinary rich 'data' source through which many

---

<sup>65</sup> Here, we come to the end of Chapter Twelve (a) – the meta commentary, and almost to the end of Chapter Twelve, although as the concluding paragraph to follow suggests, and as is common in post-structuralist work, endings are rarely considered complete. Indeed, the process of re-reading and producing meta-commentary has re-introduced the myriad re-interpretations that might be made, the multiple complexities on offer for new chapters, for further analysis, and for future studies. I understand the study as an intellectual foray into relationships between psychotherapeutic practices and the constitution of self. The work is, understandably, not definitive, but does present opportunities to contribute to contemporary theoretical debate, to publish autoethnographical reflections, and/or to probe the methodology itself in the form of a further research study. Possibilities for study are probably as 'endless' as possibilities of interpretation.

stories could be told. This chapter presents only a glimpse of what might be possible. What it offers are some ways of understanding relationships between technologies of subjectification and the process of subjectification, some ways of understanding the assembling of subjects. It illustrates the multirelational constitution of subjectivity and the instability of self arrangements. It introduces a language of the body through which relationships of embodiment and constitution of subjectivity can be talked about, and increases understanding of the ways through which subjectivity is constituted through embodied interactions. It is incomplete. There is always more that could be said.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN A PARTING WORD

This postscript serves to signify closure of this study. It is a 'final' destination story. As a journey, the route has at times been tumultuous. Transformations of subjectivity are not confined to narratives of exposure. Exposure to theories, debates, and my articulations of these through various chapters, consistently and multiply re-arrange and re-assemble my person. Through the narrative of this study incessant shifts through subjectification and relationship to various textual resources produce transformations of subjectivity that are not incremental, developmental, nor linear, but mobile, complex, and unstable. As I am re-arranged my re-assembled subjectivity informs my understandings, my knowledges, through different visions and alternate articulations. Even metaphor such as the brewery, appropriated to illustrate assemblage of governance during Chapter Two, transforms as I notice numerous entrances, exits, floors which are neither up nor down, which may or may not be level, and a factory building which changes shape even as I gaze upon its apparent exterior facade. Our lives and the world through which we live are constituted through never-ending processes of performance and production; transformation is ceaseless.

In attempting a look at processes that underpin the knowledging of self through apparatus of subjectification I have argued that subjectification, the production of subjectivity, the constitution of our selves, the historico-contextual siting of our persons, is an embodied activity, a fluid process simultaneously reflecting and re-producing society and 'individuals' as social being (Burkitt, 1991). Through investigating ways through which we become subjects, through which selves are acquired I have found the use of narrative as both meaning-making strategy and interpretative device effective as illustration of some of the processes produced through the activity of social being. Our social actions are governed through relations of power forming systems of constraint embedded in institutional practice. Power relationships perform as self-shapers and for an understanding of subjectivity, it is essential to have an understanding of performances. What this study attempts is to make in some way articulate some of those power relationships.

Interpretation of relationships between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist assemblage illustrates some of the social processes through which subjectivity is articulated and produced. Exposures to

psychotherapeutic technologies of dominion, to processes of subjectification took place before I articulated my theoretical position; before I became more versed in post-structuralist speak, before much of the exposure to the doctoral process. In exposure and through the narratives I am representative of other participants in terms of my humanity and the way I am produced, yet I have access to liberating technology. Through my position of academic researcher, I am enabled to make sense of my experience through textual narrative that is momentarily suspended for examination. Through inquiry, I make sense of my assembling strategies, of my domination, and of my privileges. I have recourse to tools of deconstruction through which I can understand my making, through which I can challenge the disciplining of my body, the governance of my subjectivity.

Understanding the processes underpinning the knowledging of subjectification to technologies of dominion is both liberating and disturbing. Disturbing, because as I interpret and understand my process of subjectification I also identify the previously unknown 'exercises of power that pin me into place' (Parker, 1999a). I am momentarily daunted by the immensity of relationships of power and domination illuminated through knowledge making until I recall my relational status and constitution as social being produced through and producing our social system. As part of this system, I am liberated through my new knowledge. This doesn't mean I won't be pushed and prodded, swept away, transformed, dominated or governed through self-producing apparatus, and maybe even dominate, but it does mean that I know something else about how my subjectivity is constituted, that I have different resources in the form of vocabularies of entitlement through which I may be able to disempower the disciplining of my assemblage, sometimes.

The critical reflection performed through this study engages in and supports the opening up of our systems and practices. Through investigating subjectification produced through everyday practice regulatory arrangements of institutional power and the spaces of resistance through which contemporary regimes of governance can be disenfranchised are illuminated. Performing critical reflection upon relationships between the assembling of selves and psychological intervention technologies designed to assist assemblage illustrates the constitution of the political self. The personal is the political, entwined through discourse of domination, technologies of subjectification, and relationships of

power. Through assemblage as psychotherapeutic selves, through arrangements of domination, we are constituted without knowledge, until we deconstruct our making.

Critical reflection upon our construction contributes to a climate of change, to forms of empowerment, to opportunities for different invention to how we have been invented before. If I only understand my transformation through the technology that transforms me then I am constrained to be the way that I am produced. If new knowledges constitute new ways of understanding I am offered new ways of invention, new ways of understanding my transformations. I begin to know who I am differently.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, H. (1997). *Conversation, language and possibilities: A postmodern approach to therapy*. New York: Basic Books.
- Atkinson, P. and Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and participant observation. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. (pp248-261). London: Sage.
- Atkinson, P. and Hammersley, M. (1998). Ethnography and participant observation. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative enquiry*. (pp110-136). London: Sage.
- Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association. (n.d.) [Brochure].
- Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association Inc. (1993). *Training and standards manual* [Brochure].
- Baerveldt, C. & Voestermans, P. (1998). The body as a selfing device: the case of anorexia nervosa. In H.J. Stam (Ed.), *The body and psychology* (pp161-181). London: Sage.
- Bakhtin, M.M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. Tex.: University of Texas Press.
- Bannister, P., Burman, E., Parker, I., Taylor, M., & Tindall, C. (1994). *Qualitative methods in psychology: A research guide*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Banton, R., Clifford., Frosh, S., Lousada, J., and Rosenthal, J. (1985). *The politics of mental health*. UK: MacMillan.
- Barnard, H. (1993). Fieldwork. In H. Barnard (Ed.), *Introductory social anthropology: 46.101 Study Guide 1*. Palmerston North: Massey University, New Zealand.
- Barrett, M. (1991). *The politics of truth: From Marx to Foucault*. UK: Polity Press/Blackwell.
- Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Baumeister, R.F. (1987). How the self became a problem: A psychological review of historical research. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, (1), 163-176.
- Baumeister, R.F. (1998). The self. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske, G. Lindzey (Eds), *Handbook of social psychology, Vol. 1* (4th ed., pp680-740). USA: McGraw-Hill.

- Berger, K.S. (1988). *The developing person through the lifespan* (2nd ed.). New York: Worth Publishers Inc.
- Billig, M. (1997). Discursive, rhetorical and ideological messages. In C. McGarty and S.A. Haslam, (Eds.), *The message of social psychology: Perspectives on mind and society* (pp37-53). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bird, J. (n.d.). *The Heart's Narrative: Therapy and navigating life's contradictions*. New Zealand: Edge Press.
- Bowers, J. (1996). Hanging around and making something of it: Ethnography. In J. Haworth (Ed. ), *Psychological Research. Innovative methods and strategies* (pp 120-138). London: Routledge.
- Brandes, S. (1982). Ethnographic autobiographies in American anthropology. In E. Adamson Hoebel, R. Currier, and S. Kaiser (Eds.), *Crisis in anthropology: View from Spring Hill* (pp187-202). New York & London: Garland Publishing Co.
- Brannen, M.Y. (1996). Ethnographic international management research. In B.J. Punnet and O. Shenkar (Eds.), *Handbook for international management research* (pp115-143). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Burkitt, I. (1991). *Social selves: Theories of the social formation of personality*. London: Sage.
- Burkitt, I. (1999). Between the dark and the light: Power and the material contexts of social relations. In D.J. Nightingale and J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice* (pp69-82). UK: Open University Press.
- Burman, E. (1999). Whose construction? Points from a feminist perspective. In D.J. Nightingale and J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice* (pp159-175). UK: Open University Press.
- Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.
- Butt, T. (1999). Realism, constructionism and phenomenology. In D.J. Nightingale and J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice* (pp127-140). UK: Open University Press.
- Choosing a psychotherapist. (n.d.). The New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists [Brochure].
- Clarkson, P. (1994). The nature and range of psychotherapy. In P. Clarkson & M. Pokorny, (Eds.), *The handbook of psychotherapy* (pp3-27). London & New York: Routledge.
- Coleman, L. (1984). *The reign of error: Psychiatry, authority and law*. USA: Beacon Press.

- Conger, J.P. (1994). *The body in recovery: Somatic psychotherapy and the self*. Berkeley, California: Frog Ltd.
- Cornman, J.W., Lehrer, K., Pappas, G.S. (1987). *Philosophical problems and arguments: An introduction* (3rd ed.). USA: Hackett Publishing.
- Corsini, R.J. and Wedding, D. (1995). *Current psychotherapies* (5th ed.). USA: F.E. Peacock Publishers Inc.
- Cromby, J. and Nightingale, D.J. (1999). What's wrong with social constructionism? In D.J. Nightingale and J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice* (pp1-19). UK: Open University Press.
- Crossley, M.L. (2000). *Introducing narrative psychology: Self, trauma and the construction of meaning*. UK: Open University Press.
- Curtis, K.A. (1999). "Bottom-up" poverty and welfare policy discourse: Ethnography to the rescue? *Urban anthropology*, 28, 103-140.
- Cushman, P. (1991). Ideology obscured: Political uses of the self in Daniel Stern's infant. *American Psychologist*, 46, 206-219.
- Cushman, P. (1992). Psychotherapy to 1992; A historically situated interpretation. In D.K. Freedheim (Ed.), *History of psychotherapy: A century of change* (pp21-64). USA: American Psychological Association.
- Dattilio, F.M. & Freeman, A. (1992). Introduction to cognitive therapy. In A. Freeman and F.M. Dattilio (Eds.), *Comprehensive casebook of cognitive therapy* (pp3-11). New York, London: Plenum Press.
- Davies, B. and Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20, 42-63.
- Davis, W. (1998). Biological foundations of the schizoid process: A functional approach to character development, Part II. *Energy and Character: The Journal of Biosynthesis*, 29, 55-73.
- De Swaan, A. (1990). *The management of normality: Critical essays in health and welfare*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1988). *A thousand plateaus*. tr. B. Massumi. London: Athlone.
- Derrida, J. (1981). *Positions*. London: Athlone Press.
- Drewery, W. and Monk, G. (1994). Some reflections on the therapeutic power of poststructuralism. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 17, 303-313.
- Drewery, W., Winslade, J., & Monk, G. (2000). Resisting the dominating story: Toward a deeper understanding of narrative therapy. In J. Raskin & R. Neimeyer (Eds.),

- Constructions of disorder* (pp243-263). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Dreyfus, H.L. (1995). *Being-in-the-world: A commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*. USA: The MIT Press.
- Dreyfus, H.L. & Rabinow, P. (1982). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics: With an afterword by Michael Foucault*. UK: Harvester Press.
- Edwards, D. and Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology*. London: Sage.
- Edwards, D., Ashmore, M., & Potter, J. (1995). Death and furniture: the rhetoric, politics and theology of bottom line arguments against relativism. *History of the Human Sciences*, 8, 25-49.
- Epston, D. (1989). *Collected papers*. Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- Epston, D., & White, M. (1995). Termination as a rite of passage: Questioning strategies for therapy inclusion. In R.A. Neimeyer & M.J. Mahoney (Eds.), *Constructivism in psychotherapy* (pp339-354). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Family Therapy Centre. (1999). *Workshop series* [Brochure].
- Family Therapy Centre. (2000). *Educational programme* [Brochure].
- Fetterman, D.M. (1989). *Ethnography step by step*. London: Sage.
- Finlay, D.J. (1998). *A relational approach to bioenergetics*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Ford, D.H. and Urban, H.B. (1998). *Contemporary models of psychotherapy: A comparative analysis*. USA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Foucault, M. (1965). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. New York: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1970). *The order of things*. London: Tavistock.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. London: Allen Lane.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1981). *The history of sexuality I: An introduction*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. In H.L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp208-226). London:

Sage.

- Frank, A.W. (1998). From disappearance to hyperappearance. In H.J. Stam (Ed.), *The body and psychology* (pp205-232). London: Sage.
- Franzoi, S.L. (1996). *Social psychology*. USA: Brown & Benchmark.
- Frechette, L. (1996). Mahler's stage theory. IIBA Training Materials, Quebec, Canada.
- Freedman, J. and Combs, G. (1996). *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company, Inc.
- Freeman, M. (1993). *Rewriting the self: History, memory, narrative*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Freeman, M. (1998). Mythical time, historical time, and the narrative fabric of the self. *Narrative Inquiry*, 8, 27-50.
- Freeman, M. (1999). Life narratives, the poetics of selfhood, and the redefinition of psychological theory. In W. Maiers, B. Bayer, B. Duarte Esgalhado, R. Jorna, & E Schraube (Eds.), *Challenges to theoretical psychology* (pp245-250). Ontario, Canada: Captus University Publications.
- Freeman, M. (2000a). Modernists at heart? Postmodern artistic 'breakdowns' and the question of identity. In D. Fee (Ed.), *Pathology and the postmodern: Mental illness as discourse and experience* (pp116-140). London/Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
- Freeman, M. (2000b). When the story's over: Narrative foreclosure and the possibility of self-renewal. In M. Andrews, S. Day Schlater, C. Squire & A. Treacher (Eds.), *Lines of narrative: Psychosocial perspectives* (pp81-91). London & New York: Routledge.
- Frewin, K. & Tuffin, K. (1998). Police status, conformity and internal pressure: a discursive analysis of police culture. *Discourse & Society*, 9, 173-185.
- Frewin, K. (1997). *Reflexivity in psychology: practices and performances*. Unpublished master's thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- Friedlander, M.L. (1984). Psychotherapy talk as social control. *Psychotherapy*, 21, pp335-341.
- Furman, B. and Ahola, T. (1992). *Solution talk: Hosting therapeutic conversations*. New York/London: WW Norton & Company.
- Gadlin, H. (1995). On leaving psychology. In I. Lubek, R. van Hezewijk, G. Pheterson, C.W. Tolman (Eds.), *Trends and issues in theoretical psychology* (pp255-262). USA: Springer Publishing Company.
- Gavey, N. (1989). Feminist post-structuralism and discourse analysis: Contributions to feminist psychology. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13, 459-475.

- Gergen, K.J. (1989). Warranting voice and the elaboration of self. In J. Shotter and K. Gergen (Eds.), *Texts of identity* (pp70-81). London: Sage.
- Gergen, K.J. (1993). (Ed.). *Refiguring self and psychology*. UK/USA: Dartmouth Publishing Company.
- Gergen, K.J. (1995). Singular, socialised, and relational selves. In I. Lubek, R. van Hezewijk, G. Pheterson, C.W. Tolman (Eds.), *Trends and issues in theoretical psychology* (pp25-32). USA: Springer Publishing Company.
- Gergen, K. (1999). Beyond the self-society antimony. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12, 173-178.
- Gergen, K.J. and Davis, K.E. (Eds.). (1985). *The social construction of the person*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Gergen, K.J. & Gergen, M.M. (1986). Narrative form and the construction of psychological science. In T.R. Sarbin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct* (pp22-43). USA: Praeger.
- Gergen, K.J. & Gergen, M.M. (1993). Narrative and the self as relationship. In K.J. Gergen (Ed.), *Refiguring self and psychology* (pp201-240). UK/USA: Dartmouth Publishing Company.
- Gergen, K.J. & McNamee, S. (2000). From disordering discourse to transformative dialogue. In R.A. Neimeyer & J.D. Raskin (Eds.), *Constructions of disorder: Meaning-making frameworks for psychotherapy* (pp333-349). USA: American Psychological Association.
- Gergen, M. & K. (1994). Let's pretend: A duography. In D. John Lee (Ed.), *Life and story: Autobiographies for a narrative psychology* (pp61-86). USA: Praeger.
- Gerhardt, J. and Stinson, C. (1996). The therapeutic encounter: neutral context or social construction? In D.I. Slobin, J. Gerhardt, A. Kyratzis, J. Guo (Eds.), *Interaction, social context, and language: Essays in honor of Susan Ervin-Tripp* (pp449-468). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gestalt Institute of New Zealand. (2000). [Brochure].
- Goldenberg, I., and Goldenberg, H. (1991). *Family therapy: An overview* (3rd ed.). USA: Brooks/Cole.
- Greenberg, G. (1995). If a self is a narrative: Social constructionism in the clinic. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 5, 269-283.
- Greifinger, J. (1997). On the horizon of authenticity: Toward a moral account of psychoanalytic therapy. In C. Spezzano and G.J. Gargiulo (Eds.), *Soul on the couch: Spirituality, religion, and morality in contemporary psychoanalysis* (pp201-230). USA: The Analytic Press.

- Grof, S. (1985). *Beyond the brain: Birth, death and transcendence in psychotherapy*. USA: State University of New York.
- Grof, S. (1990). *The holotropic mind: The three levels of human consciousness and how they shape our lives*. USA: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Hansen, N.E. & Freimuth, M. (1997). Piecing the puzzle together: A model for understanding the theory-practice relationship. *The Counselling Psychologist*, 25, 654-673.
- Hare-Mustin, R.T. (1994a). Discourses in the mirrored room: A postmodern analysis of therapy. *Family Process*, 19-36.
- Hare-Mustin, R.T. (1994b). Uncovering clues, discovering change. In D. John Lee (Ed.), *Life and story: Autobiographies for a narrative psychology* (pp143-160). USA: Praeger.
- Harper, D.J. (1994). The professional construction of 'paranoia' and the discursive use of diagnostic criteria. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 67, 131-143.
- Harper, D.J. (1995). Discourse analysis and 'mental health'. *Journal of Mental Health*, 4, 347-357.
- Harré, R. (1991). The discursive production of selves. *Theory & Psychology*, 1, pp51-63.
- Harré, R. (1998). *The singular self*. London: Sage.
- Haug, F. (1987). Memory-work. In F. Haug (Ed.), *Female sexualization* (pp33-72). London: Verso.
- Hayano, D.M. (1979). Auto-ethnography: Paradigms, problems, and prospects. *Human Organization*, 38, 99-104.
- Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Irwin, C., Couze, V., & Walkerdine, V. (1984). *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity*. London: Methuen.
- Henwood, K., Griffin, C. & Phoenix, A. (Eds.). (1998). *Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology*. London: Sage.
- Hermansson, G. (1998). *Eclectic counselling: Working with an integrated model* (2nd ed.). New Zealand: Inside-Out Books.
- Hershenson, D.B., Power, P.W., & Waldo, M. (1996). *Community counselling: Contemporary theory and practice*. USA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hilton, V. (1998). The passion, the person and the body-politic. *Newsletter of The International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis*, 18/3, 1-4.
- Hodges, I. (1995). Changing your mind: Therapeutic discourse and Foucault's ethics.

In I. Lubek, R. Van Hezewijk, G. Pheterson, C.W. Tolman, (Eds.), *Trends and issues in theoretical psychology* (pp301-305). USA: Springer Publishing Company.

Holland, R. (1977). *Self and social context*. London: Macmillan.

Hollway, W. (1984). Gender differences and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, J. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (pp227-263). New York: Methuen.

Hollway, W. (1989). *Subjectivity and method in psychology: Gender, meaning and science*. London: Sage.

Howard, G.S. (1994). The stories we live by: Confessions by a member of the species *Homo Fabulans* (Man, the storyteller). In D. John Lee (Ed.), *Life and story: Autobiographies for a narrative psychology* (pp247-274). USA: Praeger.

Humphreys, M. (1999). Ethnography: Reading across culture. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Critical textwork: An introduction to varieties of discourse and analysis* (pp178-190). USA: Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Irvine, L. (2000). "Even better than the real thing": Narratives of the self in codependency. *Qualitative Sociology*, 23, (1), 9-28.

Jackson, S. (1998). Telling stories: Memory, narrative and experience in feminist research and theory. In K. Henwood, C. Griffin, & A. Phoenix (Eds.), *Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology* (pp45-64). London: Sage.

James, W. (1890). *The principles of psychology*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Jansz, J. (1993). Individualist and collectivist voices of the self. In I. Lubek, R. van Hezewijk, G. Pheterson, C.W. Tolman (Eds.), *Trends and issues in theoretical psychology* (pp33-38). USA: Springer Publishing Company.

Johnson, S.M. (1985). *Characterological transformation: The hard work miracle*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Johnson, S.M. (1994). *Character styles*. W.W. Norton: New York.

Kaplan, H.I., Sadock, B.J. Grebb, J.A. (1994). *Kaplan and Sadock's synopsis of psychiatry: Behavioural sciences; clinical psychiatry* (7th ed.) USA: Williams & Wilkins.

Kaye, J. (1999). Toward a non-regulative praxis. In I. Parker (Ed.). *Deconstructing psychotherapy*. (pp19-38). London: Sage.

Kazantzis, N. & Deane, F.P. (1998). Theoretical orientations of New Zealand Psychologists: An international comparison. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*. 8, (2), 97-113.

- Kazantzis, N., Deane, F.P., Patchett-Anderson, L.S., & Ronan, K.R. (1998). *The professional development of New Zealand psychologists: Concepts, questions, and methods of the Collaborative Research Network (CRN) international study*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the New Zealand Psychological Society and New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Keen, E. (1997). Psychiatric power and levels of concealment. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 10, 125-137.
- Kidder, L.H. & Fine, M. (1997). Qualitative inquiry in psychology: A radical tradition. In D. Fox and I Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp34-50). London: Sage.
- Kitzinger, C. (1992). The individuated self concept: A critical analysis of social constructionist writing on individualism. In G.M. Breakwell (Ed.) *Social psychology of identity and the self concept* (pp221-250). London: Surrey University Press.
- Klein, M. (1952). 'Some theoretical conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant'. In Klein, M., Heinemann, P., Isaacs, S. and Riviere, J. (Eds.), *Development in Psycho-Analysis*, London: Hogarth.
- Lacan, J. (1977). *Ecrits: A selection*. London: Tavistock Press.
- Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. USA: University of Chicago Press.
- Lawson, H. (1985). *Reflexivity: The post-modern predicament: Problems of modern European thought*. London: Hutchinson.
- Lee, D.J. (1994) (Ed.). *Life and story: Autobiographies for a narrative psychology*. USA: Praeger.
- Leifer, R. (1990). The medical model as the ideology of the therapeutic state. *The Journal of Mind and Behaviour*, 11, pp247-258.
- Lovlie, L. (1992). Postmodernism and subjectivity. In S. Kvale (Ed.), *Psychology and Postmodernism* (pp119-134). London: Sage.
- Lowen, A. (1958). *The language of the body*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lowen, A. (1965). *Love and orgasm*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lowen, A. (1967). *Betrayal of the body*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lowen, A. (1970). *Pleasure: A creative approach to life*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Lowen, A. (1972). *Depression and the body*. New York: Penguin Books.

- Lowen, A. (1975). *Bioenergetics*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Lowen, A. (1980). *Fear of life*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lowen, A. (1984). *Narcissism: Denial of the true self*. New York: Macmillan.
- Lowen, A. (1985). *Narcissism*. New York: Collier.
- Lowen, A. (1990). *The spirituality of the body*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Lowen, A. (1995). Bioenergetic analysis. In R.J. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.), *Current psychotherapies* (5th ed., pp409-418). USA: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.
- Lowen, A. & Lowen, L. (1977). *The way to vibrant health: A manual of bioenergetic exercises*. USA: The International Institute for Bioenergetic Analysis.
- Madill, A. and Doherty, K. (1994). 'So you did what you wanted then': Discourse analysis, personal agency, and psychotherapy. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 4, 261-273.
- Mahler, M.S., Pine, F., Bergman, A. (1975). *The psychological birth of the human infant: Symbiosis and individuation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Maley, M. (1998). Developmental tasks of separation-individuation. IIBA Training Materials, Minneapolis, USA.
- Marshall, H, Woollett, A, & Dosanjh, N. (1998). Researching marginalized standpoints: Some tensions around plural standpoints and diverse 'experiences'. In K. Henwood, C. Griffin, & A. Phoenix (Eds.), *Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology* (pp115-134). London: Sage.
- Marshall, H, Woollett, A, & Dosanjh, N. (1998). Researching marginalized standpoints: Some tensions around plural standpoints and diverse 'experiences'. In K. Henwood, C. Griffin, & A. Phoenix (Eds.), *Standpoints and differences: Essays in the practice of feminist psychology* (pp 115-134). London: Sage.
- Masson, J.M. (1994). (rev.ed.). *Against therapy*. USA: Common Courage Press.
- Masterson, J.F. (1985). *The Narcissistic and Borderline disorders*. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers.
- May, T. (1993). *Social research: Issues, methods and process*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- McCreanor, T. (1997). When racism stepped ashore: Antecedents of anti-Maori discourse in Aotearoa. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 26, (1), pp36-44.
- McNamee, S. and Gergen, K.J. (Eds.) (1992). *Therapy as social construction*. London: Sage.

- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mertens, D. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology*. London: Sage.
- Michel, E. (1997). *Bent out of shape: Anatomy and alignment for bioenergetic trainees*. California: Elizabeth Michel.
- Monk, G., Winslade, J., Crocket, K., and Epston, D. (1997). *Narrative therapy in practice: the archaeology of hope*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Morris, B. (1991). *Western conceptions of the individual*. New York: Berg: St. Martin's Press.
- New Zealand Society of Bioenergetic Analysis Inc. (n.d.). *Bioenergetics Aotearoa training programme* [Brochure].
- New Zealand Society of Bioenergetic Analysis Inc. (1997). *Bioenergetic Analysis training programme for psychotherapists* [Brochure].
- Nichols, M. and Schwartz, R. (1998). *Family therapy concepts and methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Nightingale, D.J. (1999). Bodies: Reading the body. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Critical textwork: an introduction to varieties of discourse analysis* (pp167-177). USA Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Nightingale, D.J. and Cromby, J. (1999). Reconstructing social constructionism. In D.J. Nightingale and J.Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice* (pp207-224). UK: Open University Press.
- O'Connor, K. (1996). Glossary of validities. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 25, 1, 16-21.
- O'Connor, K. & Hallam, R.S. (2000). Sorcery of the self. *Theory & Psychology*, 10, (2), 238-264.
- Oliver, W.D. & Landfield, A.W. (1962). Reflexivity: An unfaced issue of psychology. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 18, 118-124.
- O'Neill, D. (1997). *Men against violence: A post-structuralist critique of the science and practice of stopping men's violence to women in an applied community setting*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- Owen, I.R. (1992). Applying social constructionism to psychotherapy. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 5, 385-402.
- Pallone, N.J. (1986). *On the social utility of psychopathology: A deviant majority and its keepers?* USA: Transaction, Inc.

- Parker, I. (1989). Discourse and power. In J. Shotter & K.J. Gergen (Eds.), *Texts of identity* (pp56-69). London: Sage.
- Parker, I. (1990a). Discourse: definitions and contradictions. *Philosophical Psychology*, 3, 189-204.
- Parker, I. (1990b). Real things: discourse, context and practice. *Philosophical Psychology*, 3, 227-233.
- Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology*. London: Routledge.
- Parker, I. (1995). Everyday behaviour (ism) and therapeutic discourse: Deconstructing the ego as verbal nucleus in Skinner and Lacan. In J. Siegfried (Ed.), *Therapeutic and everyday discourse as behaviour change* (pp447-467). USA: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Parker, I. (1997). Discursive psychology. In D. Fox and I. Prilleltensky (Eds.), *Critical psychology: An introduction* (pp284-298). London: Sage.
- Parker, I. (1999a). Critical reflexive humanism and critical constructionist psychology. In D.J. Nightingale and J. Cromby (Eds.), *Social constructionist psychology: a critical analysis of theory and practice*. (pp23-36). UK: Open University Press.
- Parker, I. (1999b). Deconstruction and psychotherapy. In I. Parker (Ed.), *Deconstructing psychotherapy* (pp1-18). London: Sage.
- Parker, I. & Shotter, J. (Eds.). (1990). *Deconstructing social psychology*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Parker, I., Georgaca, E., Harper, D., McLaughlin, T., & Stowell-Smith, M. (1995). *Deconstructing psychopathology*. London: Sage.
- Parry, A. (1991). A universe of stories. *Family Process*, 37-53.
- Pepper, S. (1942). *World hypotheses*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Pilgrim, D. (1996). British psychotherapy in context. In W. Dryden, (Ed.), *Handbook of individual therapy* (pp1-18). London: Sage.
- Potter, J. and Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: Sage.
- Prior, L. (1993). *The social organisation of mental illness*. London: Sage.
- Radley, A. (1998). Displays and fragments: Embodiment and the configuration of social worlds. In H.J. Stam (Ed.), *The body and psychology* (pp13-29). London: Sage.
- Reed-Danahay, D.E. (1997). (Ed.), *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the self and the social*. Oxford: Berg.

- Reich, W. (1970). *The function of the orgasm*. New York: Farrar, Strauss.
- Reich, W. (1972). *Character analysis*. New York: Farrar, Strauss.
- Ricoeur, P. (1981). *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Riessman, C.K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Robinson, J.A. & Hawpe, L. (1986). Narrative thinking as an heuristic process. In T.R. Sarbin (Ed.), *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct* (pp111-128). USA: Praeger.
- Rose, N. (1990). *Governing the soul: The shaping of the private self*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power, and personhood*. USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Russell, B. (1948). *History of western philosophy and its connection with political and social circumstances from the earliest times to the present day*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
- Sampson, E.E. (1983). Deconstructing psychology's subject. *Journal of Mind and Behaviour*, 4, 135-64.
- Sampson, E.E. (1988). The deconstruction of self. In J. Shotter and K. Gergen (Eds.), *Texts of identity* (pp1-19). London: Sage.
- Sampson, E.E. (1998). Establishing embodiment in psychology. In H.J. Stam (Ed.) *The body and psychology* (pp30-53). London: Sage.
- Sarbin, T.R. (1977). Contextualism: A world view for modern psychology. In A.W. Landfield (Ed.), *1976 Nebraska symposium on motivation* (pp1-41). Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Sarbin, T. R. (Ed.) (1986). *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*. New York: Praeger.
- Sarbin, T.R. (1994). Steps to the Narratory Principle: An autobiographical essay. In D. John Lee (Ed.), *Life and story: Autobiographies for a narrative psychology* (pp7-38). USA: Praeger.
- Sass, L. (1987). Schreber's panopticism: Psychosis and the modern soul. *Social research*, 54, 101-145.

- Schnitzer, P.K. (1996). "They don't come in!": Stories told, lessons taught about poor families in therapy. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 66, 572-582.
- Schrag, C.O. (1997) *The self after postmodernity*. USA: Yale University Press.
- Segal, H. (1964). *Introduction to the work of Melanie Klein*. London: Heinemann.
- Shotter, J. (1989). Social accountability and the social construction of 'you'. In J. Shotter and K. Gergen (Eds.), *Texts of identity* (pp133-151). London: Sage.
- Shotter, J. and Gergen, K. (Eds.). (1989). *Texts of identity*. London: Sage.
- Sidelines. (2000), August. Auckland Family Counselling & Psychotherapy Centre Newsletter [Brochure].
- Smith, D. (1997). 'Comment of Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited', *Signs*, 22 , (2), 392-8.
- Spence, D.P. (1994). The Orpheus legend and its surprising transformations. In D. John Lee (Ed.), *Life and story: Autobiographies for a narrative psychology* (pp109-124). USA: Praeger.
- Stam, H.J. (1998). *The body and psychology*. London: Sage.
- Stancombe, J. and White, S. (1998). Psychotherapy without foundations? Hermeneutics, discourse and the end of certainty. *Theory & Psychology*, 8, 579-599.
- Stern, D. (1975). *The first relationship: infant and mother*. London: Open Books.
- Stern, D.N. (1985). *The interpersonal world of the infant: A view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Stroebe, M., Gergen, M.M., Gergen, K.J., and Stroebe, W. (1992). Broken hearts or broken bonds: Love and death in historical perspective. *American Psychologist*, 47, 1205-1212.
- Szasz, T. (1979). *The myth of psychotherapy: Mental healing as religion, rhetoric, and repression*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Tavris, C. (1992). *The mismeasure of woman*. New York: Simon & Shuster.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Telecom New Zealand Yellow Pages. (2000). Manawatu, New Zealand.
- Terwee, S.J.S. (1995). Deconstructing social constructionism. In I. Lubek, R. van Hezewijk, G. Pheterson, C.W. Tolman (Eds.) *Trends and issues in theoretical psychology* (188-195). USA: Springer Publishing Company.
- Tomm, K. (1990). A critique of the DSM. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*, 3, pp5-8.

- Toren, C. (1996). Ethnography: theoretical background. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods for psychology and the social sciences*. UK: BPS Books.
- Touraine, A. (1995). Ego, self, and subject. In I. Lubek, R. van Hezewijk, G. Pheterson, C.W. Tolman (Eds.), *Trends and issues in theoretical psychology* (pp3-16). USA: Springer Publishing Company.
- Tschuggnall, K. (1999). Intertextuality and positioning in life narratives. In W. Maiers, B. Bayer, B. Duarte Esgalhado, R. Jorna, & E Schraube (Eds.), *Challenges to theoretical psychology* (pp214-219). Ontario, Canada: Captus University Publications.
- Tudor, L.E. and Tudor, K. (1994). The personal and the political: Power, authority and influence in psychotherapy. In P. Clarkson & M. Pokorny (Eds.), *The handbook of psychotherapy* (pp384-402). London/New York: Routledge.
- Tuffin, K., Morgan, M., Frewin, K., Jardine, A. (2000). Economic rationalism in action. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 29, 30-36.
- Van Der Kolk, B. A. (1997). *The psychobiology of post traumatic states*. Presented at the 1997 New Zealand Psychological Society Annual Conference, Massey University, New Zealand.
- Van Der Kolk, B.A., McFarlane, A.C. & Weisaeth, L. (1996). (Eds.). *Traumatic stress: The effects of overwhelming experience on mind, body and society*. New York, Guilford Press.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Waldegrave, C.T. (1990). Just therapy. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*. 1, 5-46.
- Walkerdine, V. (1981). 'Sex, power and pedagogy'. *Screen Education*, 38, 14-24.
- Walrond-Skinner, S. (1986). *A dictionary of psychotherapy*. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and post-structuralist theory*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Wertz, F. (1987). Cognitive psychology and the understanding of perception. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 18, 103-142.
- Wetherell, M. (1986). Linguistic repertoires and literary criticism: New directions of the social psychology of gender. In S. Wilkinson (Ed.), *Feminist social psychology: Developing theory and practice* (pp77-96). Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

- Wetherell, M. & Maybin, J. (1996). The distributed self: A social constructionist perspective. In R. Stevens (Ed.), *Understanding the self* (pp219-280). London: Sage.
- Wetherell, M. and Potter, J. (1988). Discourse analysis and the identification of interpretative repertoires. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods* (pp168-183). London: Sage.
- Wetherell, M. and Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- White, M. (1995). *Re-authoring lives: Interviews & essays*. South Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.
- White, M. and Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Whiteley, C.H. (1977). *An introduction to metaphysics* (2nd ed.). UK: Harvester Press.
- Widdicombe, S. (1993). Autobiography and change: rhetoric and authenticity of 'Gothic' style. In E.Burman & I.Parker (Eds.), *Discourse analytic research: Repertoires and readings of texts in action* (pp94-13). London: Routledge.