POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES ON THE COUNSELLING PROCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ETHICAL DILEMMA

PETER CHURCHILL

POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVES ON THE COUNSELLING PROCESS IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ETHICAL DILEMMA.

By

Peter Churchill, B.A.

An internship report submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

Faculty of Education

Memorial University of Newfoundland

March 2004

St. John's Newfoundland

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the kind assistance and support of my academic supervisor, Dr. William Kennedy, and to the attention, kindness, and patience of Ms. Dorothy Joy in addressing my various administrative struggles.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Harlow Campus Trust overall, for a such a rewarding internship opportunity, and most particularly to Mrs. Betty Bethel and her staff for their assistance in securing research opportunities.

With regard to those research sites, I am grateful for the assistance of library staff at the Department of Experimental Psychology, Magdalen College, Cambridge; the Medical Library at the University of London; and the British National Library's Public Policy Collection.

Finally I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation for the assistance and support of my placement supervisor, Mrs. Marguerite Briggs, and her colleague Mr. David Tune, for their constant support and advice, and for their generosity in creating opportunities for professional growth, which has led to so many rewards in the ensuing years.

ABSTRACT

This internship report discusses the impact of postmodern thought on the counselling process, and some of its implications for ethics, theory, and practice. Postmodern thought rejects the dominant modernist paradigms of empiricism and of universal codes or meta-narratives. It challenges the objectivity of the diagnosing clinician, arguing that the practitioner decides what may qualify as significant in advance of the client's particular story. Client and their stories are interpreted as Texts; client and counsellor variously share the roles of Author and Reader in a collaborative process of disclosing or creating meaning. It is argued that this is undermined in traditional practice by the notion of therapeutic distance or professional boundaries, which describe and quantify power relationships. Postmodern thought is sufficiently congruent with certain counselling models that some writers have challenged its contributions and even its novelty. In particular, it emphasizes epistemological and ethical reasons for the counselling process to be respectful, collaborative, and non-hierarchical with regard to perceived power relationships. The report goes on to discuss, from a process perspective, the author's lived experience of an ethical dilemma as a novice counsellor. The author was faced with a conflict between various ethical directives in terms of how to address the problem; in addition, actual theoretical models appeared to diverge in their interpretation of whether the challenge existed within the purview of the counsellor or outside it. Arising from this is a discussion of the dilemma as consistent with modernist codes of practice. These codes appear to have certain blind spots. While literature exists that documents and quantifies violations of professional codes, there appear to be few fora in while ethical struggles may be discussed. Gender issues may impact this as well, as traditional roles appear to limit support and dialogue. The author was not able to access appropriate guidance or discussion to address this dilemma, in counselling literature or through peer consultation; it is not clear that plans for addressing such issues had been developed, or a need identified. This may suggest a vestigial modernist theme in how counsellor evaluate, characterize, and address their own struggles. One perspective on postmodern ethics suggests that self-examination is an appropriate ethical tool and stance, as opposed to a modernist adherence to any universal moral code.

PART ONE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Chapter One: Definitions

a. What is Postmodernism?

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (1995) defines 'postmodern' as:

> "...relating to a complex set of reactions to modern philosophy and its presuppositions, rather than to any agreement on substantive doctrines or philosophical questions. Despite there being little agreement on what the presuppositions of modern philosophy are, and despite the disagreement on which philosophers exemplify these presuppositions, postmodern philosophy typically opposes foundationalism, essentialism, and realism." (pp. 634-5).

It is useful, therefore, to consider that some have chosen to characterize postmodern thought as not so much a reaction to modernism, but rather a collection of what has been rejected by, or lost due to, the development of modernist philosophy.

b. Features of the Modern

What, then, is understood by the 'modernism' that is preceded, eclipsed, or rejected? In the daily context of my work in counselling, assessment, or teaching, I have tended to equate the modern – in a no doubt inexcusably reductionist manner – with the 'medical model' which defined most of psychological practice through the 1950's, and which arguably continues to represent the strongest influence in most areas of counselling practice today. When I speak of this 'medical model', I mean a tendency to understand psychological diagnosis and treatment as prescriptive and even perfunctory, involving an emphasis on assessment criteria and more importantly a clear professional boundary between patient and practitioner. In this relationship it is understood that virtually all power, knowledge, and expertise rest with the counsellor. The counsellor has the license to define the relationship, as well as the clients' various concerns or difficulties. The practitioner is ultimately answerable to local and larger bodies which exert a similar

power over her or his practice, and which are broadly reactionary. I must clarify that I am not aware that any practitioners, professional organizations, or licensing bodies can be fairly described in the foregoing terms; I regard this rather as the specter of modernism which may at times emerge in our attitudes. In diagnosis there is perhaps an implicit suspension of any doubt in our own terms, observations, and insights, the tools with which we have equipped ourselves, and the fidelity to reality of the empirical model itself.

The Literacy Dictionary (Harris & Hodges, 1995) defines modernism as "an artistic and literary movement culminating in post-World War I Europe, the United States, and Canada that discovers or creates alternatives to Western values". It is described as emphasizing 'novelty' and 'experiment'. Modernism itself is properly used in the artistic or literary sense to include a variety of movements, such as Symbolism, Expressionism, and Surrealism, which were themselves characterized by their rejection of earlier, primarily 19th-century, systems of valuation and interpretation. (Baldick, 1995, p. 140). Jurgen Habermas characterized it thus:

> "The epochal new beginning that marked the modern's world's break with the world of the Christian Middle Ages and antiquity is repeated, as it were, in every present moment that brings forth something new. The present perpetuates the break with the past in the form of a continual renewal," (Habermas, 1989, p. 48).

c. Features of the Postmodern

I will review briefly some of the largely accepted key features of postmodernism, with a view to giving the reader some sense of the implications of a postmodern stance. It may become quickly clear that the attitude of postmodern analysis is to resist definitions and characterizations in general (Baldick, 1995, p. 174) – therefore to define it through terms rather than processes or emerging dialogues is itself problematic,

contradictory, and modernist. As one dictionary observes, "Besides, post-modernism is still happening. When something else develops from it or instead of it, it will, perhaps, be easier to identify, describe, and classify." (Cuddon, 1977, pp. 733-4). Adopting the example of others (Audi, 1995, & Rosenau, 1992), therefore, I will attempt not to define postmodernism, but to delineate what it is not.

Postmodernism is anti-epistemological (Rosenau, 1992, pp. xiii-xiv). In other words, it rejects knowledge as an abstract field of study, where its origins, limits, and fundamental nature are investigated as abstractions (such as the conflict between induction and deduction as ways of knowing). In lieu of this, it regards knowledge as emergent consent, an inter-subjective process, so that 'knowledge' as an abstraction is rejected in favour of 'knowing' some one thing in a specific context.

Postmodernism is anti-essentialist (Audi, 1995, p. 635). Objects and ideas do not have an absolute or inherent nature or meaning. No quality is a necessary component of a given subject; in philosophical terms, properties are accidental rather than essential. All nature, all meaning are evolving products of context. The corollary of this is that meaning is reduced to message; images and communications are literally superficial: existing only on the surface.

Postmodernism is anti-realist (Audi, 1995, p. 635). It opposes the notion that qualities such as blueness or fairness exist exclusive of given things that are blue or fair. In philosophical terms, this stance that only particulars exist is called nominalism, and its implications are sweeping. For example, it can be taken to mean for the purposes of counselling that there is no such thing as 'depression', there is rather only a set of individuals who are depressed.

Postmodernism is anti-foundationalist (Audi, 1995, p. 635; Rosenau, 1992, p. xi). The meanings of events or statements are subjective. While said events or statements are real – *all* of them – they can't be described or evaluated in any language that all reasonable subjects would accept.

Postmodernism rejects knowledge as reflective of reality (Audi, 1995, p. 634).

Postmodernism rejects truth as reflective of reality (Audi, 1995, p. 634).

Postmodernism rejects sweeping or all-inclusive categories, narratives, and systems (Rosenau, 1992, pp. xii-xiii).

Postmodernism rejects being characterized as relativistic, skeptical, or nihilistic (Audi, 1995, p. 634).

Postmodernism is ironic. That is to say, language and images used in post-modern discourse tend to be employed in senses which have double (or multiple) signifying power, or one signifier and two (or more) signifieds (Hutcheon, 1992, p.32). This is a conventional definition of verbal irony, "literally saying one this and figuratively meaning the opposite" (Sperber & Wilson, 1981, p. 295). This ironic stance is calculated to undermine the Reader's sense of complacency or uncritical certainty:

> "it is a self-conscious mode that senses the failure of all sophisticated conceptualizations; stylistically, it employs rhetorical devices that signal real or feigned disbelief on the part of the author toward the truth of his own statements …" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 13).

Irony's stance of feigned disbelief, and its reliance on the critical stance of the Reader, is ideologically consistent with Lyotard's definition of the "postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Fredric Jameson puts the matter more succinctly; it is "an imitation that mocks the original" (Jameson, 1983, p. 113).

These are among the more common descriptions and criticisms of the postmodern stance. While it is not intended that this report wander into the deeper landscape of critical theory or late 20th-century philosophy, imperfectly understood by this writer in any event, it is perhaps useful to discuss this equation of post-modernism with post-structuralism. "It also refers to a critical position in criticism, in which a complete relativism exists – hence its proximity to post-structuralism." (Cuddon, 1977, p.734). Though distinctions may be made in terms of their emphases on culture versus language, respectively, or on re-imagining empiricism versus rejecting it (Rosenau, 1992, p. 3n), both movements advocate deconstruction, both movements claim Foucault, Lyotard, and Lacan (Baldick, 1990, p. 175). Part of the apparently solid basis for these allegations of consonance is the postmodern rejection of the structuralist concepts of signifier and signified (Eagleton, 1983): as defined by Saussure, these terms suggest that meaning in communication is identifiable, and has direction (Cuddon, 1977, p. 735). The post-structuralists and postmodernists appear to agree that this is rather a dynamic tension, an ongoing, organic and multi-voiced process in which evolving meaning may be located but not defined (Baudrillard, 1980).

It is perhaps unsurprising that gender issues should emerge in a postmodern analysis of process research. Postmodern thought has been linked to feminist theory and gender theory; in an attempt to apply rational criteria and criticisms to unfamiliar situations, one is confronted with the notion that even 'reason' as commonly understood may be engendered, patriarchal, and optional (Audi, 1995, p. 634). In addition to its relation to or inclusion of feminist criticism, discussed later, it is argued that the rise of Marxist and

psychoanalytic criticism are aspects of postmodernism's influence (Cuddon, 1977, p. 734).

The post-modern has variant and at times precise meanings in the different branches of artistic, philosophical, or generally creative endeavour where it was first discussed. In the visual arts and architecture, it encompasses the use of multiple voices and styles, disconnected images, and representational forms, rather than traditional, geometric, or thematic forms. In literature it resists such delineation. It celebrates and reflects the chaos of contemporary consumer culture, and rejects the inclination to discern or impose pattern, theme, or meaning on the presentations of said culture – Jameson states that it is in fact "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson, 1984, p. 52). It derides interpretation as reductionist and arbitrary; an *a posteriori*, ideologically grounded set of inferences about meaning. In place of this, it substitutes a collection or succession of disparate contemporary or nostalgic images or styles, to be regarded with a species of facile, amused detachment.

That anti-epistemological stance becomes critical to an understanding of counselling process. We do not, it appears to suggest, know the subject/client in any abstract way; we merely collaborate with them towards consensus on the meaning and significance of a communication (Frosh, 1995).

In my own reading it has appeared that insofar as post-modernism is philosophical and abstract, it might have little application in shaping many areas of traditional therapeutic research – i.e. the efficacy of various models or interventions on various populations, or efforts to better characterize the presentation of given treatment concerns. Conversely, I am persuaded that it has enormous potential in process research and in

actual practice, as it adjures us to interact with each client where they are at, in terms of their uniqueness.

It is not the world or its properties but the vocabularies by which we name them that are socially constructed - fashioned by human beings - which is why our understanding of those properties is continually changing. (Fish, 1996).

2. Chapter Two: Themes

a. Why Postmodernism?

There appears to have been some manner of recent imperative that postmodernism should be a subject for consideration by each field that does not wish to be dismissed as anachronistic or obsolete. Its apparent comfort with popular culture may be a cornerstone of this. The images and references that hold currency are confusing and disconnected, and they are presented, permutated, and discarded at bewildering speed. Consequently we may feel that, if we cannot encompass them in scholarship (whether our field has a social grounding or mandate, or not), it is an admission of perplexity - the prelude to a senile decline in which our dusty subject moseys along behind the world at a remove that comes to be measured in generations.

Some of the reasons for this imperative may be self-evident. Postmodernists reference and celebrate popular culture, which seems to suggest not only that they understand it, but also that they discern some depth or value in it we have been wont to overlook. Implicitly, if we employ the postmodernist as a sort of native guide, we will be able to speak about the world of the moment.

Conversely, the postmodern stance is not merely a lens which may clarify present culture; it is the lens through which that culture may perceive and characterize us. Postmodern criticism represents in part an analysis of entrenched power structures and of the modes of knowing which support them. When this critical tool is turned on us, one might say that the world is analyzing psychology as psychology has analyzed the world. We may perhaps be pardoned if we wish to vindicate ourselves in the face of this criticism. In such encounters with postmodernism or any other school of deconstruction,

there is an implied threat that we must utilize it or shatter it, and that if we fail to do either, we will neither be able to claim understanding of the present world, nor relevance to it. We may try to represent our discipline as validated by its criteria, or we may try to represent its criteria as refuted by our discipline.

One may accept from the body of literature (Eco, 1986; Featherstone, 1988a; Habermas, 1989; Jameson, 1983; Jameson, 1984; Kellner, 1988; Kellner, 1989; Lyotard, 1984; Poster, 1988) that the postmodern has asserted its existence, its importance, in such a manner that each discipline of scholarship acknowledges a call to weigh its claims, whether to integrate, refute, or merely attempt better to characterize them. There are a number of considerations that arise from these cautious but often-passionate encounters.

The first debate the postmodern appears to invite is the conundrum of how it may be characterized in relation to each discipline. It may be relevant to the subject matter of a discipline, as in literature, or to the structure or practice of the discipline itself, as in Sociology (Bauman, 1988; Featherstone, 1988b; Lash, 1990; Rosenau, 1992). Its relevance may be simply open to question. It appears most commonly to be regarded as primarily an alternative way for a discipline to view or characterize itself, with the implication that this may in some fashion presage a renewal (Jameson, 1984; Rosenau, 1992).

Hard on the heels of this is whether something that may be best understood negatively, i.e. in terms of what it is not, can promise any real contribution of depth, growth, or direction to a discipline. As will be discussed in slightly more depth, authors and critics are in far from perfect agreement as to what postmodernism is (Rosenau, 1992). This is at least in part due to its having emerged and evolved in widely different

fields, each of which may have reacted against modernism in unique ways (Audi, 1995; Jameson, 1983). Another factor is that it is a theoretical stance predicated on deconstruction, and on an acceptance of subjective and multiple interpretations and therefore cannot support the notion of definition (Derrida 1981; Dews 1987). In this sense, it is better described as a process or a tool rather than as a school of thought (Kamug, 1991). That being the case, it is inevitable to question whether it can direct study and practice in a field, or whether it will only be able to attack, fragment, or undermine it (Rosenau, 1992).

Related to these questions of definition is one which is perhaps more exactly a matter of delineation: disciplines appear to debate not only the internal merits and perils of the postmodern stance, but the extent to which they deserve to be accorded an independent existence. In other words, to use psychology as a case in point, is postmodernism something which has arrived long after the themes, theories and practices of psychology have become established, even rigid, paradigms (Frosh, 1995; Brennan, 1995)? Or is it a pre-existing truth, an ancient theme usurped and neglected by rationalism, yet ultimately needed to give birth to larger dialogues as the old ones decay and crumble?

The argument might proceed something like this: rationalism and empirical method are paradigms which do not perfectly explain all the phenomena in our experience. We accept that paradigms are constructed, and depend on consensus, and further that they may become rigid and resistant to valid challenges. This would be a flaw, as the rationalist paradigm might be incomplete, yet unwilling to evolve to counter its limitations (Kuhn, 1962). Now, positing all of this, we recognize that the rationalist paradigm is temporary entrenched, or located in time. Other paradigms existed before it.

Other paradigms may come into existence after it. And that may in fact be happening now.

The postmodern view claims to differ from rationalist, definition-seeking perspectives on the world. Where, then, is the postmodern view located in time? Accepting for the sake of this argument that rationalism has hit a wall, one response may be to return to earlier paradigms which rationalism supplanted and rejected, and investigate whether they can facilitate a more successful exploration of our experience. This equates the postmodern with the primitive, the pre-rational (Lyotard, 1984). The alternative response is to infer that the postmodern view is located after rationalism, and is entirely and necessarily a product of a multifaceted, media-saturated, rapidly evolving, noisy, messy, multicultural world (Baudrillard, 1980; Jameson, 1984).

Finally, can the postmodern body of criticism claim with any legitimacy to exist outside of common practice? For example, in many fields, a common observed response has been to equate aspects of the postmodern with current, recent or ancient practices, and to therefore reply in some sense, 'Our discipline does not require the surgery (radical, emergency, or merely cosmetic) which the postmodern movements seem to promulgate; we have been engaged in similar practices for some time,' (Brennan, 1995; Frosh, 1995; Murphy, 1989).

Let us take the example of Physics. Postmodern criticism might say that physical data are filtered through the senses, and interpreted in a manner which is deeply contingent on the attitudes, assumptions, and culture of the observer; observations are therefore subjective and suspect (Baudrillard, 1980; Jameson, 1984; Kamug, 1991; Rosenau, 1992). The difficulty is that Physics itself made and accepted this point (vide

Heisenberg) several decades before the earliest appearance of identified Postmodern thought (Lightman, 2000). A Physicist might then say with some weight that postmodern criticism, far from undermining accepted theories in Physics, is simply a product of them. This presents a conundrum, as the postmodernist in turn might counter that physicists behave and talk as though uncertainty is a specific phenomenon within Science, whereas a more rigorous application of its implications might call into question the entire field (Brennan, 1995).

At last arises the problem of what to do with the creature. Of those who have commented on the postmodern from within the therapeutic disciplines (Hanes, 1996; Roffey, 1993; Safran & Messer, 1997), some have determined to rise to a perceived demand to discard aspects of the discipline to participate in a new dialogue (Brennan, 1995; Murphy, 1989), while others have maintained that the postmodern is ultimately nihilistic at best, nebulous at worst (Frosh, 1995).

b. Rejection of Dualism

One of the most central characterizations of postmodern criticism is that it opposes those overarching, abstract schema which have been constructed (or possibly, let us say, revealed or inferred) to codify and explain some significant arena of experience Lyotard, 1984; Rosenau, 1992). These would include, but not be limited to, such dominant monoliths as metaphysics, science, and religion. Both those great systems themselves, and the aspects of thinking that desire to create and explore them, are rejected as mechanisms of control (Lash, 1990). It is argued that these systems are imposed on experience rather than derived from it. They dictate reality rather than describing it, and impose the illusion of consensus when in fact our experience may be as aptly understood through diversity (Jameson 1984; Lyotard 1984). These great paradigms, so vastly conceived and so minutely detailed, are not ultimately comprehensive (Baudrillard, 1980). Consequently their claim to reflect and explain our experience of reality is rejected (Kamug, 1991).

Postmodernists denote these systems for describing and defining our experiences as metanarratives (Lyotard 1984; Poster 1988), literally 'after-stories', great stories about the world which rest on a supposition of dualism (Murphy, p.61). The Philosophical Dictionary (http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/index.htm) defines dualism as "the belief that mental things and physical things are fundamentally different kinds of entities". Dualism reflects a strength in the western scientific tradition, an intuition of cause and effect which has fueled us in interpreting our environment, manipulating it, and improving on it through invention (Brennan, 1995). This is at the root of the dominance

of our species, and more narrowly of its western culture; it is perhaps grimly unsurprising that there is a certain territorial pride over the rewards of this world-view.

This pride remained largely vigorous and secure, Brennan (1995) argues, until a predominantly German-driven philosophical tradition led to a series of predominantly German-driven wars. The Great Western Analytic Tradition, from Kant to Wittgenstein was culminated and immolated in two World Wars. Distressingly, these were the natural fruit of it, marvels of scientific advancement and cultural hegemony. "Philosophers reacted both to the failure of their tradition to safeguard civilization and truth, and to the complicity of science and philosophy in the horrors of both wars." (p. 100).

The theme of dualism has appeared in some form in western thought since Plato's conception of the Realm of Ideas, separate from this transient material world. The Realm of Ideas provided a kind of unity for intellectual experience, as abstract concepts, seen to resemble each other in kind, required a common basis. Murphy (1989) expresses the case with greater wariness: "Western philosophy has been haunted by the promise of apodictic knowledge. Some sort of absolute foundation has been sought traditionally to give meaning to everyday events." (p. 61).

This thirst for apodictic knowledge, the author elaborates, is in conflict with the tenet that we, as creatures confines by our senses and bound by our flawed material forms, cannot transcend our individual biases of perception. Supposing it to be the case that pure and objective truths exist, can we somehow set aside limitation and bias to apprehend them clearly? How can subjective beings have unsullied access to objective truths, or even have access to a certain knowledge of their existence? This in itself is a core argument of the postmodernists (Murphy, 1989).

The rationalist response is that an impartial medium or tool could bridge the gap. Here enters the role of theology, metaphysics, and ultimately science. Again for argument's sake let us be specific, take the example of psychology. Psychological experiment or the therapeutic distance practiced in a counselling session, the critics might parry, are simply ways of gathering, organizing, and presenting data. They are constrained by our subjectivity as practitioners (Safran & Messer, 1997). We gather data we have already arbitrarily declared to be relevant. We organize incidents it in terms of a determined pattern, which may not have reference to how we find them. And finally we exercise rhetoric, and the social weight of our expert voice, to coerce acceptance of our arguments as reflecting a greater, objective, reality.

c. Language Games: Author, Reader, and Text

Through each of these stages, our engagement with our participants or clients is permeated with the medium of thought and communication: language. The postmodern emphasis on the role of language appears to have been developed to subtle and arcane extremes, often employing the creation of new words, or the unorthodox application of existing terms, heightening a sense of mystery and distance from the familiar. Ultimately, their arguments appear to be grounded in a pre-Socratic conception of language, where the term and its referent are not distinguished. In Socratic thought words are treated as referring to the abstract concept, which exists as it were 'behind' the thing denoted. But the Sophists appear to have regarded wordplay as a trade rather than a calling, and appear to have made no distinction between persuasive rhetoric and manipulation of actual objects or phenomena (Kitto, 1991). This introduces a point that may initially appear subtle: reality, knowledge, and truth are not objective or absolute (Lyotard, 1984; Kamug, 1991). They exist only as products of language; one explores a specific phenomenon, grounded in one's own context, characterized through one's own exercise of rhetoric. This is not 'mere' subjectivity, but the equal of all other 'truths', as no clearer or higher path actually exists (Rosenau, 1992).

In literary criticism - the milieu in which much of the language of postmodernism is grounded - the debate which dominated the 20th century concerned whether meaning was located with the Author, the Reader, or the Text (Eagleton, 1983).

If meaning is located with the Author, the argument goes, it is possible to get a poem 'wrong' – the Author knows what it means, and why it was written, and may correct the critic. This school of thought gave rise to the practice of examining an Author's life and

times in minute biographical detail, the better to make inferences regarding the context of her or his intent. This, it was reasoned, would allow the critic to approximate the 'true' meaning if the Author's work. Among the difficulties this presents are the notions that multiple interpretations of a work cannot be valid, that a work cannot have deeper or more complex meanings than the author intends at its creation, and that the intent of a deceased or merely uncommunicative author must always be in doubt.

If meaning was located with the Reader, on the other hand, meaning is located with each subject, and is uncovered through his or her interaction with the text. In such a case meaning and truth become synonymous with interpretation. This is an uncomfortable position for the scholar. It presents the problem that a Reader could ignore an Author's own notes, or contradict the Author's interpretation of her or his own work. Perhaps even more significant, all interpretations with some reasonably defensible basis might be equally valid. A multiplicity of interpretations might exist, none usurping or refuting the other.

The notion of meaning located exclusively in the text was problematic. Textual criticism has been a practice of narrow analysis of content, and is often concerned with the book as a physical object and the search for the most original or authoritative version of a Text.

Borrowing presumably in spite of themselves from the practice of Hegel, the postmodernists attempt to move from thesis and antithesis to synthesis, maintaining that all rather than none of the foregoing are true.

In his most famous essay, Is there a text in this class? (1980), the anti-foundationalist Stanley Fish elucidates this argument and its implications. He describes a student

approaching him asking whether there is a text in his class; Fish replied in the affirmative and referred the student to the syllabus and the bookstore. The student clarified that having just taken a course in critical theory, they were trying to anticipate Fish's views on whether meaning resides with the author. Fish relates laughingly replying in the negative, as it had been possible for him to misunderstand the student's question – therefore the meaning of words can be unstable between author and reader. In other words, Yes, there is a text in the sense that he has provided a syllabus. And conversely, No, Text cannot exist as an abstract artifact or locus of meaning, since variant interpretations are possible in language. And yet finally, Yes, there is a Text, in the sense that each set of interactions between Reader and Author represents a genuine engagement in which meaning may be located within language and situated in place, person, and time (Fish, 1980).

"Postmodernists," Murphy (1989) states, "are fond of comparing the social world to a text." (p.63). By consensus between an Author and various Readers, the text is admitted to exist. The question of its truth or meaning is then a matter for interaction. It may begin as what is understood by the Author, but each Reader engages in a separate interaction with the Author. In consequence, there is a succession of interpretations, but each one if rigorous will be an engagement by the reader in the author's world, not a unilateral imposition of meaning. Of these interpretations, none can be definitive or enduring – these are not real qualities of 'facts' or 'observations'.

To return to the example of counselling, the client may make statements or displays behaviours. These have a meaning for the client at the time, but they also have an independent existence, as demonstrated by the fact that the counsellor sees them, and

may interpret them independently of the client's awareness or intent. Through this engagement by the counsellor, the language creations (verbal or not) of the client may be interpreted. These interpretations are mutable; different counsellors may engage and interpret differently. This may even be true of the same counsellor at different times, or when applying different theoretical models (Safran & Messer, 1997).

This is not to suggest, Murphy (1989) argues, that interpretation is to be discredited or eschewed (p.65). It is the prescriptive and pathologizing process of diagnosis that is suspect.

One basis of the counsellor's role may be to identify and mediate dissonance between the client and the perceived norms or rules of society; the client may be in a state of external conflict with these norms, or may be at odds with them internally insofar as they do not support other of the client's needs. This conceptualization of counselling draws upon the textual themes discussed earlier. Social norms are obviously socially constructed; they are perhaps less obviously linguistic artifacts, the imposition of which is a kind of social control or power game (Jameson, 1983). When individuals diverge from these norms, a state of conflict becomes apparent between two languages: that of reality as rhetorical construct or social consensus, and that of the divergent individual (Murphy, 1989).

A prevalent theme in postmodern thought is that language is the basis not only of thought and interaction, but of perception and interpretation. It is frequently asserted that reality is socially constructed, and that social constructs and interaction are grounded in language games (Poster, 1988). The world itself, as well as each of the objects and phenomena in it, is described as a text. It is perhaps worth exploring the basis of this

assertion briefly, as so much of postmodern argument rests upon it. Let us postulate that our naïve observations are filtered, interpreted, and delineated through cognition, and further that this cognition is largely a process of manipulating symbols or icons which represent objects, events, or concepts (Kamug, 1991). At this point interpretation supercedes observation; meaning is imposed once the observer decides how to characterize the observed. This does not suppose that we think only through the medium of language, but rather that we cannot describe or interpret without employing it. It is worth observing that the Greek word *Logos* means both "word" and "reason". In pre-Socratic thought it denoted the unifying order of existence, while to the Sophists mentioned earlier it was identified with debates and their topics (Pickett, 2000). These usages appear to prefigure the arguments of postmodern criticism, and may provide some foundation for an argument that it does not derive from peculiarly contemporary themes; one may speculate that it is a current recapitulation of some of western thoughts earliest insights.

Taken to its extreme, the equation of postmodernism with language games may tend to break down; it has been credited with implying that language is an inadequate medium for reflecting experience (Frosh, 1995). Its adherents appear to counter that it is rather the only adequate medium, and that its detractors are attempting to imply that some higher codifying system exists – in effect, some metanarrative.

Linked to this is the assertion that postmodernism rejects causality. This argument is of course in no way peculiar to it; David Hume (1999) made this the cornerstone of his empirical philosophy in the mid-18th century. The postmodern contribution appears rather to be in its rendering of the search for causality as a circular exercise.

Interpretation is argued to work within the rules of a field so exclusively that its product is simply a kind of renaming, a rhetorical artifact.

> "Baudrillard's argument has been seminal for postmodernist theorists of this persuasion. He claims that interpretation is by nature mistaken, that 'getting beyond appearances' is an impossible task, because every approach that attempts to do this – including psychoanalytic and other depth-psychological approaches – becomes seduced by its own terms, forms and appearances, until it becomes a kind of play on words, a set of investigations devoted not to uncovering 'truth', but to persuading, deceiving or flattering others." (Frosh, 1995, p. 181).

This can be disturbing stuff. Surely, some have argued, if we reject causality and interpretation, everything becomes similarly meaningless. Postmodernists are known to counter that everything rather becomes similarly laden with meaning, but this would appear to amount to the same thing. The flaw here is the supposition that the postmodernist pretends to objectivity or impartiality. One is not expected to treat one's own perceptions and stories as merely arbitrary, or the equal of all others; naturally one's own stories are those most prized. The catch is simply proceeding in the acceptance that others will feel the same about their separate worlds (Fish, 2002).

It is not, in other words, that all stories are equal – better and more useful stories can be composed or collaborated on. It is rather that one may surrender the belief that they are required to be, or can be, true (Kamug, 1991).

This notion of better or more useful stories raises spectres of its own – how are they chosen? How are they evaluated? What quality in them, or faculty of the observing subject, can determine which are better? We are not permitted recourse to apodictic knowledge; this would be seeking shelter in essentialism. Again, the answer appears to be that we accept that these better or more useful stories are only relatively so, rather than absolutely so. They are deemed superior by the particular engaged subjects, at a given

time, in a specific place. It does not necessarily therefore follow that other subjects, in other times and places, will not concur.

> "Postmodernism is not, in this reading of things, a licence for superficiality, nor is it an invitation towards endless 'restorying'; it is rather an argument that all the words in the world can serve only to keep us apart, misperceiving each other in our narratives and storylines. Consequently, it is words, which are, literally, superficial." (Frosh, 1995, p. 188).

There is a certain problematic tendency to characterize modernism as everything that the world and we currently are, and postmodernism as a destination, an ideological rebellion against the modern. This gives rise to a litany of complaints, in which each element of postmodern criticism is asserted to be also in some sense a feature of modernist trends or phenomena. But postmodernism, rather than being a kind of formal antithesis to modernism, by which the former may be delineated and diminished, may simply be a means of describing what is problematic about modernity.

The art of the counsellor might be divided for the purposes of explanation into diagnosis and treatment. Diagnosis, it might be argued, can stand alone in the field of assessment, but in the larger work of counselling, treatment may be accepted as the goal of diagnosis. On the other hand, treatment, it must be stipulated, cannot usefully exist without some form of diagnosis, both to direct it or define its goals so therapy may begin, and to determine when those goals have been satisfactorily addressed so therapy may end. The role of diagnosis as an exercise in definition, however, would be rejected by the postmodern practitioner. It supposes that there can be an abstract metanarrative which defines norms such as health, and further that deviations from such norms would express themselves as one of a number of discrete categories. In an alternative formulation, the therapist's encounter with the client's behaviour is intended as an exploratory effort, a

mutual encounter to express the linguistic logic underlying the client's perceptions and actions. Because of this formulation, it is unsurprising that the narrative model of therapy has been among the most active in embracing postmodern thought.

In the narrative formulation of the counsellor's role, the counsellor does not have answers, but applies skills to assist the client in exploring alternative stories, and in reformulating their story in a way that is more satisfactory to both.

The client's reality as they present it, the rationale of their language, is to be regarded in context, and engaged respectfully. The postmodern practitioner would for example consider whether the client's plight might in fact be the product of political or economic factors (Murphy, 1989), or of censure or violence from any of a number of social institutions.

Practitioners are exhorted to surrender their role in social control, and instead to respect the client's identity, be flexible in the face of their resistance. The rules of interaction, and of describing behaviour, motive, or dysfunction, should be modelled on those used socially – counselling is understood simply as a skilled form of social interaction.

> "First, structural metaphors are inappropriate for describing social life. Norms are not outlined by roles, institutions, or other so-called natural phenomena. Second, deviance is not irrational, simply because the bounds of rationality that are typically recognized are transgressed. Even ostensibly bizarre behaviour is sustained by a linguistic world that has meaning. And third, intervention must not be directed at social systems, with the aim of reintegrating clients into society. Because reality is sustained linguistically, the realism suggested by the image of a system cannot be justified. Instead, intervention should be directed toward the world of experience that is created through language." (Murphy, 1989, pp. 65-66).

Some theorists appear to fear the implications of postmodernism for therapy, or at least to doubt its utility. It is accused of revelling in unreason, of merely deconstructing

and scrutinizing the limits of linguistic interaction (Frosh, 1995). Such a stance appears to align exclusively with so-called negative postmodernism, equating the postmodern with analysis explored to a nihilistic extreme – a charge often levied against Baudrillard (Eagleton, 1983). While a rigorous application, this is not the universal stance (Rosenau, 1992). The inclination to portray postmodern thought exclusively in this light appears to reflect a sense of foreboding, a belief that postmodernism has an objective of undermining counselling practice. This appears to be a rather exclusive and rationalist line of attack. Such predictions may be seen as a concomitant hazard of understanding postmodern thought through imitation rather than application. They are obviated if rather than attempting to emulate what postmodernism is, one elects to avoid what it is not. Attempts to apply its tenets will tend toward excess, and will tend to treat it as another species of rationalist metanarrative. But it does not appear to be a prescription for the destruction of fields of study or of social order. It is rather a gadfly to fields of study or institutions of social control which pretend to an impartial objectivity or an inherent ascendance. Though some adherents would naturally disagree, it is inherently a mode of thought that celebrates diversity. Choosing to represent postmodern thought in its most exclusive and negative formulation does not appear likely to be a valuable or informative line of inquiry, as its only contribution to other fields would be their censure or destruction. While it is not suggested that this branch of postmodern scholarship lacks weight, focussing on it appears to be a means by which authors such as Frosh (1995) seek to dismiss postmodern thought, equating the fringe with the whole.

Brennan (1995) links this to the dichotomy between theory and practice in psychology. Practitioners are believed to make limited or at least unsystematic and

eclectic use of theory, she argues, while theoreticians become distanced over time not merely from the reality of practice, but from all theories save those most resembling their own (p. 99). An expert, an old saying goes, is someone who knows more and more about less and less until he knows everything about nothing. This stereotype of the pedantic theorist appears to be a strong metaphor for what happens to the counsellor who, filled with the rush of love for psychology and science, and faith in rationalism and insight, stumbles into an encounter with a real person – a client.

The rarefied air of deconstructionist debate would appear to be both heady and comfortable for the theoretician, but an interesting consideration is raised. The theoretician may want postmodernism to be complete, to be cohesive, to have answers. The practitioner, by contrast, may be supposed to like its apparent permissiveness and flexibility. Conceptualized in these ways, it becomes a veil for their conflict, as apparent in the literature.

Notwithstanding the consonance between postmodern and pre-Socratic or Sophist thought, an argument can be made that contemporary attempts to apply postmodern thought to counselling are expressions of current academic fashion. The contributions of postmodern analysis, in terms of deconstruction and regard for multiple voices, can be found within the traditional practice of therapy (Frosh, 1995; Brennan, 1995).

d. The Other in Counselling

An acceptance of alternative voices and a respect for otherness can be located as well within traditional models and conceptions of counselling. The counselling relationship can be experienced as a kind of relativistic encounter, in which judgement is held in abeyance in favour of deeper consideration.

Freud is credited with recognizing the tension between juxtaposition of the fundamentally and enduringly alien nature of the other with the desire to characterize it, explore it, map it, and claim it in the name of sanity. This 'other', experienced first as the client and later as the client's unconscious processes, is regarded as ultimately indefinable (Frosh, 1995).

While this describes a receptivity to difference, it appears dubious that this may equate to the tolerance of multiple voices, or the rejection of metanarratives. Many other fields posit areas of inquiry which are alleged to be beyond human comprehension, or at the very least beyond our present abilities. Astronomy and particle physics have described their perennially frustrated search for a general unifying field theory, their exploration of chaos theory, and their endorsement of the uncertainty principle (Brennan, 1995). Theorists in artificial intelligence have questioned whether human minds can describe their own properties. Yet these fields ultimately adhere to metanarratives. Acceptance of ignorance, or complexity, or chaos remains ineluctably modernist as long as what is invoked is a single voice. Freud's caution and his acceptance of ambiguity were laudable, but they do not hold out the possibility that some people or cultures do not have an unconscious or its components, or that they have an alternate story of their psyche.

A difficulty arises when we say that because counselling is at times receptive of heterogeneity, it is as a whole defensible in the face of the postmodern incursion. Similarly, the negative extreme of deconstruction may be highlighted to argue the impracticability of the process itself. Both appear to treat therapy and postmodernism as discrete, proprietary terms, with the object of protecting counselling from close examination. Postmodernism is in the final analysis a school of interpretation. Attempts to shield counselling from its scrutiny end by making its point, that metanarratives cannot tolerate or include alternative voices.

The scientific metanarrative which permeates counselling theory and practise puts forth the notion of therapeutic distance. On the one hand, this is a practice intended to respect the difference of both practitioner and client, recognizing that their stories remain distinct, and that their senses of selfhood should not bleed each into other, or give way to imposition by the other. On the other hand, this sense of distance can be problematic when what is really meant is height – distance in a hierarchical power structure. That objectivity which is asserted to rely on distance is grounded in the notion that one party is impartial, and the other is not; consequently the former may judge, and the latter must acquiesce. That this is a necessary component of rationalism as embodied in science is far from clear. The arch-rationalist Spinoza characterized learning as a process of placing one's self within the unfamiliar to experience it from within, stating that learning was a process of incorporating new understandings so that they cease to be strange and fearsome (1989).

PART TWO: THE PRACTICUM

3. Chapter Three: Overview of Practicum Issues

There has been in very recent years an increase in interest in postmodern thought as it informs psychological research. With this corresponding attention has been given to the ways in which mainstream psychology is now seen to have failed to respond to the demands of ethics and social change. The dominant approach to ethical concerns has been to protect the practitioner by generating guidelines for behaviour. This has promoted a kind of literalism, such that practitioners are ill equipped to respond in an integrated and 'present' way to ethical dilemmas. Certifying bodies have typically derived ethical codes through surveys of the opinions of their members. These codes then come to have a prescriptive power, delineating which actions will result in censure or loss of certification.

While professional ethics have come to attract greater attention in the literature, this has not been paralleled by equal changes in counsellor education and training. Beginning counsellors receive little exposure to critical approaches to ethics and practice. The prevailing trend has been to inform them of the relevant codes, but not to train or prepare them for the lived reality of an ethical dilemma.

With the recent growth of attention to reflective practice and the counsellor's experience of counselling, the failure to develop and promote critical views of ethical practice can be perceived as a failure to allow authority and voice to the practitioner's direct experience of the special challenges of practice.

Of particular interest for the scope of this paper is the special range of issues and ethical concerns which face male counsellors. Male counsellors are not in the mainstream

of the profession, either in practice or in graduate programs. They tend still to be over-represented in publication and power, perhaps a result of traditional male role pressures to eschew the emotional demands of practice in favour of research, and the gender role mandate to professional 'ambition'. It is in no way my intent to imply that men have become marginalized in the profession. There may be gender role resistance to critical ethics and reflective practice, or simply under-representation in training. Whatever the agent, there are some practitioner concerns that are more particularly experienced by male counsellors, concerns which the literature has utterly failed to address, and which training has therefore overlooked.

Many ethical issues are not covered by current counsellor education practices. Mainstream practice itself is challenged by postmodern criticism to be open to a multiplicity of voices, of authorities. The gendered voice of the counsellor is likely to be marginalized, and inasmuch as ethical concerns are inadequately addressed this is particularly true of some issues experienced by the reflective practitioner. The intersection of the development of gender identity, postmodern ethics, and professional practice remain unexplored. Research in this area would both promote improved practice and facilitate more inclusive counsellor education (McGowen & Hart, 1990).

4. Chapter Four: Case History

a. Theoretical Background

During my Master's internship, I provided personal counselling to students of various ages at a small community college. My reflections in this paper are based on experience from this internship. During the course of my client work, I had set for myself an explicit mandate to examine carefully my biases. This included trying to understand the ways in which my training experience in particular and the conventions of counselling in general were shaping my perceptions and intentions within the counselling process.

Insofar as I had a means or tool toward this end it was an inclination for deconstruction which had emerged from readings in Habermas' Critical Theory as it related to literature. Insofar as I had an epistemological or hermeneutic stance it was an interest in phenomenology, which had emerged from exposure to Heidegger's and Husserl's descripitions of the nature of time and perception. This was widely divorced from the theories and practices I had been opposed to in my studies. It created, however, a kind of interior eye or reading for the more logocentric and mechanistic cognitive voice of my education, my experience of myself in the role of counsellor.

My academic and practicum supervision history at that point had included supervisors from three separate and relatively conventional therapeutic models; none of the three emphasized their eclecticism. Their interests, respectively, were the client-centered, cognitive-behavioural, and psychodynamic models, and so it was these I had been encouraged to familiarize myself with, and work within. The theoretical grounding informing this inquiry is drawn from recent discussions of the roles of postmodern thought in counselling.

Early in the internship I was confronted with the ethical, emotional, and therapeutic dilemma of a client who expressed social and romantic interest in me, naturally to the exclusion of the therapeutic process. Impacting on the ethical mandate to terminate therapy was the client's explicit request upon beginning with me that she not be referred elsewhere; she did not want to have to share her story too many times, even with me. I was torn between terminating therapy and 'working with' what I initially considered to be simple transference on her part. I came to feel more and more betrayed; I felt my training and the theoretical models I had been directed towards had failed to adequately prepare me for the emotional reality of the ethical dilemma. Ethics codes tend to espouse divergent but predominantly clear responses to the situation; the actual behaviour of professionals is a less clear and consistent guide. There is in traditional therapy, particularly in the dominant 'medical model', a certain myth of counsellor infallibility and invulnerability, which serves to mask a variety of abuses and indiscretions. As new theories and postmodern critiques emerge, the internal inconsistencies of the profession and practice of counselling are highlighted. Several aspects of the situation I found myself in became interesting to me from a 'theory of practice' standpoint.

In the first place, I was concerned that resources did not appear to be available to deal with the personal and emotional impact of the dilemma. I was discouraged from discussing or exploring the issue. My placement supervisor, another supervisor, and my peers declined to share insights or personal experiences, and seemed actively uncomfortable. In particular, I received cues that as a man it was both inappropriate for me to be in this situation, and inappropriate to discuss it. I have found nothing in the literature, then or since, that discusses the issue even peripherally; there is certainly

research on ethical codes and violations, and there is literature on the counselling process, but no discussion of the personal experience of problematic situations.

In the second place, I was conscious that the theories I had been taught or encouraged to use failed to address the reality of the situation. They are not associated with a body of process research. Psychodynamic theory and cognitive behavioural theory do not integrate the experience of the professional or the ethics of the profession in their conception of practice. Client-centered theory regards the emotional and ethical stance of the counsellor as inextricable from and essential to therapy, but as in psychodynamic theory the counsellor is described as either a simple mirror for the client or as a figure of great moral and emotional resilience. In other words, ethical and emotional dilemmas do not arise, as the counsellor is either so focussed on the client's issues or so well adjusted that there is no need for the professional to find support in the literature or from peers. Cognitive-behavioural theory is far more emotionally barren; in its delineation of the techniques for 'educating and retraining' clients, it seems not merely prescriptive but in fact faintly impatient. I felt caught between irreconcilable traditions.

b. The Client

The client, whom I will call N., was a single mother in her 30's with two young children. She presented issues surrounding past and present relationships with men. N. had recently experienced her second divorce, and expressed some confusion surrounding her ex-husband's continued emotional stake in her behaviour. Her 'ex' was a solitary and unexpressive individual who had initiated separation because of a stated wish for solitude and a discomfort with the emotional demands of the relationship. He preserved regular contact with her; N. felt that he didn't want her to become socially active, and was afraid of her meeting someone new.

Her meager external resources included her brother, a wealthy and famous musician. He had offered to 'be there for her' but was rarely free from work demands. N. stated that she felt that his emotional restraint and rather advantaged lifestyle made it hard to identify her concerns with his. She described her parents' marriage as poor, preserved for the sake of the children, but permeated by constant fighting. She described her family as insensitive and unexpressive emotionally. Conversely she felt denied a voice because they described her as too sensitive, too needing of overt validation and physical affection, "cuddles and so on". She described herself as needing to talk a lot about her problems. To some extent she internalized the familial perception of this as vulnerability and a lack of efficacy.

Her father emerged as the figure most evocative of affect, though she professed not to have thought about him in years. She recalled an event from her early teens, when her father refused to give her a ride home - 5 miles on the lonely road her friend had died on one week earlier. When she was first married, her father had asked her for input on a

disagreement, which flattered her, but he was then enraged when she agreed with her mother. He struck her; she struck back and became angry, saying, "How dare you! I'm not a child!" He had died unexpectedly over a decade ago, in his late 40s. She stated she had a lot of 'unresolved issues' with him because of their bad relationship, which had improved toward the end. She felt there were a lot of things she'd like to say to him and ask him.

N. said she thought that she needed affirmation and praise, and that praise was more valuable coming from a man – her girlfriends may give it, but she needs to hear it from a man. She could not describe any male relationships which were both positive and platonic; she said she found men confusing. At this point, the presenting issues seemed to me to be assertiveness, grief, and low self-concept.

At the end of the initial session she expressed feelings of attraction toward me, as well as concern about how that would affect the viability of counselling. I explained that given what she had described about her male relationships, I felt that her feelings were probably no more than a certain natural transference. I suggested that it would be important to distinguish between the feelings and intensity associated with the counselling relationship and other feelings she identified regarding my appearance, attributed traits, etc.. She said that she would rather be 'up front' about it, for fear of developing a 'crush' or similar inappropriate or counterproductive feelings. Briefly, over the next two sessions she focussed more and more on these feelings, and described them as a barrier to her engaging in process. She suggested that we could meet in a social setting, first terminating therapy if need be; later she described a wish that I accompany her on a vacation.

Pope et al. (1987) identify the percentage of counsellors who feel it is acceptable to become a social friend of a former client as 59%; to accept a client's gift worth at least $50: 21%; to become sexually involved with former client: 23%; to kiss a client: 16%; to engage in sexual fantasy about a client: 38%; to be sexually attracted to a client: 63%. There is apparently within the profession a grotesque prevalence of ethical standards which many would at least outwardly profess to find repugnant. The Rogerian genuineness and unconditional regard, so evocative of the Kantian injunction to treat others as ends in themselves rather than as means to ends of our own, is not in evidence in these statistics. The Psychodynamic mandate to treat any countertransference as an impetus to exploration of one's own unresolved developmental concerns is similarly missing from such a catalogue of emotional confusion and moral bankruptcy. It seemed to me during my internship that these were hollow standards, in practice more likely to obscure abuse and shield weakness than to guide behaviour and promote reflective practice. As such, they present especially toxic matter for the supervision experience, which relies particularly heavily on a reflective practice model.

c. Ethical Dilemma

This experience of being confronted with an inappropriate invitation to a personal relationship with a client was for me a powerful and disturbing one. The client's expression of interest seemed to me to relate very directly to the issues she identified to work on in session. She had prefaced our first session with an explanation of how difficult she found it to discuss her concerns, and how important it was to her that she not be placed in the position of having to regurgitate her story again for another counsellor at a later time. Both issues created in me a strong sense of responsibility to sustain the therapeutic relationship. Both the prevailing ethical code and the wishes of the client were in conflict with this, pulling in opposite directions. The code in effect in the area of the college (i.e. in the United Kingdom) dictated no relationship ever, with any current or former client. The client herself expressed the feeling that the therapy could have no value while her feelings were in conflict with my role. Unwilling for various reasons to abuse my position, I reluctantly informed her after the third session that I felt obligated to terminate therapy, and referred her to the six week waiting list of a female counsellor at another institution.

While my actions seemed mandated by the prescriptions of many ethics codes, I felt discomfort at what I saw as a betrayal of her need for help – a reaction I associate with an inappropriate gender-role perception that clients should be protected.

Further, I felt profoundly betrayed by the limitations of my training and the cultural constraints of supervision. The prevailing model had made no allowances for the stress of the client's attentions, the dilemma of the need to force termination, or my own need for frank and open investigation of the event in supervision. Some things were just not

done or talked about, it appeared. My own attempts to deconstruct the experience and discern the privileged theoretical and social voices which had impacted on the situation multiplied my questions without providing any direction or impetus to action. Certainly I began to read into mainstream theory and the academic guidelines for supervision a project for the protection and promotion of the profession, in stark contrast to the often avowed mandate that the client's needs come first. The protection of the counsellor and the preservation of an appearance of propriety were, it appeared, of the first importance. The corollary, it seemed, was that the counsellor's honesty, emotional preparedness, and capacity for reflection on practice were at best irrelevant, at worst detrimental.

5. Chapter Five: Interpretations

a. Modernist Theoretical Descriptions

The three conventional modernist theories identified earlier fail as guides to behaviour or lenses for personal experience, but not as descriptive tools. These schools that I went to within counselling theory failed to inform me; I can explain the encounter in terms of those theories, but their explanations don't help to guide my behaviour or facilitate my interpretation of what to do.

Psychodynamic theory is particularly suited to the description of the client's behaviour and my own experience. N. transferred to me her desire for male affirmation and approval, which had only been met (though never satisfied) in romantic relationships. Her rejecting father's authoritarian role created a strong message that women like her mother and herself were deficient except insofar as they received male support and approval. Her brother's overwhelming professional success sent a similar message; as a man, he had resources she lacked, and did not require the emotional outlets and supports she relied on. Her early impulses toward independence and emotional self-expression met with resistance from her father. Her desire for personal power and a sense of value or efficacy as a woman was repressed, as what most of her resentment towards her father and brother. The former desire was sublimated as a need to be validated as an object of sexual desire. The latter was sublimated as admiration for her brother and a fixation on the lost opportunities for approval from her father. My physical resemblance to her brother and his peers may have suggested that like him I could have resisted her father's oppression and exhibited independence, strength, and material success, a stereotype of masculinity or potency. She may have perceived me as a male authority figure, a man

forcing her to explore uncomfortable and private issues, judging her wanting for her emotionality as her father did, appearing impervious and private like her brother. The combination of her established defenses and such threat as I may have represented elicited immediate resistance and an unconscious desire to sabotage the therapeutic process. While this resistance should have been seen as a positive cue that sensitive emotional material was ready to emerge into consciousness, it was sabotaged in turn by my own resistance in the form of countertransference. Earlier unresolved relationships, for example, may have left residual overprotective and accommodating behaviours, or an excessive wariness of perceived dependence. In theory, such countertransference should be addressed though consultation, or through the therapist participating in therapy. My attempts to address this in supervision were resisted; the ethical mandate of the situation superceded the other needs of my client and myself.

Developmentally, a case could be made for the evidence of oral-incorporative personality issues such as low self-esteem, voluntary self-isolation, and barriers to trust, affection, or the maintenance of intense relationships. In Erikson's psychosocial view, while there may be residual issues of trust versus mistrust, there are also significant unresolved developmental issues with regard to industry versus inferiority (personal adequacy and goal-setting sabotaged by her brother's competence and fame in her school-age years) and intimacy versus isolation. Perversely, her apparent pattern of moving fairly quickly from man to man in her support systems argues a lack of intimacy and a fear of it rather than a facility with it. Mahler's conception of the narcissistic character arising from inadequate resolution of separation/individuation issues echoes N's frail self-concept and hunger for attention and affection; her unpopular predilection

for sharing in detail her feelings stopped short of actually resolving those emotional issues; as in her other relationships, she tended to express her needs, but terminate before they could be addressed and resolved.

The techniques of client-centered humanistic theory in this circumstance seem potentially hazardous to the particular client and unsympathetic to the therapist. The client's low self-regard might be said to stem from a conflict between her basic need for self-expression and emotional candor, and her need for approval from others. In theory, the correct therapeutic stance is to be non-evaluative, nonjudgmental, warm and empathetic. This might take the form of understanding and accepting her feelings of attraction; the counsellor would then affirm the validity of her need to express such affection. The message should perhaps be, "I accept these feeling of attraction; they are not bad or wrong. I understand and value you as a person, therefore you can explore emotional issues like these without threatening the process." This natural exploration would then lead to an acceptance on her part of both the emotion of attraction and the need for approval; the facilitative environment would promote self-esteem and growth.

The stumbling block here was, presumably, that I was inadequately empathetic and congruent, unable to remain authentic in the face of advances. Client-centered theory makes great demands of the therapist as a person; whether a truly authentic and congruent therapist would be equipped to negotiate murky ethical waters begs the question. The destination is described, but obstacles to getting there are not addressed. Certainly within Rogerian therapy's interpretative framework her help-seeking behaviour suggests an ability to idetify potential conditions for growth, and to make self-directed and constructive change. But what if, as was apparently the case for many therapists in the

study by Pope et al (1987), the therapist's genuineness and acceptance are distorted by misguided ethics, desires, or fears?

Training and supervision in the theory may not model the requisite non-judgmental attitude. I consulted an experienced Rogerian counsellor, who was evidently uncomfortable with the fact that I was experiencing confusion. I had been unable to remain nonjudgmental and empathetic, and so was the therapist I consulted. Rogerians would argue that I am pathologizing both the client and myself, and there is some justice in this. My distrust of their project, however, stems from a perception that in a sense they subscribe to a pretense of objectivity and authority little less pervasive and logocentric than that of the Psychodynamic theorists. Their faith in my benevolence and the client's capacity to seek healing may gloss over a spectrum of other motives and misconceptions. Where the analysts place their faith in the accuracy of reason, the humanists seem to rest everything on the spotlessness of everyone's motives, and on a shared and objective paradigm of health and growth.

b. Postmodern Themes:

i. Male Help Seeking

Related to this is the issue of my own ability of willingness to address the issue, seek advocacy, risk censure. Good & Wood (1995) found a strong relationship between Male Gender Role Conflict (MGRC) (essentially the desire to meet traditional standards of 'masculine' behaviour) and resistance to help seeking among college males. Further, there is evidence that particularly strong MGRC may preclude help seeking regardless of the level of psychological distress (Good et al., 1996). While outside the scope of this paper, it is worth considering that my own failure to access resources may have been in some way informed by gender role. The proportion of counsellors who feel it is ethical to continue working when too distressed to be effective is 7%, according to Pope et al. (1987).

ii. Transference and Attribution

I was conscious that in the early case histories of the psychodynamic model, such transferences were almost anticipated. In attribution theory, people are said to attribute causes to novel stimuli to regain "a sense of predictability or control over their environments" (Lopez, p.310). According to self-verification theory, people seek to enter or create social conditions that confirm their self-conceptions (Swann, 1983). Should I have adopted such a stance? At the time I felt that the introduction of such therapeutic distance have been even more toxically modernist, authoritarian, and male. Again, prevailing modernist ethics do not provide guidelines or direct consideration to the resolution of issues like this. McGowen & Hart (1990) identify the prevailing (male and modernist) paradigm of professional behaviour as based on separation rather than attachment, instrumental rather than relational. Conversely, the failure embedded in the termination of therapy was a failure to engage the client's voice of attachment and relationship.

iii. Gender and Agency

Brown (1990) points out that gender issues in countertransference are typically neglected in both research and self-reflection. This blind spot impacts diagnosis, service provision, and the counselling relationship. Gender role is a social and phenomenological construct, a powerful agent though which identity is both perceived and constructed (Brown, 1990). It is an accepted tenet of the Gilligan-Kohlberg debate that gender colours moral understanding. The traditionally privileged male-gendered moral voice has been the agent of the prevailing prescriptive ethical dicta, to the detriment of practitioners of either gender.

The prevalence of sex bias in counselling practice remains an open question in research literature (Simon et al., 1992). Such questions have expanded in the last decade to include more detailed consideration of the impact of broader gender-related issues such as counselor reaction to client gender role. The values, relational styles, and vocational descriptors that define counselling are coherent with values identified as 'feminine', rendering the practice and receipt of counselling a 'closed book' to men (Simon et al., 1992).

The present failure of the literature to investigate gender issues in reflective practice may be in itself sexually biased, inasmuch as while a text of the feminist voice is evolving there is no corresponding male text. Some may argue that the male voice is not absent but invisible by virtue of its historical authority. Conversely, the fact remains that if there is a male voice there is no critical explication of it.

Thoreson et al. (1993) point out that while the male gender role has been the subject of considerable attention in psychological research, this has not been reflected in the

relationship of the male gender role to the counselling process. While societal influences on male gender role impact on the experience of counselling, there is a lack of theory and research in response to this (Thoreson et al., 1993). The growth in demand for emotional expression, interpersonal skills, and sexually responsible professional behaviour has perhaps happened too quickly for men to adequately respond, particularly in light of the developmental impact of the behaviours modeled by their fathers (Levant, 1990).

Because gender bias operates unconsciously and at variance to stated belief (Thoreson et al, 1993; Brown, 1990), it is necessary that the counsellor enter the counselling relationship with deliberate and explicit expectations for gender as an issue and a phenomenological lens. As a counsellor, I have become aware of an impact of gender-role expectations from peers, supervisors, and clients. Setting aside for the moment the role of countertransference in my experience of a client's or counsellor's gender, my own gender role has been a distinct variable in transference. The client's expressed perception of me as authoritative or sexual recapitulates her experiences of maleness. The expectations in crisis work echoed this; males in the field are a rare resource, to be reserved for the most violent and unresponsive clients. While I might feel discomfort at the implicit attributions, postmodern thought demands that the client's construction of my gendered behaviours be privileged. The alternative is an assertion of counsellor objectivity. This raises certain highly problematic issues for traditional ethics. While motivated no doubt in part by inclination and in part by fear of censure, my decision to initiate termination of counselling with my client rose at least partly from a disinclination to trust her ability to safeguard her own best interests. While in the normal practice of counselling it may be possible to avoid a prescriptive 'I know what's best'

relationship, ethical issues as currently conceived force a reversion to the modernist male-gendered voice. There is a tacit mandate for the counsellor to act alone in evaluating the risk for abuse. Alertness to gender as a cultural construct is a prerequisite of the reflective voice; gender attributions themselves are integral to voice.

Professional identity, presumably an object of counsellor education, is shaped and informed by the student's experience of their gender and culture as they interact with the culture of counselling. If this culture is prescriptive, mainstream and modernist, the student may be marginalized. The diversity of the values and paradigms presented in training will determine how the student integrates with a professional role (McGowen & Hart, 1990).

c. Non-standard Theoretical Responses

I have highlighted the apparent absence of theories and research within counselling which might meaningfully inform discussion of the three-fold dilemma identified; the failure of training to prepare me for the ethical issue, the ethical decision itself, and the inadequacy of supervision to redress the deficits of training and literature. While there are likewise no theories I have been able to identify outside mainstream counselling literature which address the problem any better than the theories 'inside' the literature, there are certainly some which support my perception that there is at least an issue at hand. They are various voices or readings peripheral to counselling, but they helped to frame my questions.

Existential therapy is a philosophical guide to the practitioner's reading of client narratives and authentication of client voices; it is not an internally defended system of practice and treatment. For N., the need for therapy was certainly expressed as a need for direction, strength, and substance in life. She did not pathologize her own concerns or identify a need for healing; she seemed rather to wonder very deeply where things in her life could go next. Children, school, and part-time work had all failed to pierce the existential vacuum of her oddly privileged and picaresque lifestyle. The relationship she offered was a sharing of the activities she herself found ultimately unsatisfying; clubs, concerts, travel. Perhaps any therapy could describe her issues equally validly, but existential thought at least does not either deify or utterly negate the full personhood of the therapist. My own frustration was with seemingly irreconcilable conflicts between protecting the client and ethical termination of therapy; between personal honesty and the structure of supervision; between the security of conventional theory and the allure of

deconstruction. Isolated by supervision, confused about my values, unable to identify the therapist that I wanted to be, my own deepest emotional and cognitive issues were the anxiety of alienation as I looked for professional insight and guidance, and the burden of self-awareness and responsibility as I weighed the client's untenable demands. The allure of mainstream theory is precisely that it neatly avoids such anxiety-provoking issues. Faithful adherence to an interpretative framework rewards the practitioner with the assurance that those who question analysis are repressed, those who question humanism are not congruent, those who question faith are sinners, and so on. The refusal to accept this frosty comfort is central to both existential thought and the kind of reflective practice which is core to the supervised student's attempt to uncover their shortcomings and support and further their professional growth. My plodding and dogged persistence in dissecting this experience can be traced to my own conviction that inaction or abrogation of responsibility were untenable decisions. It is easy to say that one would always do the right thing; this experience was profound and fearsome because I did not know what the right thing was, let alone whether I would want to do it. I did know, however, that blind obedience to a prescriptive code on the one hand, or to my own desires to help (or experience affection) on the other hand, were neither of them truly responsible. The security of dependance on a code and the escape of immersion in need and appetite both constitute and avoidance of choice and a sublimation of identity.

Existential theory informs this dilemma, but I wouldn't suggest that it simply validates my experience. In many ways it constitutes for me a meaningful and constructive critique of the decisions I made and the interpretative biases I laboured under, the 'bad faith' I acted in. I feared that my future decisions were in a sense fragile,

that I would recapitulate past selfishness or lay a future course for blind obedience based on that one event. I failed to remain in the moment with N. and work in the present because of preoccupation with what would happen in the future. My perception of my own inability to find a truly ethical and caring solution was allowed to challenge my worth.

If one applies the rigorous tenets of existential thought to both client and counsellor, there is a certain symmetry. If N. blamed her father for her problems, well, I was eager to wash my hands of responsibility for my role in her life.

The growing body of literature applying the tools of post-modern social criticism provides ways of framing the problems surrounding the issue at hand. Traditional theories, conversely, have a kind of egocentrism and univocality which implies that any failure of interpretation, any ethical stumbling block, is located within the malpractice or misinterpretation of the therapist. Perhaps most systems have a pretence of internal consistency that rewards only the faithful. As long as one accepts the aegis of psychodynamic thought, for instance, ethical hurdles are simply interesting defences arising out of the client's transference. The challenge that they represent actual shortcomings of theory and training, genuine responses to the therapeutic milieu, is not a permitted reading of events. Fear of reprisal or loss of status is consistent with the instrumental values and the prescriptive ethics of positivistic science that often sees codes as a concession, an insurance rather than an integrated and personal social response. The dominant voice or authority of valuing was the traditional naturalistic concept of control of the situation, domination of the client and one's own fears. My own values and experiences were marginalized as subjective, the objective being the paradigm of the

treatment model and the text of the client's narrative. This implies hierarchical rather than equal relationships; the therapist is a more authoritative determinant of meaning than the client, the professional community more authoritative than the therapist, and the model itself more authoritative than any liveing proponent or interpreter - an untenable illusion of external validation, totalizing and foundationalist.

The peril of post-modern criticism, in my mind, is that while it is an empowering voice when used as exploratory and descriptive tool, it lacks a ceratin impetus to change, leveling all readings to the same absence of authority. Post-modernism can be an agency of cynicism and despair, divorced as it is from any moral push beyond a certain call to liberation. I am bothered by the can of worms this kind of wholesale subjectivity opens; there is certainly an incompleteness or lack of rigour in my endorsement of deconstruction. As an end in itself, it builds nothing. It does not solve dilemmas; it identifies and removes the barriers to their expression and solution. In that sense, it is a means that justifies the end. It is better to challenge existing biases and criticize the moral confusion of current supervision and ethical codes, even if it takes a while to rebuild some sensible system in the wake of the destruction.

6. Chapter Six: Conclusion

There is within counselling literature a limited but rapidly growing body of work in the areas of postmodern theory, professional ethics, gender biases, and practitioner insight and experience. No research attention has yet been given to postmodern ethical theories, practitioner experience of ethical issues, training and supervision deficits in the area of ethics, or the importance of gender-related experience differences among counsellors rather than clients.

> "The integrity and continuing development of a profession depend on the profession's willingness to examine the ethical implications of its activities, to establish standards to which it holds itself accountable, and to implement strategies to foster ethical behavior" (Pope et al., 1993, p. 335).

My own case of demonstrated to me the failure of the modernist aspects of theory, literature, or supervision adequately to equip me for an ethical dilemma. While inappropriate relationships receive considerable attention now in prescriptive codes of ethics, there are two grave weaknesses in the current state of ethical education.

First, it is open to question whether prescriptive codes work, or on what moral levels they operate, considering the small but alarming number of counsellors who persist in views many find exploitative and repugnant.

Second, while existing codes may delineate unacceptable practices, existing training responds to these issues only on the level of 'don't do that'. With the growth of reflective practice and attention to counselling process, it is important to explore the impact of ethical dilemmas on counsellors. There is a need for open dialogue how counsellors are addressing ethical problems on emotional, cultural, and phenomenological levels.

Counselling literature has embraced feminist criticisms of its largely modernist and patriarchal practice. It has begun to attend more explicitly to the ways in which client

gender impacts the counselling experience. That counsellor gender should be so dramatically excluded from consideration is startling given the perception that one sex dominates the culture of counselling, while the other holds disproportionate power.

It is clear that males are more likely to abuse their relationship with clients, or to report such abuse; they are also more likely to see such behaviour as acceptable. There is as yet no voice in the literature for male counsellors struggling with ethical challenges, or with the modernist dynamics of transference and countertransference that foster those challenges.

We are keenly aware of the pervasive impact of gender, but as with ethics we are all too inclined to assume that knowledge has somehow inoculated us as practitioners, that psychologists do not have a psychology.

The postmodern ethicist Zygmunt Bauman (1993) predictably rejects the notion of universal ethical codes. He maintains, however, that certain ethical perspectives are tenable under the postmodern rubric; self-examination, self-sacrifice, and sensitivity to the fact that actions and thoughts may be right in one context, and wrong in another. He further argues that one may reject universal principles, and yet continue to strive to make moral choices - continue to try to live morally and harmoniously with others. The ethics of postmodernism, he holds, is to examine the variant reasoning between different practices and codes. It is not surrender of the quest to be moral in exchange for relativism, but an ongoing inquiry into the nature of accountability (p. 27).

References

Audi, R. (Ed.). (1995). The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press..

Baldick, C. (1990). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baudrillard, J. (1980). Forgetting Foucault. Humanities in Society, 3:1.

Bauman, Z. (1988). Sociology and Postmodernity. The Sociological Review. 6: 4.

Bauman, Z. (1989). (1993). Postmodern Ethics. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Brennan, C. (1995). Beyond Theory and Practice: A postmodern perspective. Counseling and Values, 39, 99-107.

Brown, L. S. (1990). Taking account of gender in the clinical assessment interview. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 21(1), 12-17.

Cuddon, J. A. (1977). The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory. (3rd ed.) London: Penguin.

Derrida, J. (1981). Positions. London: Athlone Press.

Dews, P. (1987). "Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory". London: Verso.

Eagleton, T. (1983). Literary Theory: An Introduction. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Eco, U. (1986). Travels in Hyperreality, London: Picador.

Featherstone, M. (1988a). In Pursuit of the Postmodern: An Introduction, in Featherstone, M. (ed.), Theory Culture and Society 5 (2-3), London: Sage.

Featherstone, M. (1988b) Towards a Sociology of Postmodern Culture. In H. Haferkamp (ed.) Social Structures and Culture. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Fish, S. (2002). Don't blame relativism. The Responsive Community, 12(3), pp. 27-28.

Fish, S. (May 21, 1996). Professor Sokal's Bad Joke. New York Times, p. A23.

Fish, S. (1980). Is there a text in this class? The authority of interpretive communities, Harvard University Press.

Frosh, S. (1995). Postmodernism versus psychotherapy. Journal of Family Therapy, 17, 175-190.

Gabbard, G. (Ed.). (1989). Sexual exploitation in professional relationships. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association.

Gibson, W. T., & Pope, K. S. (1993). The ethics of counselling: A national survey of certified counsellors. Journal of Counseling & Development, 71(3), 330-336.

Good, G. E., & Wood, P. K. (1995). Male gender role conflict, depression, and help seeking: Do college men face double jeopardy? Journal of Counseling & Development, 74(5), 70-75.

Good, G. E.; Robertson, J.; Fitzgerald, L.; Stevens, M.; & Bartels, K. (1996). The relation between masculine role conflict and psychological distress in male university counselling center clients. Journal of Counseling & Development, 75(5), 44-49.

Habermas, J. (1989). The New Conservatism. Cambridge: Polity.

Hanes, M. (1996). Paul Virilio and the articulation of post-reality. Human Studies, 19, 185-197.

Harris, T. L., & Hodges, R. E. (Eds.). (1995). The Literacy Dictionary. Newark: International Reading Association.

Hume, D. (1999). An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. Oxford: Oxford Press.

Hutcheon, L., (ed.). (1992). Double-Talking: Essays of Verbal and Visual Ironies in Contemporary Canadian Art and Literature. Toronto: ECW Press.

Jameson, F. (1983). Postmodernism and Consumer Society, in Foster, H., (Ed.), Postmodern Culture. London: Pluto.

Jameson, F. (1984). Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism. New Left Review, 146, 52-92.

Kamug, P. (ed.), (1991). A Derrida Reader. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

Kellner, D. (1988). Postmodernism as Social Theory: Some Challenges and Problems, in Featherstone, M. (ed.), Theory Culture and Society 5 (2-3), London: Sage.

Kellner, D., (ed.). (1989). Postmodernism, Jameson, Critique . Washington, DC: Maisonneuve.

Kitto, H. (1991). The Greeks. New York: Penguin.

Kuhn, T. (1962). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lash, S., (1990). Sociology of Postmodernism. London: Routledge.

Levant, R. F. (1990). Psychological services designed for men: A psychoeducational approach. Psychotherapy, 27, 309-316.

Lightman, A. (2000). Great Ideas in Physics. McGraw-Hill.

Lopez, F. G., (1993). Cognitive processes in close relationships: recent findings and implications for counseling. Journal of Counseling & Development, 71(3), 310-315.

Lyotard, F., (1984). The Postmodern Condition, trans. G. Bennington & B. Massumi, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Marcus, George E., & Fischer, Michael M. J., (1986). Anthropology as a Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McGowen, K. R., & Hart, L. E. (1990). Still different after all these years: Gender differences in professional identity formation. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 21(2), 118-123.

Murphy, J. W. (1989). Clinical intervention in the postmodern world. International Journal of Adolescence and Youth, 2, 61-69.

Pickett, Joseph P. et al. (2000). The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, (4th ed.) Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Pleck, J. H. (1981). The myth of masculinity. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Pope, K. S. (1990). Therapist-patient sex as sex abuse: Six scientific, professional, and practical dilemmas in addressing victimization and rehabilitation. Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 21(4), 227-239.

Pope, K. S., Tabachnick, B. G., & Keith-Spiegel, P. (1987). Ethics of practice: The beliefs and behaviours of psychologists as therapists. American Psychologist, 42, 993-1006.

Pope, K. S., Keith-Spiegel, P., & Tabachnick, B. G. (1986). Sexual attraction to patients: The human therapist and the (sometimes) inhuman training system. American Psychologist, 41, 147-158.

Pope, K. S., & Vetter, V. A. (1991). Prior therapist-patient sexual involvement among patients seen by psychologists. Psychotherapy, 28, 429-438.

Poster, M. (ed.), (1988). Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings. Cambridge: Polity.

Roffey, A. (1993). Existentialism in a Post-Modern World: Meaningful Lessons for the Counselor. Counseling and Values, 37, 129-148.

Rosenau, P. M. (1992). Post-modernism and the social sciences, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Safran, J., & Messer, S. (1997). Psychotherapy Integration: A Postmodern Critique. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 4(2) 140-152.

Simon, L.; Gaul, R.; Friedlander, M.; &