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PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN  
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY  
TRAINING:

A Critical Investigation of the  
Views and Experiences of  
Trainers and Trainees

**Mark Andrew Donati**



**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy**

City University, London  
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The completion of this project marks a very significant achievement for me, which inevitably brings with it a rush of feelings and reflections. Most of all though, I am struck by the profound and unexpected impact that undertaking this work has had on my own emotional world and the immense contribution it has made to my own personal development. Furthermore, I am keenly aware that the journey I have made has not been a solitary one, and there are a number of people I would particularly like to thank for their companionship and support along the way.

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Mark Donati

5<sup>th</sup> December 2002

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# DECLARATION

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Mark A. Donati

## ***DECLARATION***

# ABSTRACT

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It has been suggested that, despite its increased centrality in the training of counsellors and counselling psychologists, personal development remains a poorly articulated area that suffers from a surprising scarcity of literature. The present study set out to investigate these claims and to begin to address this imbalance. A critical analysis of the literature identified four key areas: 1) the definition of personal development, 2) the facilitation of personal development, 3) the assessment of personal development and 4) the selection of trainees, in which complex but important questions remained. A mixed qualitative-quantitative methodology was used to investigate the views and experiences of UK counselling psychology trainers and trainees in relation to these key areas. Themes from a grounded theory analysis of 8 in-depth interviews enabled the articulation of a model of personal development and informed the development of a quantitative questionnaire survey instrument that was used to test and expand the interview findings. Eighty-eight respondents, comprising trainers and trainees from four training institutions, participated in the survey. Findings supported viewing personal development during training as a complex, broad and holistic concept and process that is affected by a diversity of personal and professional experiences, rather than as something that can be equated with the experience of personal therapy. Overall, views varied considerably amongst participants, and a significant difference was observed between the ways that trainers and trainees defined personal development. Many respondents reported feeling dissatisfied with course provisions; thinking that personal development was not adequately defined or integrated in training; that courses were too academic and not sufficiently experiential; and believing that improvements should be made to the way in which personal development is assessed during training and at selection. Differences in views and experiences were explained in terms of divergent conceptualisations of personal development and a variety of philosophical tensions. Implications for counselling psychology training were discussed, the methodology of the project evaluated and suggestions for further research proposed.

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***ABSTRACT***



# PROLOGUE

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It seems appropriate to begin a thesis on personal development by saying something about myself and my own 'personal development'. Moreover, it seems particularly important, as a matter of reflexive research practice, to share with the reader something of how I came to be interested in researching this particular topic and of the views I held about it at the outset. This kind of transparency has emerged as a defining feature of research within the qualitative paradigm. For example, Charmaz (1990) has written about the impact upon the research of the 'researcher perspective', which includes the 'substantive interests that guide the questions to be asked, a philosophical stance or a school of thought that provides a store of sensitising concepts, and the researcher's own personal experiences, priorities and values' (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1996; 83). It is thought that, by paying attention to such issues, the process and outcomes of the research are rendered more open to scrutiny and evaluation by others. However, it is interesting to point out at this stage that, in some respects, my own 'researcher perspective' has evolved significantly since the project was first conceived and carried out. But, as befits the theme of 'personal development', I will save reflection on this matter for the end of the thesis. By beginning and ending in this way, it is my hope that the reader will gain an insight into how my own personal development and orientation to the topic has both influenced and been influenced by this project; the questions that I asked and those that inevitably remain unearthed and unexplored.

My interest in the field of 'counselling psychology', and in 'personal development' in particular, first emerged when I was an undergraduate undertaking a final year module called 'The Psychology of Counselling'. To me, this module presented a heady and kaleidoscopic vision of new ideas, which both challenged and enhanced my own understanding of 'people' and 'human behaviour'. I remember being intensely stimulated by the different theories of counselling, each with their own deeply held convictions about human nature and the causes and treatment of psychological disturbance.

However, despite feeling that each theory contained something of genuine therapeutic value, I was also somewhat dissatisfied with the narrowness of their individual accounts.

I approached with greater interest the more recently evolved 'post-schoolism' integrationist views of counselling, of which the newly established discipline of 'counselling psychology' was a primary exponent. I learned how research had revealed that, broadly speaking, no single counselling approach appeared significantly more effective than any other, and that what appeared to be more important were the personal qualities of the counsellor<sup>1</sup> and their ability to form a therapeutic relationship with the client. These conclusions resonated with my own 'lay' understanding of counselling. To my mind, it made perfect sense that the therapeutic effectiveness of a counsellor should stem primarily from the kind of *person* that they are, rather than the particular theoretical school to which they belong. Furthermore, I was both excited and intrigued by this brave new discipline of 'Counselling Psychology', which seemed to have readily taken this view to the centre of its philosophy.

As I continued to read and reflect, I became increasingly fascinated by the whole idea of the counsellor as a *person*, than by the apparent vagaries of counselling theory. To me, individual factors such as the counsellor's motivations, values, integrity, self-awareness and personal development, seemed more enduring and fundamental to safe and effective practice than any theory or techniques would ever be. Consequently, I began to wonder about the extent to which such issues had been addressed, especially in relation to professional counsellor training.

At this point, my interest was driven by a strong idealism and a belief that to be a counsellor - someone who works intimately with vulnerable people - requires the possession of particular personal qualities and capacities for compassion, insight and integrity. I was also firmly convinced that a thorough understanding of the personal development of the counsellor was essential if it was to be effectively fostered during training. In addition, my undergraduate studies had injected me with a keen enthusiasm for 'empirical research' and a belief in its power to elucidate complex areas of human inquiry. What is more, although personal development appeared to be increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the terms 'counsellor' and 'counselling' will be used for brevity to refer to counsellors, counselling psychologists and psychotherapists and their professional activities.

recognised as a core topic, my initial impression of the counselling literature was that it had, so far, been more preoccupied with demonstrating and analysing the effectiveness of counselling, than with the personal development of the counsellors themselves.

By the time I had reached the end of my undergraduate studies, I had acquired a special interest in the discipline of counselling psychology and in the personal development dimensions of training and practice. Moreover, I was keen to further develop this interest by conducting my own investigation of the topic. Shortly after completing my degree, I was fortunate to secure a Ph.D. studentship at City University, working along side Mary Watts: a counselling psychologist who clearly shared my passion for the subject and belief in the need for further research on it. The chapters that follow chart the process and outcomes of the research inquiry that I then began.

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## ***PROLOGUE***

# CHAPTER 1



## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

# INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

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## 1.1 Introduction

The idea that the 'self' or 'person' of the counsellor plays an integral role in the therapeutic process is something that Freud himself recognised almost a century ago, chiefly through his concept of 'countertransference' (Wilkins, 1997). Furthermore, many of the schools of counselling that were to emerge after psychoanalysis developed their own distinct understandings and conceptualisations of its professional role and relevance (Johns, 1996).

In recent years however, counsellors of different theoretical persuasions have increasingly converged in their views regarding the importance of the counsellor's self, which is now widely regarded as serving a therapeutic function that is fundamental to all forms of counselling (Johns, 1996). Today, this basic importance is clearly reflected in the central place given to some form of 'personal development' in the training of counsellors and counselling psychologists. For example, both the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP, 1996) and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2002) now require their trainees to engage in a minimum of 40 hours of personal counselling or equivalent personal development work.

The importance attached today to the counsellor's personal development seems to stem from a basic view that counsellors need to attain a high degree of self-knowledge regarding their own personality and areas of psychological difficulty in order to be able to help another person to do the same. This belief is sometimes represented by the maxim 'the counsellor can only take their clients as far as they have been themselves' (e.g. Sinason, 1999). Thus, self-awareness and personal development are thought to enable

counsellors to ensure that they do not exploit or unduly limit the progress of their clients, through their own unresolved issues (BPS, 2001). Furthermore, because the practice of counselling is recognised as highly demanding of the practitioner's own 'self' and emotional resources (BPS, 2001), personal development is also increasingly recognised as a key way for counsellors to maintain their own well-being, and guard against occupational stress and burnout (Wilkins, 1997). Indeed, due attention to the person of the counsellor has become a formal requirement of 'continuing professional development' (CPD) for counsellors and counselling psychologists (Williams, 2000; Elton-Wilson, 1995; Bayne *et al*, 1996; BPS). The idea underlying CPD is that professionals have an ongoing obligation to maintain and extend their knowledge and expertise. For counsellors, this includes continual development on a personal level, due to the demands placed on the self by their professional work.

However, despite its widely recognised importance in today's counselling world, personal development has also been described as 'ill-defined' 'poorly specified' (Williams & Irving, 1996; 171), 'obscure', 'poorly articulated' (Hall, *et al*, 1999, p.99) and 'the most intangible element of training' (Johns, 1996; 4). Moreover, it has been suggested that, for an area of such professional importance, the amount of literature and research on the topic is surprisingly small (Williams & Irving, 1996).

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## 1.2 The focus of the present research

It is this apparent imbalance, between the increased recognition of the professional importance of personal development on the one hand and its apparent lack of definition and literature on the other, which provides the primary motivation for the present investigation: it would seem important to evaluate such claims and attempt to redress any imbalance.

Like personal development, the ethos guiding the present research might be described as one of healthy self-examination and a belief in an ongoing need for counsellors to critically reflect upon their training practices, and the values and assumptions that



underlie these, as much as they do upon their clinical practice. A process of critical self-reflection is likely to give rise to difficult questions, but the present research seeks to directly engage with, rather than shy away from, such issues. This is done in the hope of bringing forth new understandings that will be of practical use in the development of this core aspect of training and practice.

As already indicated, the following project focuses primarily on personal development within the discipline of *counselling psychology*. There are a number of reasons for this focus, which will become clearer as the review progresses. Essentially, these relate to a number of key characteristics of the discipline of counselling psychology: its theoretically pluralistic and integrative approach to practice; its attempt to marry the art and science of counselling; its espoused belief both in the importance of personal development and in the underpinning of practice with theory and research evidence; and also that, despite counselling psychology's rapid growth in the UK over the last decade, the discipline still lacks its own specialised professional literature (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996). It could be argued that some of these features, such as theoretical integrationism and the stress on evidence-based practice, make the discipline of counselling psychology a good exemplar of contemporary thinking and trends in counselling (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996). Furthermore, it could also be suggested that because 'counselling psychology' seeks to embrace traditionally divergent or conflicting theoretical/philosophical perspectives, the issue of defining the role of personal development is a particularly important and challenging one. Indeed, other writers also suggested that many of the philosophical and practical dilemmas of theoretically integrative counsellor training remain unresolved (e.g. Jenkins, 1994; McLeod, 1994).

Also as previously mentioned, the present project focuses on personal development in counselling psychology *training*. There are two main reasons for this focus. First, although counsellor personal development may be considered a continual process that extends throughout a professional career (Irving & Williams, 1999; Johns, 1996), it can also be argued that the initial training period is of special developmental significance within the career span of a counsellor. For instance, Kaslow (1986; xiii) has suggested that early training has a 'crucial shaping' effect on the therapist, and Battye (1991; 84) has proposed that it provides a 'beginning' and 'a solid foundation' for subsequent professional unfoldment. Therefore, from a developmental perspective, the training

context would seem like a reasonable initial focus for an investigation of counsellor personal development. Such a focus might then provide an important basis for understanding counsellor personal development in subsequent professional stages.

In addition, a focus on the training context is also supported by adopting the view that training practices can be regarded as significant visible representations of a profession's identity and philosophy. For example, Farrell (1996; 585) has suggested that "it is through the construction of the main pathway leading into the profession [ie. training] that values, assumptions and indeed aspirations become explicit". Thus, a focus on training might also be regarded as providing an interesting professional microcosm within which to study counsellor personal development.

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### **1.3 Traditional theoretical perspectives on the 'person' of the counsellor**

Having broadly introduced the area of counsellor personal development and the focus of the present research, the following section seeks to build a more concrete picture of the concept of personal development and the various perspectives on it that different schools of counselling have taken. Initially, this will be done by considering the traditional views of three major schools of counselling: psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and humanistic. This will provide a useful historical-theoretical background for discussing how the role of the person of the counsellor has come to be viewed in today's integrative counselling world, particularly within the discipline of counselling psychology. The way in which research has helped shape this contemporary perspective will also be considered.

The therapeutic role and importance attached to the 'person' of the counsellor has tended to vary significantly between different theoretical approaches to counselling. Such differences are perhaps most clearly visible in the three major counselling models: the psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and humanistic (Johns, 1996). Each model has its own distinctive 'image of the person', and view of psychological health and



disturbance. McLeod (1993) has offered his own way of thinking of these differences. He summarises the psychodynamic view of the person as 'animal, driven by instinct and out of control'; the humanistic view as 'botanical, and growing in helpful or unhelpful conditions'; and the cognitive-behavioural view as 'computer-like, mechanistic and badly programmed'. Furthermore, these three different images of the person are reflected in how each of the approaches has traditionally viewed the role and importance of the person of the counsellor (Johns, 1996). Each perspective will be considered in turn<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. 3. 1 The psychodynamic perspective

Central to the psychodynamic perspective is the view that a constant interplay exists between conflicting aspects of the psyche, as well as between individuals and the outside world (Jacobs, 1988). Much of this interplay takes place outside of ordinary awareness. Psychodynamic counselling focuses on helping the client to bring into consciousness their inner dynamic processes and to understand how these may affect their ways of experiencing themselves, others and their 'problems'. Typically, this process involves the exploration of significant experiences and relationships in the client's early as well as present life, where the clients' habitual ways of thinking, feeling and relating are thought to have originated. Another important part of psychodynamic counselling involves recognising and working through a client's defense mechanisms: patterns of psychological reflexes that the client has developed as a way of keeping distressing unconscious conflicts from entering into awareness. Insight into links between the present and the past and the client's typical defense strategies are then used to help explain the client's current problems and relationships and to gradually enable them to live and function with greater autonomy and satisfaction.

In psychodynamic counselling an important part of the therapeutic process is the 'transference relationship' that exists between the client and their counsellor. Jacobs (1996; 16) describes this as:

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<sup>2</sup> The three schools will be considered in a broad sense in order to highlight traditional points of difference. It is, however, important to acknowledge that each school itself contains different theoretical positions, and so the three headings used here are somewhat simplified.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

*"the repetition by the client of former, often child-like, patterns of relating to significant people, such as parents, but now seen in relation to the counsellor".*

The psychodynamic counsellor uses the transference relationship to bring out into the session how the client may be feeling, thinking and behaving in relation to the counsellor, in order to connect these with how the client may have related to other important people in their life (eg. parents, siblings, partners). By providing numerous examples of these habitual patterns the client is able to gradually develop more mature ways of relating and to function with greater insight and freedom. However, an important part of working effectively with this transference relationship relates to the psychodynamic counsellor's own 'countertransference'.

Countertransference refers broadly to 'the feelings evoked in the counsellor by the client' (Jacobs, 1999). These may be reflections of the counsellor's own personality, past relationships, or areas of difficulty. Therefore, in order for the psychodynamic counsellor to accurately perceive and interpret the transference relationship, it is important that they are able to distinguish in themselves between therapeutic emotional responses to the client that are therapeutic, and those that stem from their own 'unfinished business' (Jacobs, 1999).

Furthermore, in order to provide sufficient space for the client's transferences to emerge in the relationship, the counsellor deliberately keeps their own personality in the background (Jacobs, 1999). For example, Smith (1996; 29) explains that to work effectively in the transference the psychodynamic practitioner must renounce:

*"any attempt to influence the client through the force of personality or 'charisma'... one of the most important qualities of the competent practitioner is the ability to subordinate his or her personality to the 'analytic attitude'."*

Thus, as Jacobs (1988) has suggested, in psychodynamic work it is crucial that the counsellor is constantly questioning himself about the meaning and significance of the dynamic interactions that take place within the therapeutic process, both in relation to the client and to themselves. The relationship between the counsellor and client and the counsellor's awareness and understanding of their own inner reactions to the client, are therefore of central importance in the psychodynamic approach. Essentially, it is the

counsellor's self-awareness that helps them to maintain an appropriate personal distance in relation to their clients, and to create therapeutic space for the exploration and elucidation of the client's internal world.

Given its importance in psychodynamic practice, work on the 'person' of the counsellor is regarded as crucial in the training of psychodynamic counsellors. Hence, the psychodynamic trainee is expected to engage in a thorough exploration of their personal family history and relationships, their own unconscious conflicts and blind spots; anything that might be considered "potentially fertile ground for counter transference" (Johns, 1999; 32). The context for this personal development work in psychodynamic training is typically the trainees' mandatory experience of personal therapy (Wilkins, 1999; Johns, 1996).

### **1. 3. 2 The humanistic perspective**

The humanistic approach to counselling, as exemplified by the person-centred model of Carl Rogers (1961), sees people as being intrinsically healthy, trustworthy and having a deep innate drive to 'self actualise' and realise their full potential. During development, individuals experience and internalise the judgements and conditional love of significant others in their lives, such as parents. This leads to a distorted or negative self-concept, which puts the individual out of touch with their inner trustworthy core or 'real' self, and which subjects them to feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-worth. The goal of person-centred counselling is to empower the client to tune back into their real organismic self and inner resources in order to become a more 'fully functioning person'; less dependent on the evaluations of others for feelings of self-worth and satisfaction. In humanistic counselling, this is done by establishing a reparative therapeutic climate that seeks to provide the client with the right environmental conditions for such growth to take place.

The counsellor attempts to generate this optimal environment by establishing a relationship with the client that is characterised by what Rogers (1961) termed the 'core conditions' of genuineness, acceptance and empathic understanding.



*Genuineness* (also known as 'congruence') relates to the counsellor's ability to be personally transparent in the therapeutic relationship. Hence, any idea of the counsellor being personally distant or maintaining a veil of professional objectivity in relation to the client is strongly eschewed. Instead, the humanistic perspective proposes that, in order to gain a client's trust and to model a healthy relationship, the counsellor must be experienced by the client as a 'real flesh and blood' person, whose 'essential humanity' is plain to see (Mearns, & Thorne, 1999; 133). To appear consistently transparent in the eyes of the client, the humanistic counsellor must therefore be able to remain fully open to the flow of their own moment-to-moment feelings, thoughts and attitudes, as they attend to the client. It is only from such a basis of inner congruence that the counsellor can convey outer congruence to the client.

*Acceptance* (also known as 'unconditional positive regard') refers to the counsellor's ability to retain a non-judgemental stance, in their attitudes and interactions with the client. If the conditional self-acceptance that has been gradually internalised by the client is to be overturned and replaced by a greater degree of *unconditional* self-acceptance and love, the humanistic counsellor must consistently demonstrate to the client that no such conditions operate in their relationship: the client will be accepted and valued by the counsellor irrespective of what they say or do, or how bad or worthless they feel. Furthermore, Rogers (1961) proposed that the counsellor's ability to offer such unconditional acceptance to their client stems from their own capacity to accept themselves. In order to demonstrate acceptance of *all* of their client's emotions, experiences, traits or views, the counsellor must be able to hear and accept their own capacity for similar feelings or views. If such feelings or views present in the client arouse fear and hostility within the counsellor there is little chance that they will be able to convey a non-judgemental attitude towards the client.

The humanistic perspective places great value on each client's individuality, subjective reality and the meanings they attach to their experience (Johns, 1996). *Empathic understanding* refers to the person-centred counsellor's ability to enter fully into their client's unique phenomenological world. If the humanistic counsellor hopes to encourage their client to modify their self-concept, they must first be able to accurately perceive how the client experiences their world and to effectively communicate this to them. To the extent that they can do this, the humanistic counsellor will engender in the

client a feeling of being understood and the belief that the counsellor is a reliable companion to share in their explorations. The humanistic counsellor's ability to perceive the world through the eyes of their client requires them to be able to recognise and set aside their own attitudes, biases and values. Furthermore, the ability to enter fully into the subjective world of another without being overwhelmed or disorientated, requires the humanistic counsellor to be securely rooted in their own sense of self.

Hence, the humanistic counsellor's ability to convey the core conditions (genuineness, acceptance, empathy) to clients is intimately bound up with their ability to maintain these attitudes towards themselves. In other words, the counsellor's openness, acceptance and understanding of themselves is what creates their capacity to facilitate the development of these qualities in clients. This fundamental inter-relationship between the personal development of the counsellor and that of their clients is what Rogers (1961; 56) was referring to when he wrote: 'the degree to which I [counsellor] can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others [clients] as separate persons is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself'.

As a consequence of its integral role in person-centred counselling practice, work on the 'person' of the counsellor is regarded as central in person-centred training. For person-centred trainees, emphasis is placed on the development of greater self-reliance, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-understanding; anything that might inhibit their ability to express the core conditions (Mearns, 1997). In person-centred training, personal development work tends to involve trainees in a variety of experiential activities, emphasising group work and journal keeping, rather than personal therapy, which tends to be voluntary rather than obligatory. They are also encouraged more generally to risk new experiences, to read widely and to expand their breadth of life experience (Johns, 1996).

### **1. 3. 3 The cognitive-behavioural perspective**

The cognitive-behavioural approach to counselling sees people's conscious thought processes as the primary mediators of their emotions and behaviour (Moorey, 1996). Its underlying philosophy is consistent that of the Greek philosopher Epictetus, who



proposed that people are disturbed 'not by things but by the views which they take of them' (Johns, 1996). Problems are therefore seen as the result of maladaptive ways of thinking, acquired through inaccurate perceptions and out-moded learning. The goal of cognitive-behavioural counselling is to teach the client how to identify and modifying their own self-defeating thinking and to acquire a more accurate view of the world.

Cognitive-behavioural work emphasises a collaborative working alliance in which the counsellor and client adopt an empirical and pragmatic view of the client's problems. The client's core beliefs and perceptions are systematically challenged and treated as if they were scientific hypotheses to be tested out against reality. Moorey (1996:266) gives the following example. A depressed client may have the belief: 'If I visit my friend tomorrow I will get no pleasure from it.' The counsellor may then suggest that, as a form of 'homework', this client arranges to meet with this friend the following afternoon and immediately afterwards to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, the amount of pleasure they received from the experience. The client may find that they derived at least some degree of pleasure from the visit, thus disproving their original statement. In this way, a client's negative way of viewing their world may be gradually eroded and replaced with more balanced and adaptive cognitions.

Traditionally, the cognitive-behavioural model has tended to emphasise the use of therapeutic techniques in effecting psychological change more than the use of the relationship between the client and counsellor. Due to the pragmatic and didactic nature of the client-counsellor relationship in this way of working, there has traditionally been relatively little emphasis on the cognitive-behavioural counsellor's self-awareness or feelings. The counsellor's personal qualities and relationship with the client are considered relevant to the success of the work. However, they are conceptualised primarily in terms of their contribution to the forging of a collaborative alliance that will increase the client's receptivity to the application of the counsellor's techniques (Moorey, 1996). Thus, in cognitive-behavioural work, the client-counsellor relationship has not traditionally been used as a vehicle for therapeutic change in itself (Johns, 1996). As McLeod (1993) notes, there is no concept in cognitive-behavioural counselling theory equivalent to that of 'counter-transference' (psychodynamic) or 'congruence' (humanistic). Consequently, the training of cognitive-behavioural counsellors has traditionally tended to give little emphasis to trainees' personal development. There is no

expectation that cognitive-behavioural trainees should undergo their own personal therapy, though this would not in principle be discouraged should a trainee feel it necessary (Johns, 1996).

#### 1. 3. 4 Comparing traditional perspectives

From the foregoing overview, it is possible to observe several ways in which these three traditional theoretical perspectives on the role of person of the counsellor both converge and diverge.

Perhaps most striking is the divergence between the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives, on the one hand, and the cognitive-behavioural perspective, on the other. Within the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives, the relationship between the counsellor and client has traditionally been regarded as central. It is this that provides the primary vehicle for the therapeutic work itself, whether as crucible for the enactment of transference relationships or as a conduit the creation of the core conditions. Furthermore, given their emphasis on the client-counsellor relationship as the main therapeutic vehicle, both the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives regard the person of the counsellor as fundamental to the therapeutic endeavour; something that can both affect and be affected by the therapeutic relationship and process.

Consequently, both psychodynamic and humanistic counsellors are required to develop high levels of personal insight and self-knowledge. At this level, the humanistic counsellor's ability to recognise and put aside their own personal biases in order to enter fully into their client's phenomenological world could be said to correspond broadly with the psychodynamic counsellor's ability to distinguish between counter-transference reactions that stem from their own unresolved issues and those that correspond more directly to what is being unconsciously communicated by the client. Furthermore, both the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives have stressed the necessity of personal development work for the counsellor.

In contrast, the cognitive-behavioural perspective has not traditionally perceived the client-counsellor relationship as a core therapeutic vehicle, or regarded person of the



counsellor, their self-awareness and personal development, as having a fundamental role in the therapeutic process or counsellor training. A traditional divergence between the psychodynamic-humanistic and cognitive-behavioural perspectives and their approaches to counsellor training has been noted by other authors. For example, Legg (1998) has described psychodynamic and humanistic counselling in terms of a process of 'being', and cognitive-behavioural counselling in terms of a process of 'doing'. Similarly, Jenkins (1995) characterises psychodynamic and humanistic counsellor training in terms an 'inductive approach' (emphasising experiential learning and the exploration of meaning) and the cognitive-behavioural approach in terms of a 'deductive approach' (emphasising the acquisition of skills and techniques).

However, although the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives may be broadly compared and differentiated from the cognitive-behavioural perspectives, the two themselves begin to diverge when examined at a deeper level. Their points of difference emerge chiefly in the particular way that the counsellor's self-awareness is employed therapeutically. For example, while both perspectives have a role for the counsellor's self-awareness, the psychodynamic counsellor uses their personal awareness primarily to monitor counter-transference and to ensure that they remain personally neutral in relation to the client. The more they can keep their own self in the background, the more space they will create for the emergence of artificial transference relationships, which are crucial in illuminating the client's internal world and habitual patterns of relating.

In contrast, the humanistic counsellor uses their self-awareness primarily to enhance their ability to embody and convey the core conditions (genuineness, acceptance and empathy). Furthermore, it is the presence of these core qualities within the counsellor that helps to mobilise the client's own actualising capacities. It is in this sense that the counsellors own 'level' of personal development determines their ability to facilitate the personal development of their clients. Hence, rather than keep their own 'self' in the background - as in psychodynamic work, the humanistic counsellor seeks to appear genuinely 'as they really are'. If the crucial growth-facilitating climate is to develop, the counsellor's real self must be consistently transparent and available to the client. Thus, in contrast to the artificial transference relationship found in the psychodynamic perspective, the humanistic counsellors aims to create a 'real' and deeply empathic

relationship, in which they seek to experience what it is like to be the client (Mearns, 1997).

Another point of divergence between the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives can be observed in their approaches to personal development work in counsellor training. For psychodynamic trainees, it is the obligatory experience of their own personal therapy that provides the main vehicle for the development of the self-awareness and personal growth necessary for effective psychodynamic work. However, in humanistic training, personal development work is viewed more broadly and flexibly. Although the experience of personal therapy may be encouraged, it is unlikely to be made a requirement, as this would contravene the fundamental trust that the humanistic model places in the individual's autonomy and capacity to make their own decisions (Johns, 1996). Instead, emphasis is placed on group experience and other pursuits, such as journal keeping, reading, the arts and the broadening of life experience. Mearns (1997; 310) explains that one of the reasons for the emphasis on group work in humanistic training is that it is believed to 'present more personally challenging interpersonal encounters than does therapeutic contact with one other person'. However, elsewhere Mearns (1997) and Williams & Irving (1996) have also suggested that, to some extent, differences between the perspectives of various theories of counselling regarding personal development and the person of the counsellor sometimes reflect differences in terminology and emphasis, rather than deep conceptual rifts.

In sum, it appears that, within the cognitive-behavioural perspective, the person of the counsellor has traditionally been given relatively little therapeutic importance. This is in contrast to the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives, both of which have traditionally emphasised its therapeutic significance. However, beyond broader commonalities, the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives differ in the way that the person of the counsellor is harnessed in therapeutic practice, the former emphasising the counsellor's interpersonal neutrality and the latter the counsellor's interpersonal transparency.

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## 1.4 Evolving perspectives on the person of the counsellor

The foregoing discussion of traditional theoretical perspectives provides an important foundation for examining and understanding how the person of the counsellor and the role of 'personal development' have come to be viewed within the contemporary counselling context, where different theoretical perspectives are increasingly combined and integrated in practice and training.

Since they were first developed, the psychodynamic, humanistic and cognitive-behavioural approaches have each evolved in new ways that have made a significant impact on their views regarding the person of the counsellor. Furthermore, theoretically integrative approaches to counselling, as exemplified by the recently evolved field of counselling psychology, have become more commonplace than single-theory or 'pure' approaches (Begin & Garfield, 1994). A key role in these developments has been played by research into the processes and outcomes of counselling and psychotherapy (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 1996).

One major finding that has emerged repeatedly from process-outcome research over the last two decades is that, despite fundamental differences in theory and technique, the main approaches to counselling appeared overall to work equally well. For instance, Bergin & Garfield (1994: 822) concluded that:

*"We have to face the fact that in the majority of studies, different approaches to the same symptoms show little difference in efficacy."*

One of the possible implications of this finding, dubbed the 'equivalence paradox', was that there may be 'common factors' operating in each approach that are more therapeutically significant than their differences (Bayne *et al*, 1994). The most obvious common factors were the personal qualities of the counsellor and their relationship with the client.

Carl Rogers and his colleagues had carried out a substantial amount of research that supported the importance of the counsellor's personal qualities and attitudes over technical and theoretical ability (Mearns, 1997). Further studies by non-Rogerian



researchers also demonstrated that, the effectiveness of therapy was determined more by the quality of the client-counsellor relationship than by any other factor, including theoretical orientation (Luborsky et al, 1983; Bergin & Lambert, 1978). In a meta-analytic review, Hovarth & Greenberg (1996) found that the 'therapeutic alliance' could account for at least 45 per cent of outcome variance. Even in studies which looked at effectiveness in behavioural treatment the interpersonal relationship between the client and counsellor was found to be positively correlated with outcome. For example, Bennun & Schindler (1988) found that the more positive counsellor and client ratings of each other, as people, at the beginning of treatment the greater the amount of change achieved by the end of treatment. They therefore concluded that 'Researchers and clinicians should not be too preoccupied with technique; favourable interpersonal conditions are also essential for therapeutic change' (1988; 151).

Research also supported the transtheoretical importance of the personal qualities of the counsellor in creating a good therapeutic relationship and alliance. For example, 'therapist variables' such as warmth, empathy, and an acceptance, as emphasised by the person-centred approach, and the emotional wellbeing of the counsellor were consistently found to be associated with successful outcomes across theoretical approaches (Clarkson, 1995).

### 1. 4. 1 The impact of research on traditional theoretical perspectives

As previously mentioned, one of the effects of these research findings was to facilitate a significant shift in traditional perspectives regarding the role and importance of the person of the counsellor and the client-counsellor relationship in effective counselling, such that practitioners in all orientations began to pay greater attention to these elements of practice (Johns, 1996).

For example, *psychodynamic* counsellors started to acknowledge that the development of a 'real', as well as transference, relationship between the counsellor and client was a fundamental and inevitable part the counselling process. For instance, after Patterson (1986), Johns (1996) has suggested that:

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*"the ideal of impersonal behaviour on the part of the therapist must be modified. The therapist should not aim to be a blank screen but should behave in the way that patients would expect of one to whom they have come for help".*

Similarly, others psychodynamic counsellors have suggested that the 'corrective emotional experience' that clients may need can only be provided by a counsellor who is warm and accepting (McLeod, 1993). Jacobs (1999; 117) has written about the increasingly acknowledged importance of the real or 'equal' relationship in psychodynamic work. Jacobs stresses that the counsellor and client share a 'common humanity', which underpins their work together and that the personal qualities of genuineness, acceptance and empathy are equally as important here as they are in humanistic counselling. Thus, Jacobs suggests that;

*"we can no longer be content as psychodynamic counsellors to think mainly in terms of transference and countertransference, as was true of much psychoanalytic thinking from Freud's first cases to the 1960s" (Jacobs, 1999; 115).*

Within the *cognitive-behavioural* perspective too, counsellors have given increasing emphasis to the person of the counsellor and the client-counsellor relationship. The traditional lack of attention paid to these dimensions in cognitive behavioural theory, practice and training laid it open to criticism from other counsellors, who argued that powerful interpersonal processes, such as counter-transference, are present even in 'symptom orientated' therapies (Aveline, 1996; 374; Johns, 1996). As Aveline (1996; 386) has argued, 'All therapies at some stage confront the therapist with the dilemmas in her own life and the partial solutions that she has adopted'. Such arguments were given added weight by the accumulation of empirical evidence. As Elton-Wilson (1994; 75) notes, research findings show that the person of the therapist is "inextricably entwined" with the success or failure of any psychotherapeutic intervention. Hence, there was a growing concern that cognitive-behavioural training may produce 'clever technicians rather than sensitive counsellors' (Dryden & Thorne, 1991; 7; 24).

In response to such developments, cognitive-behavioural counsellors have begun to think more about how the client-counsellor relationship might be conceptualised and



used to therapeutic ends within their framework. The extent of these developments are reflected in the cognitive-behavioural therapist Meyer's recent proposition that:

*"You will get further with a patient with a good therapeutic relationship and lousy techniques, than you will with good techniques and a lousy relationship". (in AuBuchon & Malatesta, 1998; 141)*

Dryden & Thorne (1991; 3-4) have also drawn attention to the importance in cognitive-behavioural practice and training of the counsellor's self-awareness. They propose that:

*"Even in those traditions where the emphasis is on client's behavioural change or the modification of cognitive processes it is nonetheless accepted that an unaware counsellor leading an unexamined life is likely to be liability rather than an asset".*

Johns (1996) has suggested that self-awareness enhances the cognitive-behavioural counsellor's ability to understand and empathise with their clients' maladaptive thought processes, as well as making them more spontaneous and creative. She also points out that it can help to reduce the likelihood that cognitive-behavioural counsellors will challenge their client's beliefs and cognitions for the 'wrong' reasons, for example due to their own unresolved issues.

Furthermore, Corrie (2002: 25) has highlighted how recent advances in cognitive therapy have led to 'a growing interest in the therapeutic relationship as source of information in its own right'. For example, she describes how the cognitive therapist may reflect on their own emotional reactions and use their relationship with the client to highlight and challenge the client's maladaptive interpersonal tendencies, especially if these are blocking the development of an effective working alliance. She draws parallels with the psychodynamic notions of transference and countertransference, and suggests that the cognitive model may be moving towards a point where it needs to develop its own equivalent concepts. She also discusses the implications that such developments in the cognitive model may have for training and raises the question of whether personal therapy might become more relevant for practitioners of this approach.

Of the three traditional perspectives reviewed earlier in the chapter, the *humanistic* perspective appears least challenged by the research findings that demonstrate the basic importance of the person of the counsellor and the client-counsellor relationship. This is because these concepts have always been central to its understanding of human relationships and the therapeutic process. Indeed, it was the emergence of the humanistic perspective that generated the initial impetus for research into the client-counsellor relationship and the personal qualities and growth of the counsellor (Barkham, 1996). These are, therefore, terms that were originally used to express an essentially humanistic view of change and development, emphasising individuality, mental *health* (rather than mental illness), and an innate capacity for movement towards optimal wellbeing. Consequently, Mearns (1997; 189) has argued that the emphasis on counsellor 'personal development' in the humanistic tradition has proved to be the 'greatest strength' of the approach.

However, the findings of process-outcome research have challenged the humanistic view to some extent by demonstrating that, while the person of the counsellor and the client-counsellor relationship may be fundamentally *necessary* in all counselling approaches, they are not always *sufficient* to produce change in themselves (Bayne *et al*, 1994). Furthermore, Jacobs (1999) has argued that a purely humanistic conceptualisation of the therapeutic relationship may not provide a sufficiently complex view of what goes on between the client and counsellor, for example in terms of unconscious and transference dynamics. He suggests that the contemporary psychodynamic perspective, with its increased emphasis on the 'real' dimensions of the therapeutic relationship, may provide a fuller and more helpful account.

The possibility that the humanistic perspective does not provide a totally comprehensive model of effective counselling, and that it is itself still evolving and open to modification is supported by Mearns' suggestion that the person-centred approach to understanding the person of the counsellor and the client-counsellor relationship approach might benefit in the future from cross fertilisation with psychodynamic concepts. He suggests that:

*".. as the psychodynamic tradition increasingly emphasises that importance of the 'real' relationship it will be fascinating to compare the two explorations of the same*



*phenomenon from different theoretical bases.. Indeed, we may find a constructive collaboration in training by putting together the 'congruence' of person-centred with the 'counter-transference' of psychodynamic" (1997; 311).*

#### 1. 4. 2 The emergence of a theoretically integrative perspective

As well as prompting modifications to traditional theoretical perspectives on the role of the client-counsellor relationship and person of the counsellor, process-outcome research has also played a significant role in enabling the emergence of an integrative perspective in counselling. As Strawbridge & Woolfe (1996; 615) observe:

*"the consistency with which the importance of [the client-counsellor relationship] has been identified has operated as a significant force in the move towards integration of approaches".*

The accumulated evidence of little difference in effectiveness between different theoretical approaches has led many counsellors to question the need and appropriateness of allegiance to one particular theoretical school and encouraged them to develop approaches to counselling that draw on ideas and techniques from a variety of theoretical perspectives. These integrative approaches are rooted in a more generic view of counselling, which views the 'common factors', such as the person of the counsellor and the client-counsellor relationship, as the core principles around which different theories and techniques can be effectively integrated (Clarkson, 1996).

Survey's carried out over the last decade demonstrate that the majority of practitioners have begun to describe their theoretical approach as eclectic or integrative, and that integrative counsellor training courses have proliferated (Bergin & Garfield, 1994). Rather than offering an immersion in a single traditional approach, integrative trainings expose students to ideas from a number of different theoretical models and view the client-counsellor relationship as central. Moreover, 'personal development' is often regarded as providing the 'integrating core' of the learning process (Johns, 1996; BPS, 2000; BAC, 1996). A clear exponent of this new integrative view is the discipline of



counselling psychology. The following section examines its perspective on the person of the counsellor.

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### **1. 5 Counselling Psychology's perspective**

Counselling psychology has been described as a branch of applied psychology concerned with the interplay between psychological principles and the counselling process (BPS, 2002). A distinguishing feature of counselling psychology is that it seeks to marry both the art and the science of counselling. Counselling psychologists therefore align themselves with a 'scientist-practitioner' model, which stresses the importance of an empirical basis for theory and practice (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996). But counselling psychology is also critical of traditional views of science. It eschews the idea of the one objective 'truth' and consequently embraces all of the traditional approaches to counselling (psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and humanistic), viewing each as making a distinct and valuable contribution. In this sense, it has been described as representing a 'postmodern' view of counselling and 'an idea whose time has come' (for a fuller account of the development of counselling psychology in the UK see Woolfe & Dryden, 1996). However, although counselling psychology promotes a theoretically pluralistic or integrative approach, it also claims to be essentially rooted in the values of the humanistic tradition. Hence, it views the client's individuality and subjectivity, the client-counsellor relationship and the person of the counsellor as central to the therapeutic process (BPS, 2002).

However, Woolfe & Dryden (1996) have noted that the rapid growth of the discipline of counselling psychology in the UK has not yet been matched by an accumulation of specialist literature dedicated to this particular branch of applied psychology and its distinctive approach to counselling practice and training. Consequently, the best account currently available of counselling psychology's perspective on the 'person' of the counsellor is to be found in its training guidelines and syllabus. These are published by the British Psychological Society (BPS), which is the governing body for counselling psychology in the UK.

These documents outline five core components that all training programmes must include in order to be recognised as leading to chartered counselling psychologist status, whether undertaken within a recognised training institution or independently by individual candidates. Reflecting the contemporary trends previously discussed, one of these core components is *'Self reflection and Personal Development'* (the others are Counselling Psychology Practice, Counselling Psychology Skills, Academic Competence and Overall Competence) (BPS, 2002). Furthermore, a brief rationale for this component of counselling psychology training is given. This is reproduced below:

*"The practice of counselling psychology often involves powerful emotional experiences. The counselling psychologist requires an awareness of the range of emotions which may be evoked during work with clients, and an ability to recognise the ways in which these may influence process issues. Thus counselling psychologists in training require opportunities to work through disturbing experiences in order to reduce the risk of being overwhelmed by emotionally challenging material. Trainees also need an awareness of their own personal issues and motivations so as to lessen the likelihood that defence mechanisms such as denial and projection will obscure understanding of clients and their problems. The experience of being a client also enables counselling psychologists to better understand, and empathise with, the difficulties frustrations and distress experienced by clients. Such experience also tends to discourage an 'expert' orientation and facilitate the development of relationships which are based upon respect for the individuality of clients.*

*It is, therefore, thought particularly important that students should have opportunities to expand the range of their interpersonal skills, become more deeply aware of the ways in which they communicate with others, and experience themselves and others in groups; confront blocks and process issues which are inimical to fully experiencing the internal world of clients and working productively with emotions and personal meaning.*

*Courses should provide students with a range of experiences which focus on personal development. Such experiences may take place in groups and would be in addition to individual personal psychological counselling of not less than 40 hours.*

*A diary of personal enquiry as specified in the Society's Diploma Regulations would normally be part of the students' personal development programme' (BPS, 2002, p.7-8, points 7.4.1-7.4.6).*

*'[The] personal diary.. reflects the candidate's personal learning and professional development. The diary might include background factors and personal or philosophical issues, which are considered to have a bearing on choosing this profession, how such factors inform the candidate's way of working, including the articulation of their professional identity and guiding values in their practice" (BPS, 2002, p.9).*

### **1. 5. 1 A theoretical analysis of counselling psychology's perspective**

Through an analysis of the above guidelines it is possible to get a sense of counselling psychology's perspective on the 'person' of the counsellor. In terms of traditional theoretical perspectives, counselling psychology's view appears to reflect a combination of psychodynamic and humanistic ideas.

It is immediately clear from the guidelines, and their emphasis on personal development as a training core component, that a counselling psychologist is regarded as being personally affected by their work, and must therefore be self-aware in the counselling process. Such a view is clearly consistent with both the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives, as previously discussed. Furthermore, the idea that the counselling psychologist needs to work through their own 'emotional disturbances' in order to work confidently with the 'emotionally challenging material' of their clients is also consistent with both perspectives. Though the language is perhaps more reflective of classical humanistic ideas about how the counsellor's ability to remain fully open to the client's way of experiencing relies on personal stability and a capacity to be open to and accepting of their own areas of emotional discomfort. In contrast, although the basic idea that a counselling psychologist must become aware of their own 'personal issues and motivations' for training and their 'defense mechanisms' is not inconsistent with a humanistic perspective, the terms used here appear more reflective of a traditionally psychodynamic conceptual base.

An emphasis on the relevance of 'being a client' is also consistent with both humanistic and psychodynamic perspectives. However, the description of the potential benefits of 'being a client', in terms of increased empathy and the fostering of humility rather than an 'expert' stance, is perhaps more reflective of traditional humanistic values. In



addition, the emphasis on developing the counselling psychologist's ability to fully experience their clients' internal world and personal meanings also appears to owe more to a traditionally humanistic than psychodynamic perspective.

In terms of the way that personal development is facilitated in counselling psychology training, the guidelines continue to mix psychodynamic and humanistic influences. The emphasis on a 'range' of personal development experiences for trainees (e.g. personal therapy, group work and a personal diary) seems to reflect the broad approach to personal development work that is consistent with the humanistic perspective. However, the fact that the experience of personal therapy is made a training *requirement*, rather than an option, is clearly at odds with humanistic values, and is more consistent with the psychodynamic approach to training. Although the amount of personal therapy required (40 hours) is considerably smaller than what would typically be required in psychodynamic training (Mearns, 1997).

In sum, by combining influences from psychodynamic and humanistic traditions, counselling psychology's perspective on the person of the counsellor appears to reflect its espoused theoretically pluralistic ethos. But the language used in the guidelines often reflects an underlying humanistic standpoint. This would, again, be consistent with the fact that counselling psychology claims to be essentially rooted in humanistic values, despite being open to a range of theoretical influences. In contrast however, the requirement that trainees undergo their own experience of personal therapy is not consistent with humanistic values.

Therefore, while counselling psychology's perspective on the person of the counsellor seems to offer a theoretically inclusive view of the person of the counsellor and reflects contemporary trends towards a more generic view of counselling and the role of the person of the counsellor, it may not be completely free from the underlying philosophical dilemmas and contradictions that can accompany attempts to synthesise or integrate ideas from diverse theoretical standpoints (Jenkins, 1994).

However, on the basis of these training guidelines and syllabus, it is difficult to know to what extent counselling psychology's perspective on the person of the counsellor represents an eclectic amalgamation of ideas from different philosophical traditions or a



more considered and purposeful integration of them. Furthermore, it may be that these guidelines intend to allow individual training programmes the space to resolve for themselves these kinds of philosophical issues, in terms of their course's 'core philosophy' (Horton, 1996; Johns, 1996). For instance, the BPS guidelines do advise accredited training institutions 'to develop a clear rationale for the personal development elements of their courses' (BPS, 2001; 8; 7.4.5). The flip side of such an approach is of course that it opens up scope for significant differences to emerge between counselling psychology training courses in terms of how they view and approach personal development work.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of using formal training documents to make inferences and extrapolations about counselling psychology's perspective on the person of the counsellor. It seems reasonable to suggest that more vital, detailed and revealing information on this subject might reside in the personal perspectives of those currently engaged in counselling psychology training.

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## 1.6 Chapter review

- The person and personal development of the counsellor have come to be widely regarded as an important basic feature of counselling training and practice in today's counselling context. However, it has also been recently suggested that this area suffers from a lack of definition and literature. To critically reflect on and evaluate these claims, particularly in relation to the area of counselling psychology training is the basic focus and aim of the present research.
- Traditionally, there have been notable similarities and differences between the major schools of counselling regarding the role and relevance of the person of the counsellor, with the psychodynamic and humanistic perspectives tending to emphasise its importance - although in different ways - and the cognitive-behavioural perspective seeing it as significantly less important than theory and technique.

- However, accumulated research evidence has demonstrated that the person of the counsellor and the therapeutic relationship are basic ingredients in all approaches. As result, the major counselling traditions have increasingly drawn together in their views regarding the role of the counsellor as a person and the need for personal development work in training. This research also encouraged counsellors to develop approaches to counselling practice and training that integrate ideas from a number of theoretical perspectives. Today, the majority of counsellors claim not to adhere to just one approach, but instead regard themselves as integrative practitioners.
  - The recently evolved discipline of 'counselling psychology' is a major exponent of this new integrative approach. Its perspective on the person of the counsellor combines psychodynamic and humanistic concepts and therefore largely reflects its theoretically pluralistic philosophy. However, it is not clear to what extent counselling psychology's perspective is based on an explicit and systematic integration, rather than an implicit amalgam, of theoretical ideas from different counselling traditions. The implications of bringing together divergent philosophical standpoints on personal development may be left for individual training courses to consider and resolve. This may in turn result in significant differences between counselling psychology courses in their approaches to personal development and training.
  - The available specialist counselling psychology literature and the use of training documents to infer counselling psychology's perspective on the person of the counsellor are significantly limited. Those currently involved in counselling psychology training may provide more valid data on this subject.
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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

# CHAPTER 2



## ***CHAPTER 2: THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT***

# THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an introduction to the basic rationale and focus of the present research. It reviewed the concept of the person of the counsellor from a variety of theoretical perspectives, and examined how it has increasingly come to be regarded as fundamental to all approaches. The increased centrality of the person of the counsellor is now clearly reflected in the emphasis given to 'personal development' work in the training of professional counsellors and counselling psychologists (BACP, 1996; BPS, 2002). But it has also been suggested that, despite its increased centrality, 'personal development' still remains an 'ill-defined' and 'poorly specified' area of training that suffers from a surprising scarcity of literature (Williams & Irving, 1996; 171).

The aim of the present chapter is to begin an evaluation of these claims through a more in-depth critical review of the existing 'personal development' literature. Key questions that will be addressed are: 'What is the current status of the personal development literature?', 'Why is defining personal development important?' and 'To what extent *has* personal development been defined?'. Specific implications for counselling psychology training will be considered throughout. First, attention will be paid to Williams & Irving's suggestion that there is a scarcity of personal development literature.

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## 2.2 The current status of the literature

Williams & Irving (1996; 166) suggest that 'For something so important it is somewhat surprising that there is little in the literature on personal growth'. Clearly, from a researcher's perspective, this presents both a difficulty and an invitation. From an initial overview, it appears to be true that there is presently little literature under the specific rubric of 'personal development'. However, although a *specialist* literature on personal development may have yet to evolve very far, the amount of work that refers or pertains to this subject is actually quite large, albeit diffuse.

For example, some literature has focused on the broader concept of 'counsellor development'. However, work in this area has centred on the professional rather than the personal aspects of counsellor development (a distinction that will be more fully explored later in this chapter). For example, it has considered issues such as how counsellors learn specific therapeutic skills, how their cognitive style develops, how they move from theoretical understanding to practical implementation, and how their knowledge is consolidated and enriched over the career (for a concise overview of work within this paradigm, see Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996). Despite this bias towards the 'professional' dimensions of development, this literature still has some relevance to personal development and the aims of the present chapter (eg. Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996).

Another relevant source of literature are introductory texts about counselling in the UK. These normally include a chapter on the topic of professional training (e.g. Woolfe & Dryden, 1996; McLeod, 1993; Dryden, 1996), which provide overviews of the training process, including the role of 'personal development' work, and highlight topical issues. A number of texts focus exclusively on the topic of counsellor training (e.g. Hughes & Buchanan, 1999; Watts & Bor, 1999; Connor, 1994; Dryden & Thorne, 1991; Dryden & Feltham, 1994; Dryden, Horton & Mearns, 1995; Mearns, 1997). Some of these dedicate whole chapters to the issue of 'personal development' (e.g. Hughes & Buchanan, 1999; Mearns, 1997; Connor, 1994; Dryden & Thorne, 1991). Typically, these chapters emphasise the centrality of personal development to therapeutic work and include brief discussions of various methods that may be used to facilitate personal development during training. Some also propose detailed curricula for trainees' personal development work (e.g. Mearns, 1997; Connor, 1994).



Three texts have emerged that focus specifically on the topic of personal or professional development. These are *Personal Development in Counsellor Training* by Hazel Johns (1996), *Personal and Professional Development for Counsellors* by Paul Wilkins (1997); and *Becoming a Therapist: A manual for personal and professional development* by Malcolm Cross and Linda Papadapolous (2001). Each of these texts offer insightful explorations of the nature and role of personal development in counsellor training, and of the various methods that may be used to facilitate it. However, like the textbook literature mentioned above, their main purpose is to provide practically useful information and guidance for counselling trainers and trainees, rather than to critically evaluate the area or develop theory and research within it.

Notably, much of the aforementioned literature tends to have a strong person-centred flavour and to refer, perhaps more generically, to 'counsellors' and BACP training codes (e.g. Dryden *et al*, 1995; Wilkins, 1997), than specifically to 'counselling psychologists', 'clinical psychologists' or 'psychotherapists'. This may not be surprising, given that it is the person-centred perspective that has traditionally emphasised the concept of personal development for clients and therapists (Mearns, 1997).

However, there is another relatively large body of literature that has taken a more empirical perspective. The vast majority of this work has focused on evaluating and discussing the professional benefits of personal therapy for counsellors (for recent reviews of this literature see Macran & Shapiro, 1998; Macaskill & Macaskill, 1988). However, despite the volume of empirical work on personal therapy, the emotiveness and complexity of the topic, and the poor quality of many studies, have made it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the usefulness of personal therapy. Consequently, this literature has remained open to divergent interpretations, which tend to be more reflective of writers' personal perspectives or theoretical allegiances than the empirical evidence (Elton-Wilson, 1994). A small number of papers have also studied the effects of personal development group work (e.g. Hall *et al*, 1999; 1997). However, this too has been characterised by disagreements and criticisms regarding the rationale and benefits of the work, despite the fact that its use and value in counsellor training, like personal therapy, tends to be fairly widespread and unquestioned (e.g. Williams & Irving, 1996; Lyons, 1996).



In the last few years, some writers have also begun to discuss difficult philosophical and conceptual issues and to highlight dilemmas and gaps in present knowledge concerning counsellor training and personal development (eg. Wheeler, 2002; Walker, 2002; Irving & Williams, 1999; Berry & Woolfe, 1997; Bayne *et al*, 1996; Williams & Irving, 1996; Jenkins, 1994; Scanlon & Baillie, 1994). These papers are characterised by a more reflective and critical stance, as typified by the work of Williams & Irving, whose criticisms provide an important impetus for the present research. Indeed, it may be that the recency of this critically reflective work, as well as the small body of dedicated personal development literature referred to above (Cross & Papadapolous, 2001; Wilkins, 1997; Johns, 1996), reflects a rising awareness of the need for specialised literature on counsellor training and personal development.

In sum, although as Williams & Irving (1997) suggest, there may be a surprisingly small amount of specialist literature on 'personal development' *per se*, a considerable but diffuse literature exists that seems relevant to it. The remainder of this chapter can be understood as an attempt to synthesise the various strands of this literature into a more unified and coherent form that will provide a firmer basis for further focused work in this area.

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### 2.3 Why is it important to define personal development?

Besides a lack of literature, Williams & Irving (1996) also claim that the concept of personal development tends to be inadequately defined and articulated in counsellor training. Similarly, Jenkins (1994: 205) has argued that 'core elements of counsellor training lack definition and agreement'. However, as personal development is believed to have an important therapeutic function, and a core aim of professional training is to facilitate this development, it seems reasonable to suggest that counsellors should be able to define what personal development *is*.

However, Williams & Irving (1996: 166) argue that the notion of personal development 'is endowed with myriad implicit meanings and shared understandings'. They illustrate this conceptual fuzziness by pointing to the variety of terms that

appear to be used synonymously or interchangeably with 'personal development'. They cite 'personal development', 'encouraging self-awareness', 'personal growth', 'experiential learning', 'reflecting on feelings', 'getting in touch with oneself' and 'openness to change' as terms that have all been used synonymously, but which they argue have different meanings. An additional analysis of the literature for the present research found the terms 'self development' (BAC. 1996:,10; Dryden *et al*, 1995; 97), 'self exploration' (Dryden & Thorne, 1991: 17), 'work on self' (McLeod, 1994: 209), 'self reflection and personal development' (BPS, 1998; 9) and 'personal therapy' (Aveline, 1996; 386) all been used to represent similar concepts and processes relating to the person of the counsellor.

In addition, Williams & Irving argue that the accounts of 'personal development' generally given are incomplete and misleading. For instance, they suggest that there is a common tendency to equate 'personal development' with 'self-awareness'. But Williams & Irving suggest that personal development is actually a much broader and more complex concept that encompasses a trainee's whole 'way of being' rather than just a 'state of knowing' (1996; 166).

As well as its terminological and conceptual confusion, Williams & Irving argue that the humanistic rationale commonly underlying personal development in counsellor training is 'fatally flawed' (1996, p.165). Citing the work of Lehain (1994), they propose that Rogerian assumptions about the nature of human growth are implicit and pervasive in the training programmes and professional organisation of counselling and counselling psychology in the UK. As a consequence of these theoretical and philosophical assumptions, the authors suggest that far too much faith tends to be placed in trainees' 'actualising tendency' and the belief that personal development will inevitably occur given the right environmental conditions. However, Williams & Irving observe from their own experience and research as counsellor trainers that, in reality, the personal development experiences of trainees (e.g. personal therapy and group work) are not always beneficial. What is more, they propose that there is a distinct lack of guidance from the BACP and BPS regarding the 'necessary and sufficient' conditions for facilitating personal development during training (Williams & Irving, 1996, p.166). Consequently, Williams & Irving (1996) challenge trainers to develop a more clearly defined and realistic conceptualisation of personal development. They warn that this may be necessary, not only for the welfare of trainees, but for the future credibility of the counselling professions.



Furthermore, Williams & Irving's (1996) argument for the necessity of a clearer definition of personal development also appears to have direct implications for a number of other core aspects of counsellor training: the facilitation of personal development, the assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees. Each of these areas will be considered in turn.

### **2. 3. 1 Implications for the facilitation of personal development**

A clear definition of personal development would also seem to be a fundamental prerequisite for successfully facilitating personal development during training, as it seems reasonable to suggest that trainees need to have an idea of what they are aiming for in order to get there. Indeed, Lyons (1996) has suggested that clarity regarding the aims of personal development work in training not only helps to model 'intentional practice', but is also essential to the optimal development of trainees and what she calls a 'purposeful personal development programme'.

Similarly, drawing on her own experience as a counsellor trainer, Proctor (1991: 61-63) emphasises the basic importance in effective counsellor training of 'clear working agreements' between the course and its members. She argues that it is essential that trainers provide clear answers to trainees' questions about what they are expected to learn, what resources are available to them and who is responsible for the different ingredients in learning opportunities. In Proctor's view, such agreements facilitate deeper engagement in the personal development activities and experiences themselves. Sugarman (1985) has also put forward a similar argument, suggesting that clarity and transparency about learning aims and objectives helps to 'de-mystify' the learning process in a way that is helpful to trainees.

Furthermore, Irving & Williams (1996) suggest that the issue of defining personal development has an ethical dimension that relates to trainees' 'informed consent'. They argue that training courses have a professional obligation to ensure that trainees clearly understand and feel safe with the personal development methods used on the course (1996; 137-138). This can only be achieved, they suggest, by having explicit and clearly defined aims for personal development work. However, like the terminological and conceptual confusion surrounding personal development, a

number of different terms also appear to be used interchangeably in relation to some methods for facilitating personal development. For example, in relation to group work, McLeod (1993; 211) suggests that the terms 'therapy groups, experiential groups or encounter groups' are used interchangeably. Similarly, the terms 'personal therapy' (BPS, 1999; 2001; Macaskill, 1988) 'personal counselling' (Bayne *et al*, 1994) and 'personal psychological counselling' (BPS, 2002) all appear to be used interchangeably, with any intended differences between them remaining largely unexplicated.

A further criticism is that the aims of personal development facilitation methods, such as personal therapy and personal development group work, themselves tend to be insufficiently specified and understood (Mearns *et al*, 1998; Williams & Irving, 1996). For example, while some writers have suggested that trainees be given wide scope to decide how they would like to best use their experience of personal therapy (Legg, 1998), others have proposed that trainees should be required to use their personal therapy to focus on issues that have the greatest potential relevance to their client work (Dryden, 1994). Furthermore, a study by Williams (1999) found that clarity of aims regarding personal therapy was associated with greater perceived benefits of the experience for counselling psychology trainees.

Dryden & Thorne (1991) have also raised a related concern about the tendency for some counsellor training courses to pay lip service to personal development by presuming that a personal therapy requirement will be sufficient to meet trainees' personal development needs and to regard it as separate from, or an 'add-on' to, the main body of the training programme. In contrast, these writers argue that individual personal development needs are highly complex and diverse and that personal therapy must be complemented with other methods, such as group work, in order to address the range of issues necessary. Furthermore, they suggest that, in order to ensure the integration of personal and professional learning, courses must explicitly integrate personal development into all other aspects of the training process. They argue that such integration enables trainers to get to know and closely monitor the progress of their trainees. As noted previously, in counselling psychology training, it is currently recommended that courses 'provide students with a range of experiences which focus on personal development', including group work (BPS, 2002; 8; 7.4.3). However, through its 40 hour requirement, the experience of personal therapy still



seems intended as the main vehicle for facilitating counselling psychology trainees' personal development.

Furthermore, there is some evidence that a tendency to overlook the importance of a broad and integrated approach to personal development may be particularly characteristic of counselling training that takes place within an academic setting, as in counselling psychology training. Research by Scanlon & Baillie (1994) on the experiences of students undertaking counselling training within Departments of Higher Education found that, although trainees believed personal development to be integral to the process of becoming a counsellor, they also felt that their courses paid far too little attention to experiential and skills work, instead emphasising academic competence and empirical rigour. This feeling was particularly common among trainees who had less prior counselling experience. The researchers also found that trainees were concerned about the lack of integration and monitoring of their clinical placements.

Scanlon & Baillie (1994) explain this apparent imbalance in terms of an earlier theory put forward by Schön (1983), who argued that the training of 'reflective practitioners', such as counsellors, in institutes of higher education is problematic because academic culture emphasises scholarly activity rather than 'real world' professional practice. In addition, they argue that this problem reflects a culturally embedded epistemological 'down-hierarchy', where academic values, with their emphasis on scientific rigour and rationality, provide the accepted benchmark for professional credibility in the wider societal arena, while the person of the counsellor, their experiential learning and clinical practice are 'de-emphasised' (p.416). Furthermore, Scanlon & Baillie suggest that trainers may be as dissatisfied with the current imbalance in their programmes as their trainees. However, they are currently obliged by demands of the wider system to provide courses that meet with accepted, though limited, academic standards of competence. Scanlon & Baillie therefore urge 'collaborative action by all those involved in the educational process to bring about the necessary change' (p.425).

### 2. 3. 2 Implications for the assessment of personal development

As with the facilitation of personal development there is also an important basic link between the definition of personal development and its assessment in training. Given the widespread belief that personal development is central to professional training and competence, it could be reasonably argued that counsellor trainers must not only be able to effectively define and facilitate personal development, but also assess the degree to which it takes place. As Mearns (1997) points out, training courses have a professional and ethical responsibility to ensure that trainees have met all course objectives and are fit to practice. Thus, a clear definition of personal development would seem to be a logical prerequisite for its assessment because, before one can establish the degree to which something has taken place, it is essential to know what is being looked for. This point is reiterated by Irving & Williams (1999, 523) who argue that:

*"in establishing training needs there has to be some specification of minimal requirements.. If certain personal attributes are deemed fundamental to competent and safe practice, there has to be in place some adequate way of assessing this component of training."*

Further support for a basic link between definition and assessment is provided by Connor's (1994) integrative model of counsellor training. This model proposes that effective personal development assessment must be founded on clearly defined, basic personal development objectives for all trainees, which can then be broken down and personalised through discussion between individual trainees and their tutors.

The definition-assessment link is also supported by Williams & Irving's (1996: 166) argument that a more concrete definition of personal development is necessary for basic reasons of professional credibility and legal accountability. They suggest that:

*'Ultimately, if counselling is to progress in a professional mode, where the validity of accredited qualifications will ultimately be tested in the courts (as might occur when a candidate is seen through formal assessment to have the necessary skills required for a diploma, but has failed to 'grow' and is, therefore, not acceptable to the accrediting organisation), then a less amorphous description will be needed'.*



The concerns that Williams & Irving raise here are also relevant to wider topical debates about the definition and assessment of 'counsellor competence'. For instance, McLeod (1996a) has suggested that the question of satisfactorily defining counsellor competence is an increasingly crucial one in the UK, due largely to wider social and market forces, such as the increased dependency of the counselling professions on third party agencies for funding, the demand for accountability, quality assurance and evidence-based practice, and the proliferation of counsellor training courses. McLeod also highlights a number of key 'counsellor competence' questions, whose importance has been heightened by these wider cultural forces. For example, he asks:

- *'What qualities, skills and competencies should training courses be aiming to develop in their students?*
- *What competencies should trainees already possess before beginning a course? What level of competence should constitute the pass/fail cut-off point on a counsellor training course?*
- *What methods and techniques can best be used to assess competence?*

Similarly, counselling psychologists have themselves noted an 'increasing public and governmental concern with quality and the maintenance of competence in all fields of practice' (BPS, 2001; 2).

However, there is some evidence that current methods for assessing counsellor competence and personal development may be inadequate, particularly in academically based training courses. For example, Scanlon & Baillie's previously mentioned study (1994; 420) found that counsellor trainees in Institutes of Higher Education felt that, although their academic competence had been assessed quite rigorously, the assessment of actual clinical competence was lacking. As one informant commented:

*"My impression is.. that it is much easier to get through the clinical component than the academic.. [and] that there are people who are clinically dodgy who are somehow getting through - and that really annoys me."*

However, the difficulty of assessing clinical competence and personal development, especially compared with other key training components such as counselling theory and skills several, is something that has been highlighted by a number of counsellor

trainers (e.g. Wheeler, 2002; Berry and Woolfe, 1997; Johns, 1996; Connor, 1994). The difficulty is frequently attributed, particularly in Higher Education settings, to the fact that these trainee attributes are not amenable to assessment 'in the traditional academic manner' (Berry and Woolfe, 1997; 523). Furthermore, Berry and Woolfe (1997) suggest that this difficulty reflects a deeper philosophical tension between the essentially academic values of 'assessment' (e.g. objectivity, external locus of evaluation, open scrutiny) and the basic 'person-centred' values of counselling (e.g. subjectivity, internal locus of evaluation, confidentiality). However, like Williams & Irving, Berry & Woolfe (1997) also argue that there are significant potential benefits to developing more systematic ways of assessing trainees' clinical competence and personal development, including enhanced professional credibility, regulation and quality control.

Similarly, Wheeler (2002) has argued that an academic setting places particular demands for rigour on student assessment, and that these can be beneficially applied to assessing the personal development of trainee counsellors. Wheeler recommends developing an approach to assessing personal development that is founded on a basic university model of good 'Teaching & Learning' practice. This emphasises the specification of: 1) clear learning objectives for personal development (e.g. the ability to give and take feedback, to identify personal strengths and weaknesses, and to demonstrate evidence of how these areas will be addressed); 2) possible sources of 'evidence' for assessment (e.g. personal therapist, teaching staff, supervisor, written work and clinical material) and 3) assessment methods (e.g. structured use of personal journals, satisfactory personal development group facilitator reports, critiques of clinical work based on the self-reflection of the trainee, and self, peer and staff assessment that leads to generation of a document about the trainee that all parties have to agree on).

Wheeler also highlights a study in which she found that many trainers experience dilemmas about trainees who they feel are not personally suitable or safe to practice but who, by meeting all of the 'academic' course criteria, are passed. She therefore emphasises the importance of developing more concrete and evidence-based approaches to assessing personal development in training, which provide trainers with a more confident basis for dealing with trainees who have failed to develop satisfactorily.



Walker (2002) has addressed the issue of counsellor assessment more broadly. She identifies transparency between courses and trainees regarding assessment methods and criteria as a fundamental principle, and argues that 'hidden agendas' or 'unclear procedures' are problematic because they contribute to a climate of 'insecurity', which hinders the openness that is required for effective learning to take place. The feelings of insecurity that trainees may experience in relation to the subject of 'assessment' has also been discussed by Kowszun (2002). She refers to the 'shadow of assessment' and notes the increasing move from 'functionalism to structuralism' in counselling training that reflect wider societal pressures for evidence-based practice.

Connor (1994) has also attempted to confront both the practical and philosophical dilemmas involved in assessing personal development in training. She recommends that trainees' personal journals are used on two levels to provide direct and tangible evidence that individually tailored personal development objectives have been met. In Connor's model, trainees first assess their own progress in relation to their previously set objectives and then trainers then assess the way in which the trainee is providing evidence for their self-assessment, and how well they are using their journal as a learning tool.

Like Connor's (1994) and Wheeler's (2002) approaches, counselling psychology training courses also require trainees to keep a personal journal, which is used to 'assess' their personal development. However, unlike Connor's and Wheeler's models, counselling psychology training stresses the essential *informality* of personal development assessment. For example, the BPS regulations advise that the personal journal may be used as an 'aid to supervision', but that evidence of a trainee's personal development is generally sought through 'other components' of the course (BPS, 1997; 10; 6.3). Consequently, it may be that there is scope within counselling psychology training for developing a more formal system for monitoring and assessing trainees' personal development.

### 2. 3. 3 Implications for the selection trainees

Mearns (1997; 113) has suggested that the effective selection of candidates for counsellor training represents 'an important first step in achieving the personal

development dimension within training'. Therefore, as with the facilitation and assessment of personal development, an important link may also be perceived between the definition of personal development and an effective admissions process.

A key reason why an applicants' personal development may be considered an important issue in course selection is because professional counselling training aims to engage candidates in an emotionally, as well as intellectually, demanding experience (eg. Mearns, 1997; Connor, 1996; Johns, 1996; Dryden *et al*, 1995). Consequently, is crucial for course selectors to evaluate an applicant's personal readiness for counselling training, as well as their academic readiness. In fact, Mearns (1997) has suggested that candidates' personal readiness is the single most predictive factor of the success of their personal development during training, and that a key factor in this readiness is the candidate's openness to personal change.

Successful candidates are therefore expected to be sufficiently open to the personal changes that the training experience may bring about, and to demonstrate some evidence of the personal development capacities that they will be expected to develop during training. Moreover, this relationship between trainees' personal development capacities before and during training, suggests that a clear definition of personal development may be important in providing course selectors with a sound basis for specifying the personal attributes that successful candidates must possess, and the methods that are most appropriate for assessing them. The candidate's motivations for training have also been identified as important factors in assessing personal suitability (Guy, 1987). For example, Dryden *et al* (1995) have suggested that it is important to establish that course applicants are not primarily seeking a personal therapy type experience, rather than a professional training. Guy (1987) has also written about a number of desirable and undesirable personal qualities and motivators for those wishing to enter counsellor training.

However, despite its obvious importance to counsellor training, a number of writers have commented that personal suitability is a notoriously difficult quality to assess at selection, much like the assessment of personal development during training (Dryden *et al*, 1995; McLeod, 1993; Guy, 1987). Furthermore, these authors suggest that the selection methods commonly used in counsellor training (e.g. application forms, references, interviews) may be significantly limited in their capacity to assess such personal dimensions. For instance, Dryden *et al* (1995) highlight a specific difficulty in



spotting particular kinds of unsuitable applicants and then dealing with the problem once training has begun. These authors emphasise the importance of helping applicants, as well as selectors, to make the right decision about their suitability or readiness for training, by stressing the importance of providing clear information about the course and openness between selectors and applicants throughout the whole admissions process. For instance, these writers report structuring application forms in such a way that requires applicants to reflect on their motivations and expectations for training. They also issue a 'Health Warning' during interviews regarding the possible changes that individuals may experience in their personal lives as a result of the training.

Although an applicant-centred approach seems important and helpful in the admissions process, Aveline (1996) has argued that course selectors carry the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that applicants do not take on training for which they are unready, as well as for acting as 'gate-keepers' for their profession (Guy, 1987). It may be that significant scope remains for counsellor training courses to improve their selection procedures, and that clearer definition of personal development may be able to assist in this process. Indeed, this possibility appears to be supported by the comments of other writers, who note that there have been surprisingly few attempts to research or develop this fundamental aspect of counsellor training (see McLeod, 1994; and Guy, 1987). Furthermore, this incongruence seems particularly significant for the discipline of counselling psychology, which places particular importance on the use of research to inform practice. It is also interesting to note that the issue of personal suitability is not mentioned in the selection criteria that the BPS recommends for counselling psychology courses, other than to say that: 'All criteria used in selection should be compatible with the aim of producing trained counselling psychologists of the highest quality.' (BPS, 1997; 5; 6.5). Although, as suggested in the previous chapter, these guidelines may be intentionally broad to allow individual counselling psychology courses scope to address such issues as they see fit.

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## 2. 4 To what extent has personal development been defined?

From the forgoing discussion it is clear that significant criticisms have been made about personal development and its definition in counsellor training. There also appear to be a number of fundamental ways in which the (lack of) definition of personal development impinges significantly on other key aspects of counsellor training. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the areas of training that are inter-dependent on the definition of personal development, such as the facilitation and assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees, seem themselves to be characterised by a lack of definition and literature and to thereby provide additional supportive evidence for Williams & Irving's (1996) criticisms. Consequently, there appears to be a range of reasons why the definition of personal development is important.

If a definition is important, a logical question to ask is 'To what extent has personal development been defined?'. As pointed out previously, Williams & Irving (1997) suggest that the area as a whole is poorly articulated. However, there are some instances in the literature of theoretical work that helps to clarify and refine the definition of personal development, and some of its related concepts. Some writers have gone as far as proposing their own detailed 'curricula' for personal development in counsellor training. These curricula attempt to operationally define personal development in terms of specific aims and objectives for trainees. The remainder of this chapter focuses on evaluating this body of work in relation to Williams & Irving's criticisms and considering, in particular, possible implications for personal development in counselling psychology training. This will eventually lead to the specification of the questions that the present research will seek to address.

### 2. 4. 1 Personal development and professional development

It seems appropriate to begin a more in-depth critical examination of 'personal development' by considering the conceptual distinctions that have been made between the terms 'personal development' and 'professional development'. This is because personal and professional development have been described as the two major conceptual strands that constitute the broader process of 'counsellor development' (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996).

Wilkins (1997) has offered a broad and inclusive definition of these two strands. He suggests that, *professional* development is primarily concerned with counselling 'skills and knowledge', while *personal* development can be understood as embracing 'everything else which facilitates being a practising counsellor'. Wilkins' distinction between personal and professional development also seems to correspond with McLeod's (1996a; 47) two-part taxonomy of counsellor competencies. McLeod sees counsellor competencies as falling into two broad domains, which he refers to as 'technical competencies' and 'generic competencies'. McLeod describes the former as referring to the counsellor's 'skills applied in specific domains of counselling activity', and the latter as the counsellor's 'personal qualities and attributes'.

Professional development has also been described more specifically as consisting of activities such as basic and further training, attending conferences and workshops, keeping abreast of developments within the field, having regular supervision and maintaining ethical practice (Sharrock, 2000; Horton & Varma, 1997; Bayne *et al*, 1994). In contrast, personal development has been described as being concerned with the counsellor's 'obligation to address personal material which may inhibit.. therapy and... to care for the self of the therapist' (Wilkins, 1997; 10).

However, despite these distinctions, references to professional development may also include dimensions of a more personal nature, such as the practitioner's fitness to practice, self care and personal counselling (Horton, 1997; Elton-Wilson, 1994; Bayne *et al*, 1994). This would seem to indicate that, although a conceptual division may be made between them, personal and professional development are not mutually exclusive concepts or processes. Indeed, a point that appears to be increasingly emphasised in counselling discourse is that, in practice, there is an inextricable relationship between the personal and professional facets of counsellor development. As Skovholt & Ronnestad (1996; 1) observe: 'the field has increasingly come to realise the intertwining of the personal and professional aspects of functioning of the therapist/counselor'. Similarly, Johns (1996; 10) stresses the 'inevitable interplay' that exists between personal and professional development, and states that, although 'they may be separated for semantic or training purposes... each, inextricably, contains the other'.



The inter-dependency of personal and professional development has been described by Wilkins (1997), who suggests that there is 'no clear separation' between the two facets, that they are 'mutually dependent', and that, if they can be separated, 'the boundary is hazy and shifts with the moment' (Wilkins, 1997; 5). Consequently, Wilkins proposes that, rather than splitting counsellor development into two parts, it makes more sense to think of it as comprising a 'spectrum of elements' (see Figure 1. below) that may be more easily defined in terms of personal or professional needs.

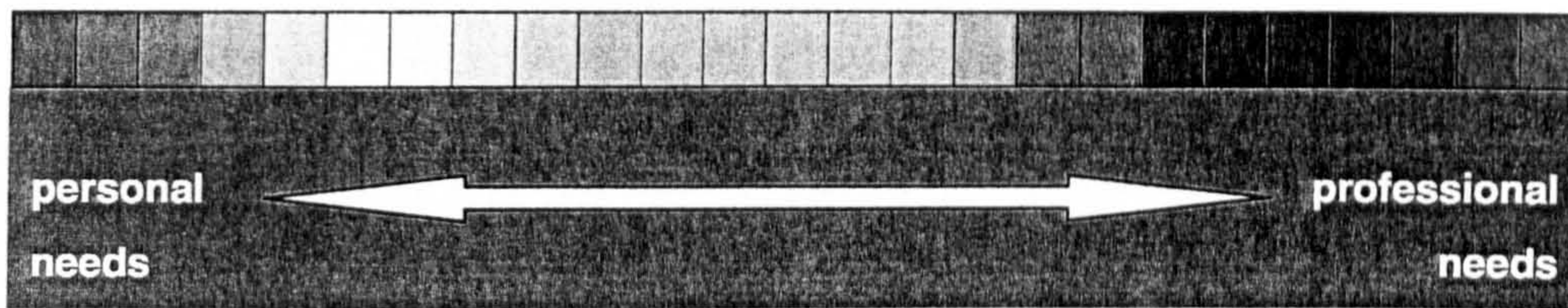


Figure1. Spectrum of elements in counsellor development

#### 2. 4. 2 Is a distinction between personal and professional development useful?

As well as questioning the reality of a distinction between personal and professional development, Wilkins also questions the point or value of distinguishing between personal and professional development at all. He suggests that, since distinctions are essentially artificial, they may be of little value (1997).

However, in direct response to Wilkins suggestion, Irving & Williams (1999) have argued that, despite the inextricable nature of their relationship, distinguishing between the two facets is worthwhile. For example, they suggest that:

*"...it is instructive to distinguish between specific aspects of professional development, such as learning to use supervision, or being familiar with ethical codes, and the purely personal agenda, of say, an ability to self-reflect."*



Furthermore, earlier research by Skovholt & Ronnestad (1996) appears to bear out this argument and help elucidate the increasingly acknowledged yet poorly understood relationship that exists between the personal and professional aspects of counsellor development. Based on one hundred in-depth interviews with a cross section of American counsellors and therapists, Skovholt & Ronnestad developed a number of themes and an eight-stage model of counsellor development that incorporated both personal and professional dimensions. The researchers found evidence for a fundamental developmental process spanning the counsellor's whole career, which they called 'professional individuation'. They observed that, over the course of this individuation process, the extent to which the personal and professional aspects of a counsellor's development were intertwined or integrated depended on their career stage. This idea seems consistent with Wilkins' previously discussed suggestion that the boundary between personal and professional development is hazy and shifts with the moment.

For example, in Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) developmental model, at the beginning of training the personal and professional realms are closely intertwined to the point that they are indistinguishable. At this stage, the trainee is relatively unaware of the ways in which their personality or self may be impacting on their professional work. Consequently, they tend to help clients from an essentially lay perspective, basing therapeutic interventions more on common sense and their personal life philosophy than on specific clinical theory or skills.

After the initial training period, the personal and professional realms gradually begin to separate and diverge, as the trainee becomes more aware of the role played by their own personality and unresolved issues in their client work. Around this time, many trainees experience a sense of instability and insecurity, both personally and professionally, as they struggle to assimilate the mass of newly acquired clinical knowledge they have gained. The counsellor at this stage therefore tends to have difficulty achieving a comfortable and effective integration of their personal and professional selves.

However, through increased experience and critical reflection, the personal and professional realms slowly begin to re-converge. The counsellor begins to develop a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between their professional effectiveness and their emerging individual style. They start to formulate and hone a

more personalised and eclectic philosophy of practice, based increasingly on their own creativity, intuition and clinical experience of what 'works', as opposed to text book theory. Gradually they begin to integrate their personal and professional selves in a more confident, coherent and therapeutic way.

As they approach the end of their career, the counsellor develops an 'increasingly higher order integration of personal and professional selves' (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996; 100). Eventually, they achieve a fluid and harmonious synthesis of the personal and professional dimensions of their clinical practice and development. Like the novice trainee, the personal and professional selves of the veteran counsellor are seamlessly and intuitively blended. However, unlike the novice, the veteran counsellor has a profound awareness and implicit understanding of their inter-relationship. They are able to operate in a highly personalised and creative way which maximises the contribution of their person self to their professional effectiveness.

Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) research therefore both confirms and elucidates the reciprocal relationship that exists between the personal and professional dimensions of counsellor development. It also demonstrates that a personal-professional distinction can provide a fruitful framework within which to study and understand the various aspects of counsellor development, particularly as their research clearly shows that it is a long and complex process.

Furthermore, Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) research also suggests that traditional theoretical differences between counsellors regarding the extent to which they perceive personal and professional development to be separate or a relevant distinction may become less significant with time and increased clinical experience. This suggestion is also supported by findings from other research. For example, a recent study by Hollanders and McLeod (1999) found that the more experienced a practitioner, the more likely he/she is to move towards an eclectic position.

#### **2. 4. 3 Personal development & self-reflection**

The concepts of personal development and self-reflection have also been closely associated in the professional literature in several ways. A relationship between the

two concepts is implied in the previously described BPS regulations for training in counselling psychology (BPS, 2002; 2), which refer to 'Self-reflection & Personal development' as one of the core components. The discipline of counselling psychology also identifies itself with a 'Reflective Practitioner' model (Legg, 1998). The term 'reflective practitioner' is most closely associated with the work of Shön (1983), and refers to the reflection that needs to take place within the individual for personal and professional learning to occur. For therapists, this reflection takes place through activities such as ongoing self-monitoring, supervision and personal therapy (Horton & Varma, 1997). A capacity to stand back from and observe one's own internal processes also resembles Casement's (1985) concept of the 'internal supervisor'.

It has been suggested that this capacity allows for and sustains professional development through a cyclical movement in which practice and reflection develop by mutually informing one another (Horton & Varma, 1997: 48). Reflection is also central to a model of experiential learning previously proposed by Kolb (1976), where it acts as a pivotal mechanism in a cyclical process of personal learning, that moves between concrete experience, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation.

Moreover, in their previously mentioned study, Skovholt & Ronnestad (1996; 105) also identify 'continuous professional reflection' as the central process by which counsellor development takes place. They suggest that the therapist's ability to maintain a 'reflective stance', in which they are 'consciously giving time and energy to processing, alone and with others, impactful experiences' accompanied by 'An active, exploratory, searching, and open attitude is of extreme importance' (1996; 106). Furthermore, these researchers suggest that it is when reflection stops that development also runs to ground and stagnation and burnout may occur. The centrality of reflection to counsellor development has been tersely encapsulated by Johns (1996; 84), who suggests that 'learning to reflect is the key to increased self-awareness and personal development'.



### 2. 4. 3 Personal development and personal growth

As noted previously, central to Williams & Irving's (1996) criticisms of personal development in counsellor training is their suggestion that different, though related, concepts are used interchangeably. One term that these authors have suggested is commonly confused with personal development is *personal growth*. Furthermore, Irving and Williams (1999) have themselves attempted a conceptual clarification of these terms. They proposed that, although the processes of personal development and personal growth are closely inter-related, the two concepts are semantically distinct in a number of important ways.

In terms of commonalities, Irving & Williams point out that both concepts clearly imply some kind of personal directional change towards a future outcome. However, the authors define 'personal development' as a more purposeful, specifiable and structured activity, which seeks to develop discrete skills or qualities, whose effects can be either 'positive' or 'negative' or transitory, and whose main focus is to enhance a trainee's professional effectiveness. In contrast, 'personal growth' is defined by Irving and Williams as a more unstructured, non-specifiable and holistic process, is more about becoming a certain kind of person than developing a particular set of aptitudes, which may come about as a side-effect of personal development work and can only be perceived retrospectively. Personal growth refers to change of a positive nature, and it's primary focus is the enhancement of a trainee's personal well-being, rather than their professional effectiveness *per se*. A summary of Irving & William's distinctions is provided below in Table 1.

Irving & Williams also provide evidence for their semantic distinctions between *development* and *growth* by giving examples of sentences that make appropriate use of the two terms. For example, the authors point out that:

*"It is acceptable to say 'I am seeking to develop my potential' but not to say 'I am seeking to grow my potential'... I can grow taller, but not develop height; I can develop my counselling technique, but not grow it."*

They demonstrate the positive direct of change that is implied by growth versus the relative neutrality of development by pointing out the feasibility of saying: 'She is growing into a good counsellor' or 'She is developing into an unsafe counsellor' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 519), but not that 'She is growing into an unsafe counsellor'.



They also distinguish the broader holistic nature of growth from the structured and specifiable nature of personal development by suggesting that: 'It may be possible to observe a trainee's personal growth as a counsellor', which includes the 'development of an ability to self-reflect'. (Irving & Williams, 1999; 521).

<b>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>PERSONAL GROWTH</b>
a purposeful activity; deliberately entered into	an incidental process; may occur as an outcome of personal development
a process that can be planned and structured	a process that cannot be planned, because it is organic and amorphous
developmental goals/criteria can be specified; the process can be monitored and distinct 'end points' achieved	developmental goals/criteria cannot be specified; the process is open-ended and perceivable only in retrospect
the effects can be transitory	the effects tend to be permanent
is semantically 'neutral'; its effects may be positive/desirable or negative/undesirable	is a value laden term that refers only to positive/desirable effects
is about developing specifiable skills, aptitudes and qualities	is about becoming a certain kind of person
its aims are client-directed - the needs of the client are the primary motivating concern	its aims are counsellor-centred - the needs of the trainee are the primary concern

**Table 1. Summary of Irving & Williams' semantic distinctions between personal development and personal growth.**

Notably, Johns (1996; 8) has made similar, though less detailed, distinctions between personal development and personal growth. She proposes that:

*"Development... involves some sense of purpose, directionality, continuity, planned activity in the direction of more effective living and working in counselling... Growth... we might define as the product of all this - as an end in itself.. "*



Furthermore, like Irving & Williams (1999), Johns (1996; 40) also suggests that a trainees' personal development is made of discrete elements and that these are likely to have an impact on the trainees' personal growth in a broader sense. She suggests that:

*"all personal development is about the ways in which we learn and change, and that any change in knowledge, skills, attitudes or awareness, usually influences the whole person."*

The distinctions that Irving & Williams (1999) and Johns (1996) make between personal *growth* and personal *development* also seem to broadly correspond with two facets of a personal development definition offered by Wilkins (1997). He suggests that personal development refers to: 1) the counsellor's 'obligation to address personal material which may inhibit... therapy' and 2) 'an equal obligation to care for the self of the therapist' (Wilkins, 1997; 10). Thus, Wilkins makes a distinction between a dimension of personal development that has a direct and specific professional function and relevance, and another that is more indirectly related to professional practice, concerned primarily with maintaining the counsellor's own well-being.

Having made a case for the conceptual differentiation of personal development and personal growth, Irving & Williams (1999) also discuss the practical implications for counsellor training of their widespread conflation. They argue that, by mixing the two concepts, training courses may be imposing inappropriate criteria for personal *growth* upon trainees, which is about becoming a certain kind of person, rather than personal *development*, which is about developing specific skills, aptitudes and qualities. They argue that this creates practical and ethical difficulties which 'may result in a confusion of aims and... inappropriate methods'. (p.520). Furthermore, they cite counselling psychology's emphasis on *personal therapy* as a clear example of this, arguing that:

*"personal therapy is seen as being concerned principally with 'personal growth', whereas training needs have more to do with personal development, as it relates to the needs of the client... it is clear that whereas both personal growth and personal development may be essential for the trainee counsellor, they are to be achieved in different ways and judged by different criteria. It is thus absurd and dangerous to*



*assume that personal development needs can be met by procedures (such as personal therapy) designed principally to facilitate personal growth.” (p.522).*

Irving & Williams do not offer any specific suggestions regarding the different ways or criteria by which *personal development* and *personal growth* might be facilitated or judged. But their argument that an assumption that the trainee's experience of personal therapy is sufficient to cover personal developmental requirements does echo the previously noted concern expressed by Dryden *et al* (1995).

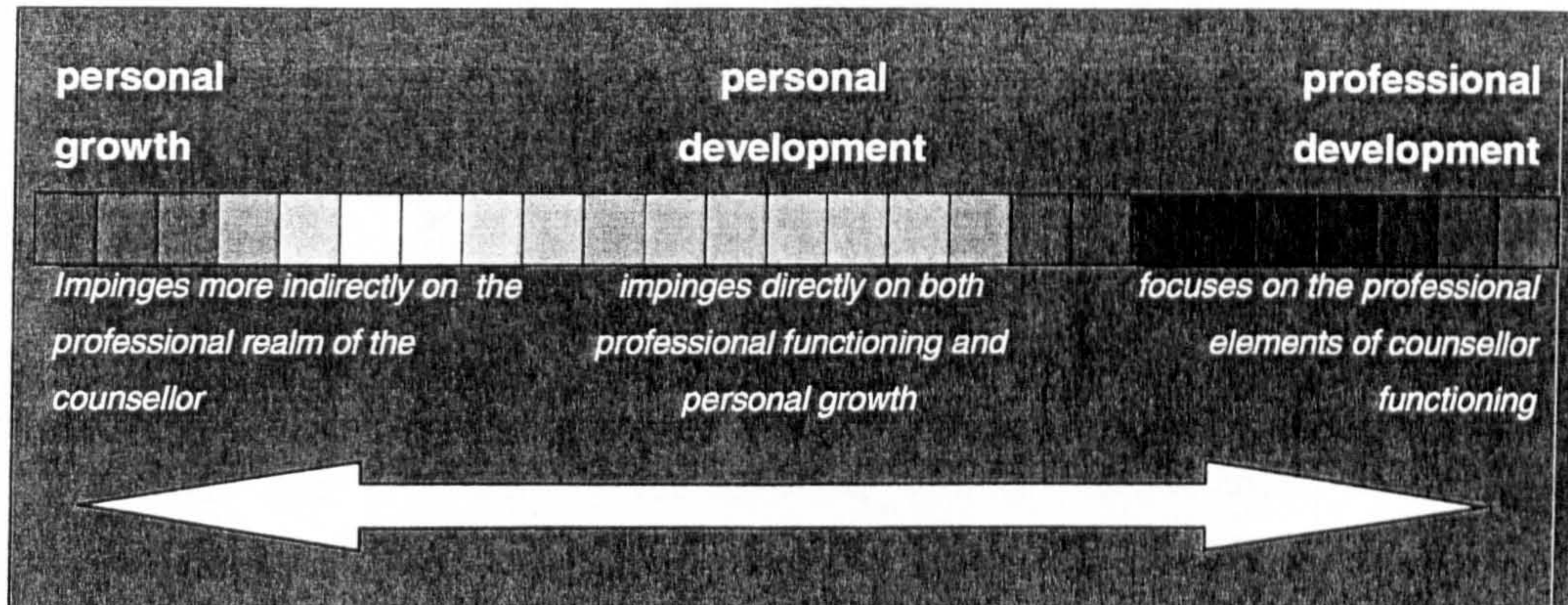
However, Irving & Williams (1999) distinction between personal development and personal growth seems to conflict with conceptual ideas expressed by Elton-Wilson (1994). In a discussion of the nature and inter-relationship of personal and professional development, Elton-Wilson (1994) suggests that *professional* development is concerned with 'Doing needs' (e.g. techniques & skills, explanations & theory, validation & research, training & qualification), and *personal* development is concerned with 'Being needs' (e.g. authenticity, interpersonal engagement, intimacy, self valuation). She also suggests that, while *professional* development is a 'competency issue' and can therefore be externally assessed, *personal* development is not a competency issue and, therefore, it cannot and should not be objectively assessed (1994; 71).

Elton-Wilson's (1994) view that personal development cannot be reduced to a competency issue, because it is about 'being' not 'doing', seems to resemble Irving & Williams' (1999) description of *personal growth* rather than their definition of personal development. Instead, it is Elton-Wilson's conceptualisation of *professional* development that corresponds more closely with Irving & Williams' definition of personal development.

Although Elton-Wilson's conceptualisation of personal and professional development appears inconsistent with Irving & Williams' (1999) definitions of personal growth and personal development, it may make an interesting contribution to the clarification of the relationships between personal growth, personal development and professional development. One might even propose a tentative integration of Elton-Wilson's and Irving & Williams' (1999) conceptualisations that builds on Wilkins' (1997) previously described two-pronged spectrum of counsellor development needs to produce a broader continuum of counsellor development related concepts



This might place *personal growth* at one pole and *professional development* at the other pole. The former impinging only indirectly on professional development and the latter focused exclusively on professional elements. *Personal development* might then be said to exist somewhere in between, as it directly impinges on both professional functioning and personal growth. A visual representation of this integrated model is presented below in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. A continuum of counsellor development-related concepts**

#### 2. 4. 4 Implications of a 'growth-development' distinction for counsellor training

Irving & Williams' (1999) also argue that the relatively formal and specifiable nature of personal development *vis a vis* personal growth would enable training courses to take a more structured and assessable approach to it. In contrast, Irving & Williams argue that the 'personal development' component of many training courses currently emphasise what they would define as personal growth *not* personal development. In contrast to personal development, Irving & Williams suggest that the aims and paths of trainees' personal *growth* will inevitably be idiosyncratic and not specifiable in advance. Illustrating the deep influence of Rogerian theory, they note the tendency in modern counsellor training to expect individual trainees 'to take their own path and find out for themselves' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 521-522) and for courses and their regulating bodies to provide little in the way of guidance or structure for trainees.



Interestingly, Wilkins (1997) has made the same observations. But, in contrast to Irving & Williams (1999), he argues that, although the lack of guidance may seem confusing, it is reasonable and appropriate for professional bodies to allow individual counsellors to decide for themselves exactly what personal development means to them, because 'each of us is unique, and our ways of growing are different'. Wilkins (1997) therefore seems to be suggesting, in contrast to Irving & Williams, that, due to its idiosyncratic nature, personal development can only be defined by the individual and not by any external professional body or other. Furthermore, from a humanistic perspective, to attempt to do so would also contravene a trainee's individuality and autonomy.

However, from Irving & Williams' perspective (1999), Wilkins' (1997) view might be regarded as a good example of the ethical and philosophical dilemmas that arise when personal development and personal growth are confused. It seems significant that Wilkins interchanges the terms 'personal development' and 'personal growth' throughout his discourse. It therefore seems likely that Irving & Williams would suggest that the idiosyncratic and externally indefinable process to which Wilkins refers is actually personal *growth*, not personal development.

Furthermore, Irving & Williams' (1999; 519; 524) argue that, as long as a clear distinction is made between personal growth and personal development, it is not only possible but practically and ethically necessary for training courses and their governing bodies to specify what constitutes 'personal development'. In terms of logical and practical reasons, they argue that:

*'If I am developing a skill or propensity, I will need to define goals, and be able to say what it is that I will be able to do better when I have succeeded in my task. I can structure my activities to ensure both that the aim is met and that I will know when it is.'*

And in terms of ethical and professional reasons, they contend that:

*'the specific professional demands of being a counsellor require more specific and confirmable objectives. Thus personal development needs as they relate to client work should be the focus of training, although personal growth may be the outcome for individual trainees.'*



Irving & Williams (1999; 523) also suggest that it would be useful to make a distinction between those aspects of personal development: 'personal attitudes, qualities and skills', that are considered *essential* for safe and competent client work and those aspects that might be *desirable*, but which are not essential. They suggest that, if this can be achieved, 'then personal development work in training would necessarily become a more structured activity' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 524).

Interestingly Irving & Williams' (1999) suggestion that trainees' personal development work should be linked more directly with their client work and aimed at enhancing their professional effectiveness, as opposed to their personal growth *per se*, is clearly consistent with a previously mentioned suggestion by Dryden (1994). In discussing the controversial issue of personal therapy for trainees, Dryden suggests that its observable effects on counsellor effectiveness might be significantly increased if personal therapy was limited to addressing those personal issues that have the most direct relevance to trainees' work with clients, rather than being used as a catch-all for *any* issue that a trainee may wish to bring, irrespective of its potential relevance to their client work. Dryden (1994) terms this approach 'client-centred personal therapy' and, in its explicit emphasis on linking the counsellor's personal issues with their therapeutic work, it might also be compared with the traditional psychoanalytic notion of 'training therapy' (Mearns, 1997). Expressed in terms of Irving & Williams' conceptualisation, Dryden's is therefore suggesting that personal therapy might be rendered more professionally useful if it were re-conceptualised as being a tool for trainees' personal *development* rather than their personal *growth* (Irving & Williams, 1999).

Irving & Williams' (1999) suggestion about linking personal and professional work is also echoed in another discussion by Dryden *et al* (1995). They suggest that, although *any* form of personal growth in a trainee is likely to have some relevance to their client work, personal development work in training needs to maintain a client-oriented goal and focus. They state that:

*'It might be argued that since every dimension of self may, at one time or another, be relevant to work with clients then any self-development work is relevant to counselling training. However, the argument does not follow that the trainees may simply focus on any aspects of self-development by whatever means and thereby meet the self-development requirement of training. This is sometimes the approach taken by individuals unsupported and unstimulated by a good training context - they*

*tend to restrict their self-development to the most attractive areas without regard to or even awareness of broader or deeper personal development needs.'* (Dryden *et al*, 1995, p.97).

Dryden *et al* therefore conclude that 'The personal development needs of trainees go beyond personal preferences.' and that they are 'broader than those which he or she might immediately identify' (1995; 98-99). The idea that trainees will not always be consciously able to identify for themselves personal issues that have an important bearing on their professional work has also been discussed by Legg (1998).

The issue of a demonstrable relationship between trainees' personal issues and their professional work has also been discussed by Jenkins' (1995). He suggests that a danger of what he calls 'inductive' approaches to counsellor training, as exemplified by psychodynamic and humanistic models, is that the trainees' development of personal capacities, such as self-awareness, can come to be valued in their own right, irrespective of any demonstrable benefit to the client. Hence, what might be considered personally meaningful change to the trainee may not necessarily translate into any significant benefit to the client.

#### **2. 4. 5 The role of theory in personal development work**

As well as making a distinction between personal development and personal growth, Irving & Williams also stress the importance of a stronger theoretical underpinning to personal development work in counsellor training, arguing that 'statements as to the need for and value of 'growth' or 'development', in the absence of a theoretical frame - as in much of the professional literature - are vacuous assertions' which 'say nothing of what is being sought' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 524). Consequently, they advise that 'If practice is to be improved a more theoretical approach is urgently required' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 520).

However, Irving & Williams also point out that different approaches to counsellor training 'will each have their own, often distinct, developmental agendas', and that the personal development work has to be congruent with the 'core theoretical model' of the course (Irving & Williams, 1999; 523). This point clearly echoes the traditional theoretical distinctions regarding the person of the counsellor and approaches to personal development work in training made in Chapter 1. Furthermore, Irving &

Williams argue that the real significance of these theoretical differences makes it impossible and inappropriate to regard personal development as 'a generic process' and that to do so 'is to invite confusion' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 524). They add that the impossibility of viewing personal development in a generic way, independently of a specific theoretical framework, presupposes that something called 'personal development' cannot simply 'be tagged on to any counsellor training syllabus.' (Irving & Williams, 1999; 524).

Johns (1996; 39) has advised that personal development programmes need to be tailored to suit the varying philosophies and orientations of courses. Furthermore, she suggests that developing a coherent model of personal development work on a integrative training courses is a particularly important and challenging assignment. She proposes that:

*'the task is to identify the key elements of philosophy and practice, then weave a training web of appropriate work on personal development which incorporates all the common elements described earlier, while capturing the specific differences, colourings and beliefs that each approach to counselling encapsulates... For courses which claim to be eclectic or integrative, such a task, in terms of course design, is even more central: to identify potential contradictions in theory and practice; to find means of articulating the connections between the aims of counselling and the counsellor's strengths and potential; and to work with paradoxes inherent in synthesising differences in setting, levels and theories is truly challenging'.*

However, Horton (1996; 282) suggests that, in contrast to other professional counselling bodies (e.g. BACP and UKCP (United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy)), counselling psychology training tends *not* to follow a 'core theoretical model' but instead encourages trainees to understand and work within a variety of theoretical frameworks, 'irrespective of any potentially conflicting philosophies or values'. Furthermore, he highlights the immense difficulties that BACP accreditation panels encounter when trying to establish 'what constitutes an adequate.. model' of training for courses that adopt such an approach.

The issue of a theoretical grounding for counsellor training and how this might be addressed from an integrative perspective is something that other authors have discussed. However, writers have varied significantly in their views regarding the importance of a core theoretical model for training. For example, reflecting the



professional regulations of the BACP, Dryden *et al* (1995) argue that it is important to provide trainees with a solid grounding in one core theory of counselling, and a critical awareness of others. Horton (1996), however, takes a more philosophically neutral stance, while Feltham (1996; 299) openly challenges the necessity or value of the core model and wonders whether the idea is actually 'a myth born out of the anxieties of professionalisation'.

In sum, the above points illustrate some of the dilemmas and complexities associated with approaching counselling training and personal development from an integrative perspective. Some argue that greater theory and a clearly articulated core model are fundamental to the development of a clear rationale and approach to personal development, which is distinguished from trainees' 'personal growth' (e.g. Irving & Williams, 1999; Dryden *et al*, 1995; Dryden, 1994). Others contend that preoccupations with theory and core models are therapeutically unnecessary, professionally unhelpful and impose unrealistic demands on trainees, who are likely to eventually question or reject a singular theoretical approach (e.g. Feltham, 1996).

#### 2. 4. 6 Personal development and self-awareness

As well as conceptual distinctions between 'professional development' 'personal development' and 'personal growth', interesting semantic refinements have also been made regarding the concept of self-awareness and its relationship to the personal development process.

As observed in Chapter 1, the concept of self-awareness forms an essential part of both psychodynamic and humanistic ways of understanding the therapeutic role of the person of the counsellor. Bayne *et al* (1994) have also suggested that all of the core personal qualities and many basic counselling skills rely on the counsellor's self-awareness. Furthermore, Bayne *et al* (1994) have outlined a model of self-awareness that makes refinements to the concept that appear to be largely overlooked in the professional literature. For example, they distinguish between: *inner self-awareness*, which is defined as an individual's awareness of their own 'thoughts, emotions, sensations, intuitions, fantasies'; *self-knowledge*, which refers to the more stable aspects of inner self-awareness, such as personality traits, personal values, attitudes and interests; and *outer self-awareness*, which concerns an individual's awareness of

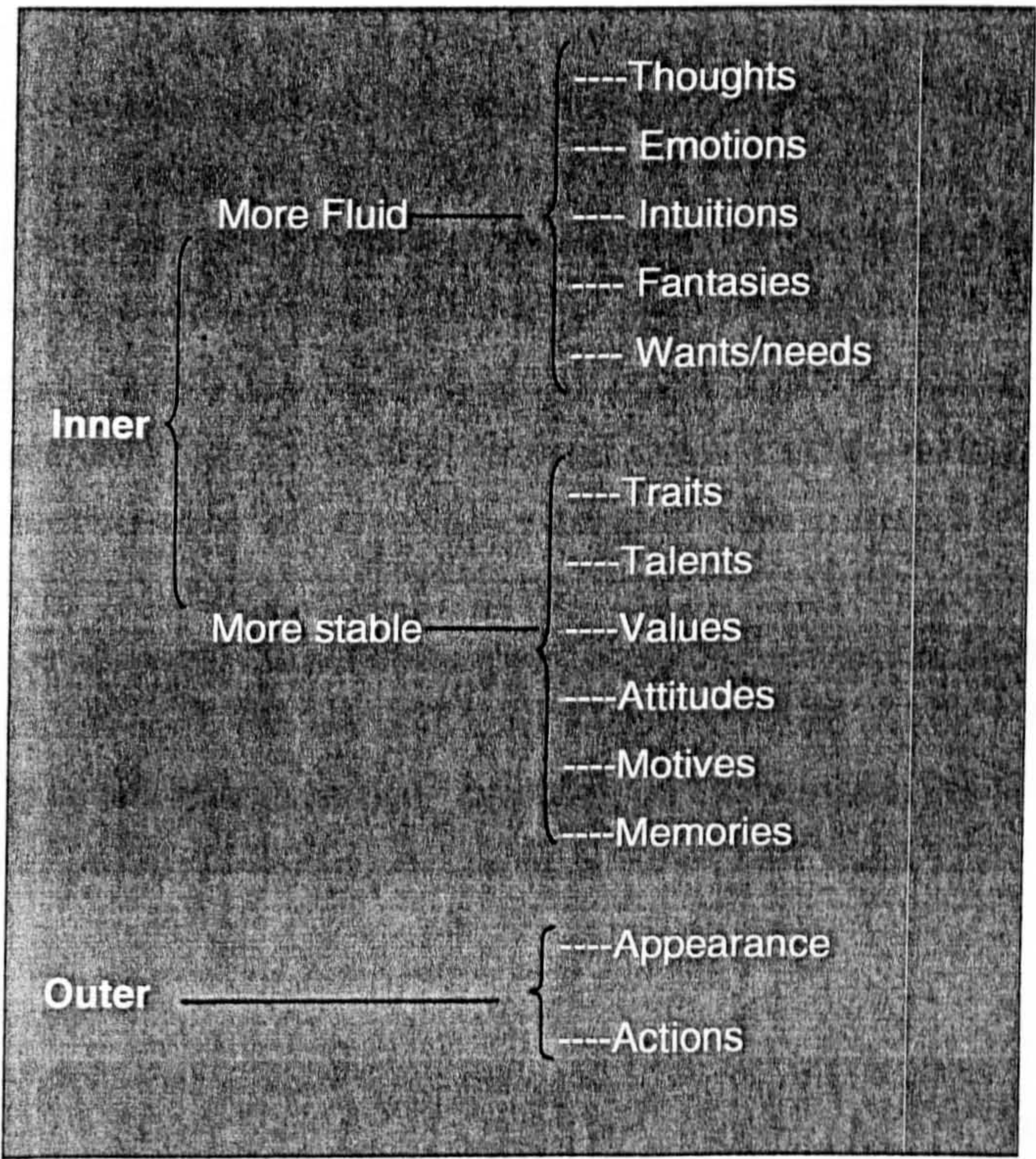


their own behaviour and how it is perceived by others. This last dimension corresponds with what other writers have termed ‘other awareness’ (e.g. Mearns, 1997). Figure 3 below provides a graphic representation of Bayne *et al*’s model.

Bayne *et al* (1994; 136) also propose that each of these three dimensions has an important role to play in therapeutic practice, explaining that:

*‘Inner self-awareness provides personal experience, especially emotions, intuitions and insights. Self-knowledge affects your judgements of others, and their judgements of you. Outer self-awareness may need to be referred to, e.g. ‘I frowned then because...’ or ‘I was being flippant. There is a serious point there too...’*

Furthermore, they propose that self-awareness is in a constant state of flux, because people are themselves constantly changing. They conclude, therefore, that self-awareness ‘is not something that can be finally achieved’.



**Figure 3. Bayne *et al*’s model of self-awareness**



Similarly, Johns (1996) suggests that the self can be understood as a complex, multi-faceted, socially embedded, socially constructed, and even illusory concept depending on one's epistemological perspective. Moreover, she argues that it is essential to move beyond a simplistic understanding of 'self' in order to approach personal development with the 'openness and flexibility' that it requires (1996; 7). Accordingly, Johns proposes that personal development must itself be understood as a complex, open-ended, career-long and lifelong process, whose aims and objectives are constantly shifting and moving forward, as the individual him/herself progresses. Such a view of personal development is consistent with McLeod's (1996) views on counsellor competence. For instance, McLeod (1996a; 47) argues that 'any adequate model of competence must include a developmental perspective. There are different challenges to competence at different stages in the career of a counsellor.' Such a view is also consistent findings from Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) previously discussed study of counsellor development, which that each stage of development was characterised by its own distinct set of needs and challenges.

As highlighted previously, Williams & Irving (1996) have argued that there is an unhelpful tendency in the professional literature to regard personal development and self-awareness as much the same thing. They contend that personal development is a very broad concept that refers to a counsellor's 'way of being', while self-awareness is much narrower and refers to a 'state of knowing'. Also mentioned previously was Jenkins' (1995) concern that increased self-awareness can sometimes be regarded in training as valuable in itself, irrespective of whether or not it translates into any beneficial change in counsellor behaviour. Such distinctions and concerns are supported by Mearns (1997), who has outlined a basic 3-stage model of personal development, in which trainees' increased self-awareness is regarded as just the first of three essential steps. Mearns argues that genuine personal development only takes place if *self-awareness* is followed by *self-understanding* and *self-experimentation*, with each step forming a necessary building block for subsequent ones.

In Mearns' view, 'fear of change' and the need for 'fearlessness' are key factors in personal development and effective counsellor functioning. Using a person-centred framework, Mearns (1997; 113) argues that self-awareness alone will not produce the fearlessness that is required to meet clients at the necessary 'relation depth'. However, if trainees are able to understand as well as be aware of their fears, these



may then begin to lose their grip, diminish or dissolve. The third step of Mearns' personal development process requires trainees to proactively engage in behavioural experimentation. This would require trainees to purposefully place themselves in a challenging or 'fearful' situation in order to test out their growing fearlessness, overcome their fears and experience real developmental movement. Mearns asserts that this third stage is crucial, though it may sometimes occur as a *natural* consequence of the previous two steps. Mearns argues that, if trainees are to maximise personal development during training, they must place these 'extra demands' on themselves.

Interestingly, Mearns' emphasis on a self active experimentation stage in trainee personal development incorporates the traditional therapeutic focus of behavioural and cognitive-behavioural approaches to counselling. In these models clients' increased self-awareness and self-understanding (traditionally emphasised by psychodynamic and humanistic approaches) are generally not regarded as sufficient to generate real, lasting therapeutic change (O'Sullivan, 1996). It also corresponds with the emphasis given to an 'active experimentation' phase in Kolb's (1976) previously mentioned model of experiential learning.

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## **2. 5 Personal development curricula**

Having examined a number of attempts to define personal development and some closely related concepts, the review now turns to consider the work of three writers - Hazel Johns (1996), Mary Connor (1994) and Dave Mearns (1997) – each of whom have attempted to define personal development in terms of specific training curricula. Each will be considered in turn.

### **2. 5. 1 Hazel Johns' curriculum**

Hazel Johns' (1996; 9) curriculum is relatively broad. She recommends that personal development work in counsellor training should seek to address the following six areas:

1. *Identifying and exploring the uniqueness and patterning of trainees' values, attitudes and constructs.*
2. *The elements in trainees' personal family, relationship and educational history which facilitate or hinder their ability to feel, perceive, relate or protect/assert themselves.*
3. *The balance of trainees' personal and interpersonal strengths and limitations.*
4. *Trainees' sense of their emotional world, their capacity for intimacy with others and ability to stay separate and appropriately distanced from them.*
5. *Trainees' knowledge of their needs, fears and intolerances.*
6. *Trainees' passions, powers and tendencies to invade or deprive others.*

Johns describes her approach as a counsellor trainer as integrative but rooted in person-centred values. This description is also similar to the basic model of counselling psychology (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996). Johns' underlying person-centred values are clearly reflected in the emphasis she places on enhancing trainees' communication of the 'core conditions' (genuineness, acceptance and empathy) as a central aim of personal development work. However, Johns's (1996) curriculum is still expressed in language that is relatively theoretically neutral. Therefore, as Mearns (1997; 113) has commented, it manages to stay 'relevant to most counselling approaches'. Echoing Irving & Williams' (1996) a previously discussed argument, Johns also stresses that trainees' personal development work should primarily serve to improve their client work, rather than their own personal growth.

Johns also offers a set of seven guidelines that are intended to help counsellor trainers develop more detailed curricula of their own. She suggests that these guidelines can be tailored to suit 'the particular structure, orientation, values, teaching/learning model, trainer style and course member needs and developmental stages' found within a counsellor training course (1996; 61). The guidelines are summarised below.

**1. *Outline the core aims expressed through a metaphor or image***

Johns recommends using a metaphor or image as a useful way of conveying the essence of key elements within a personal development programme. As one idea, she describes an 'awareness wheel', which emphasises the trainee's development of various domains of self-awareness (e.g. thinking, feeling, wanting, doing, sensing). She also suggests that trainees be encouraged to design their own metaphors or images to help them 'tease out' their own learning priorities, preferences and questions.

**2. *Articulate the aims of counselling***

Johns proposes that an attempt to articulate the aims of counselling itself may generate much relevant material for trainees' personal development. Such an approach could also facilitate the generation of a personal development curriculum that was consistent with the core theoretical model of the training course.

**3. *Make a detailed list of possible outcomes***

Johns suggests that it is helpful to specify a range of possible outcomes that trainees should experience as a result of their personal development work. However, she stresses that such a list should be considered as 'developmental and evolving', rather than 'fixed and prescriptive' (1996; 55). Moreover, she suggests that trainees should make their own lists of objectives, at the beginning, during and end of training.

**4. *Design a framework for the whole training process***

Johns suggests that developing a clear framework for the whole training process can provide a sound basis for extrapolating salient issues for the personal development component of the programme. Using such a framework could also facilitate the integration of personal development work into the course as a whole.

**5. *Outline (as concretely as possible) specific learning objectives.***

Johns proposes that outlining specific learning objectives for personal development facilitates the planning of activities for achieving and assessing these objectives. Interestingly, she includes Connor's personal development curriculum (to be reviewed shortly) as an illustrative example of a specified set of learning objectives.

**6. *Identify key areas of competence***



Johns suggests that it may be useful to identify key areas of competence around which all aspects of training can focus, and to then detail how these competencies will be taught and what kind of evidence will be used to assess them. Johns cites McLeod's (1993) work on counsellor competencies, and highlights his ideas on trainees' 'personal soundness', personal beliefs and attitudes as being particularly relevant to personal development work.

However, Johns (1996; 60) also flags the question of to what extent a competency-based approach to training is appropriate, particularly in the complex and delicate area of personal development. She comments that:

*'Competency traditionally implies measurement, science not art, and it is generally agreed that other than the most general statement, little accurate measurement of counsellor effectiveness or of the person of the counsellor has yet been achieved.'*

### **7. Identify a central driving principle**

Johns advises identifying a central driving principle that motivates all personal development work, and which can help guide the assessment of individual trainees. As an example, she cites Nelson-Jones' (1984) view that assuming personal responsibility for one's life is a driving principle at the heart of the counselling endeavour and of effective human living in general.

Johns also suggests that Rowan's (1995) lifespan model of development, which relates to human development generally rather than counsellor development specifically, offers a useful framework for understanding how the basic needs and concerns of the self may evolve over the life-course.

Rowan's (1995) model adopts an overarching transpersonal perspective and suggests that particular counselling approaches or developmental methods are suited to developmental tasks at particular stages. For example, Rowan suggests that psychoanalytic and cognitive-behavioural methods are appropriate to the aims of the self at the first position, where concerns centre around the 'mental ego', healing and adjustment. Person-centred and gestalt approaches are appropriate to the tasks of the second position, which focus on the 'real self', personal autonomy and self-actualisation. Psychosynthesis and Jungian approaches are suited to the aims of the third position, in which the 'subtle self', 'soul, ego-reduction' and transpersonal realms of experience become the primary focus. Rowan's then suggests that other personal

development methods, such as of yoga, taoism and zen benefit the goals of the fourth position, in which the 'spirit', self-transcendence and enlightenment are the primary aims.

Rowan's model provides a useful wider developmental context for understanding the more specific journey of the counsellor. It serves as an important reminder that counsellors are subject to the broader developmental stages and cycles of human life, like those also postulated by developmentalists such as Erikson (1980), Piaget (1952) and Kohlberg (1969), as well as those that stem directly from their experiences in professional training and practice. Rowan's model also adds further support to the previously discussed idea that the nature of the self, and so the aims of personal development, do not remain static but change over time.

### **2. 5. 2 Mary Connor's curriculum**

Mary Connor's (1994) personal development curriculum is put forward as part of an account of her integrative model of counsellor training. It is divided into two key areas: *intrapersonal development* and *interpersonal development* with specific learning objectives set out for each. These are listed below.

#### **1. INTRAPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Learning Objectives:*

1. *To develop understanding and appreciation of self.*
2. *To become aware of and utilise personal strengths and assets.*
3. *To become aware of blind spots, blocks and vulnerabilities.*
4. *To identify areas to work on in personal counselling.*
5. *To appreciate experientially the significance of developmental stages in personal development.*

#### **2. INTERPERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**



### *Learning Objectives:*

- 1. To understand areas of strength and areas for development in a range of interactions: with peers, staff, clients and in personal and professional relationships.*
- 2. To gain confidence in appropriate self-sharing.*
- 3. To develop skills for giving and receiving feedback.*
- 4. To facilitate growth in self and others through active participation in personal development groups.*
- 5. To develop helping relationships with clients.*
- 6. To continuously reflect upon successes and setbacks and to use such reflection as the basis for setting realistic objectives for development.*
- 7. To develop the internal supervisor, active not only during sessions with clients but also in other interactions whether group or individual.*

Like Johns (1996), Connor also describes her integrative training model as being essentially rooted in person-centred values. Consequently, as a key aim of intrapersonal development, Connor emphasises the counsellor's 'way of being', as it affects the core ability to form therapeutic relationships. Interestingly, this idea seems discordant with Irving & Williams' (1999) previously described view that a trainee's 'way of being' is associated with personal *growth* and therefore only of *indirect* relevance to a counsellor's effectiveness. However, Connor's curriculum makes no distinction between personal development and personal growth. It is therefore impossible to know how far Connor's understanding of 'way of being' corresponds to that of Irving & Williams. For instance, it may be that Connor is referring to the counsellor's ability to convey the core conditions, which would be more consistent with Irving & Williams' conceptualisation of personal development, as representing specific counsellor attributes that have a direct and demonstrable relevance to therapeutic effectiveness.

Furthermore, Connor (1994; 29) stresses, like Irving & Williams' (1999) and Johns (1996), the importance of ensuring that trainees' personal development is focused on increasing their professional effectiveness, rather than their personal well-being *per se*. For instance she argues that training should be: 'designed to maximise opportunities for personal growth, but always at the service of clients', rather than



becoming an opportunity for 'narcissistic self-absorption'. Furthermore, Connor comments that:

*'All aspects of the training model are designed to feed into the sort of intrapersonal and interpersonal development that will make a difference to the ability to form and sustain therapeutic relationships'*

This statement implies that there are aspects of personal development that might make no or less difference to the counsellor's ability to form and sustain therapeutic relationships. This idea would appear consistent with Irving & Williams' (1999) previously discussed argument that it is possible and desirable to distinguish between those aspects of personal development that are essential to competent practice and those that may be desirable but which are not essential.

Like Johns (1996), Connor (1994) also advocates the use of broader developmental models (e.g. Erikson, 1980) to help trainees understand the evolution of the self through critical life stages, both as a guide to their own developmental journeys and to those of their clients. She also highlights the usefulness of psychodynamic approaches for promoting trainees' recognition of the effects of their past on their present, and how this may manifest in terms of transference, countertransference, resistance and projection.

Again like Johns (1996), Connor promotes the value of articulating a clear structure for the whole training process. She suggests that a model of training can provide a framework 'within which a variety of approaches and skills may be located' (1994; 25). Furthermore, she reiterates the importance of clarity regarding the core elements of a training programme, whatever the core theoretical model 'in order to provide a coherent and developmental framework for training' (1994; 26). Connor proposes that an explicit framework can help trainers diagnose possible imbalances between the different elements of their courses, and enables trainees to assess areas of personal strength and weakness that require more work.

Connor also argues that, as counselling is fundamentally about the therapeutic use of a relationship, the trainees' awareness of how they relate to others and how they can improve their relating abilities (i.e. *interpersonal* development), is as crucial an aspect of personal development, as is *intrapersonal* development. She explains that:

*'The ability of the trainee to form helping relationships will be enhanced through intrapersonal development but will be communicated largely through interpersonal development.'* (p.32)

Connor therefore proposes that training must be rich in opportunities for trainees to work on their relating abilities. This should involve not just clients, but peers and staff on the course.

### **ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

Connor's also sets her personal development curriculum and model of training within a 4-stage learning cycle, based on learning theory and Kolb's (1984) previously mentioned work on the personal learning process. In Connor's cycle, the focus of training gradually moves from 1) the development of attitudes and values, to 2) the development of knowledge and skills, then to 3) client work and supervision, and finally to 4) reflection and evaluation. However, Connor emphasises Stage 1 (the development of attitudes and values) as being fundamental to the whole of the learning cycle. She outlines the learning objectives for this dimension as follows (Connor, 1994; 34-35):

1. *To become aware of personal assumptions and beliefs.*
2. *To explore and clarify values and attitudes.*
3. *To develop core therapeutic qualities.*
4. *To be aware of ethical and professional issues and expectations in counselling.*
5. *To develop a personal code of professional ethics.*

The first two of these learning objectives (to become aware of personal assumptions and beliefs, and to explore and clarify values and attitudes) seem particularly pertinent to the personal development process. They also clearly echo both Point 1. on Johns' curriculum, and the 'self-knowledge' dimension of Bayne *et al*'s (1994) model of self-awareness.

Connor proposes that trainees' attitudes values and beliefs are consciously or unconsciously active at all stages of the learning process, and that they form the basis of a counsellor's philosophy of practice. She therefore recommends that trainees are given the opportunity, through group debate, to explore philosophical issues such as free will, altruism, equality of power in the counselling relationship, and the underlying motivations of counsellors. In this way, Connor suggests that



trainees gain a deeper awareness and understanding of their own philosophical assumptions and beliefs, as well as how other people might view these. This also helps trainees to understand and accept individual differences. Connor remarks that this aspect of the learning process can be quite challenging and requires a significant degree of openness and flexibility in the trainee. Furthermore, she adds that the exploration of trainees' personal beliefs, assumptions and values serves as a useful precursor to exploring the distinctive philosophical beliefs and assumptions of the major models of counselling.

### **2. 5. 3 Dave Mearns' curriculum**

Dave Mearns' (1997) personal development curriculum consists of 25 specific aims divided into 4 broad categories: self-structure, self in relation to others, self in relation to clients, self as a learner. These are detailed below.

#### **SELF-STRUCTURE**

- 1. awareness of introjected beliefs about self and how these influence the self-concept and behaviour*
- 2. awareness of personal processes of dissonance reduction and how these are involved in the social construction of reality*
- 3. understanding how social and personality dynamics have influenced the development of self*
- 4. understanding the conditions of worth which operated in one's own early development and how these continue to influence the self-concept, personal development and work with clients*
- 5. identification of the stages of movement through personal transitional experiences*
- 6. development of a sufficiently strong sense of personal identity to resist being drawn into client's pathology*
- 7. the achievement of 'self-acceptance', or significant movement in that direction*



**SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS**

1. *awareness of introjected beliefs about others and how these influence person perception and behaviour*
2. *awareness of enduring patterns in one's own interpersonal behaviour and the needs and fears upon which these patterns are based*
3. *awareness of the assumptions, introjections, needs and fears upon which personal prejudices are based*
4. *reduction or control of the influences of personal prejudices*
5. *awareness of the way in which own sexuality is expressed within personal and professional relationships*
6. *understanding of personal (as distinct from psychological) theories of human behaviour*
7. *challenging the dimensions of self which inhibit the achievement of mutuality in therapeutic relationships*

**SELF IN RELATION TO CLIENTS**

1. *awareness of the ways in which personal prejudices influence judgement and behaviour in the counselling setting*
2. *awareness of 'blocks' inhibiting personal development with respect to expression of the 'therapeutic conditions' of empathy, unconditional positive regard and congruence*
3. *understanding the dynamics of self which create vulnerability to clinical over-involvement*
4. *understanding the dynamics of self which create vulnerability to clinical under-involvement*
5. *awareness of the behaviour which encourages projections from clients and questioning the motivation underpinning those behaviours*

**SELF AS A LEARNER**

1. *the ability to develop personal learning goals*
2. *a disposition to examine critically and systematically personal understandings; attitudes and skills*
3. *a confidence to tolerate and learn from the uncertainty which may stem from having assumptions and attitudes challenged*
4. *a disposition of openness to experience as it relates to the self, and an acceptance of responsibility for one's own behaviour and learning*

5. *the ability to use consultation as a part of the process of self-assessment*
6. *the capacity to self-appraise openly and accurately*

Mearns (1997; 115) suggests that his curriculum is not intended to be exhaustive but rather 'to indicate both the breadth and depth of a typical personal development curriculum. Furthermore, he states that, although the aims in his curriculum are expressed in terms of person-centred personality theory, the basic ideas are adaptable to training in other orientations. For instance, he explains that: 'many [objectives] would find a home within other therapeutic approaches, perhaps in a different language'. He also highlights the fourth category of his curriculum (Self as learner) as being relevant not just to trainees' personal development but also to their autonomy and development as reflective practitioners.

#### **2. 5. 4 Generalised & individualised definitions of personal development**

Mearns (1997) also emphasises that personal development curricula must always be individually tailored to suit the particular needs of each trainee. He advises that:

*'Obviously the only way to approach such a curriculum is an individualised fashion - the list of personal development aims... would not apply to every course member. Each person would have their own profile of needs drawn from this list and others that are not included.'*

A similar point has been made by Dryden *et al* (1995), who suggest that individual trainees will differ significantly in the patterning of their personal development needs. These authors suggest that trainees may have considerable work to do on certain aspects of their personal development, but may have already developed sufficiently with respect to others. Dryden *et al* (1995) therefore advise that training courses should not attempt to generalise or over-prescribe personal development aims for trainees. Instead, they suggest that courses should aim to create learning opportunities that permit trainees the scope necessary to explore their own unique needs. This view is clearly consistent with John's previously noted suggestion that the personal development objectives set by training courses should be regarded as developmental and evolving, rather than fixed and prescriptive. A possible implication of these views is that there are basic limitations to how far personal development aims can be defined.



Such a view might be contrasted with Irving & Williams' (1999) previously discussed position regarding the extent to which personal development can and should be defined. In Irving & Williams conceptualisation, it is personal *growth*, not personal development, that is idiosyncratic, constantly evolving and difficult to define. There is also a potential tension between the view that personal development should not be too defined and other previously noted arguments; for example, that personal development in training is insufficiently defined (Irving & Williams, 1999; Williams & Irving, 1997); that not all trainees' personal developmental needs are directly relevant to their professional work (Irving & Williams, 1999; Williams & Irving, 1997); and that courses may sometimes allow trainees too much scope with regards to the personal material they elect to work on. Yet in spite of these concerns, Mearns (1997) Dryden *et al* (1995) and Johns (1996) share a view that personal development aims and objectives must be individualised and regularly revised in order to ensure that they are personally meaningful and professionally relevant.

One way of understanding this discord is to view it within the context of a wider fundamental tension that courses must manage between the needs of individual course members and the needs of trainee assessment, which are in place to protect the interests of potential clients. For example, Aveline (1996; 370) describes a basic objective of trainers' as being 'to hold the balance of interest between the learning needs of trainee therapists and the clinical needs of their patients until such time as the trainee therapists can do this for themselves. Similarly, Purton (1991; 34) has suggested that:

*'counselling is by definition a very personal activity, yet the very conception of training involves something in the way of agreed standards of what counts as competence. A crucial issue with which any responsible training programme has to wrestle, then, is how to protect and encourage the development of the trainees' individual style, while providing adequate critical assessment.'*

Consequently, it could be argued that, if personal development is a professional competency as well as a personal process, it can and must be defined in more than one way. Indeed, as previously indicated, this is a view that Connor (1994) has already advocated as part of her integrative model of counsellor training.

She suggests that personal development can be defined on two levels, one which expresses the aims of personal development at a broad professional level and one in



which these broader professional aims are tailored or personalised by individual trainees. This, Connor also suggests, ensures that personal development aims are both professionally salient and personally meaningful. Trainees have the freedom to articulate, address and update their own needs. But course trainers also have a means of assessing individual trainees against some wider professional criterion of competence, thereby ensuring that they are meeting their responsibility to ensure that trainees meet basic course objectives and are fit to practice.

Furthermore, such an approach might also satisfy some of Irving & Williams' (1999) earlier noted recommendations. For instance, aims expressed at the first 'professional' level could be viewed as corresponding with Irving & Williams concept of personal development and their requirement that its aims are expressed in terms of specific desired outcomes for client work. These basic aims are the same for all trainees (e.g. the ability to keep one's personal issues from interfering with one's client work).

Aims expressed at the second 'personal' level, then hone in on those particular aspects and manifestations of the first level that individual trainees need to address in order to meet the broader professional aims of the first level. Thus, aims at the second level focus on those professionally salient personal issues, needs, vulnerabilities or blind spots that are unique to individual trainees (e.g. unresolved anger about an earlier abusive experience). Aims in this dimension might therefore be understood as being more akin to Irving & Williams' concept of personal *growth*.

In sum, this integrated two-tiered view of personal development suggests that, although it may be possible to express common personal developmental objectives for all trainees in terms of broad beliefs about the role of the counsellor's self in sound therapeutic practice, to the extent that each trainee has their own unique pattern of 'issues', each trainee will also need to take their own individual route to meet the basic professional objectives.

### 2.5.5 Comparing curricula

The personal development curricula of Johns (1996), Connor (1994) and Mearns (1997) represent the most definitely expressed and advanced ideas, to date, about

the aims and objectives of personal development for trainee counsellors. Furthermore, there appears to be a high degree of correspondence between them.

An obvious central feature throughout all three curricula is the trainee's self-awareness and the particular areas to which this self-awareness pertains. All curricula include enhancing the trainee's awareness in areas such as their values, beliefs and attitudes, personal histories, needs, fears, blind spots, strengths and limitations.

All three curricula also cite the enhancement of the trainee's expression of the core conditions of genuineness, empathy and acceptance and their ability to form effective therapeutic relationships as a core aim. Also included in all is the trainee's enhanced awareness and understanding of how they relate to others in insensitive, inappropriate or non-therapeutic ways. However, of the three writers, Mearns makes an explicit distinction between the self-awareness, self-understanding and self-experimentation (cognitive, affective and behavioural) elements of the developmental process.

Furthermore, despite a criticism made by Irving & Williams (1997) that Johns' (1996) and Connor's curricula (1994) are too 'trainee centred' and insufficiently 'client-directed', both curricula do emphasise the importance of keeping personal development work focused on the enhancement of therapeutic effectiveness and the service of clients, rather than the trainee's well-being *per se*. It may be that Irving & Williams (1999) regard the emphasis on client-directedness in Connor's and Johns' work as more of an after-thought than something that has been explicitly integrated, *a priori*, into the objectives themselves. Furthermore, despite their interesting criticisms and proposals, Irving & Williams (1999) do not themselves offer any practical suggestions or worked examples of how personal development might be more satisfactorily and effectively expressed in a more concrete and 'client-directed' way than is achieved by existing curricula.

Another area of correspondence is that both Connor's and Mearns's curricula make a clear distinction between the intra- and inter-personal aspects of trainee development. This might be paralleled with the distinction that Bayne *et al*'s (1996) model of self-awareness makes between inner and outer dimensions. However, Mearns' curriculum makes a further 'interpersonal' distinction between clients and

other individuals, setting out particular aims for each. Thus, Mearns' curriculum objectives seem to have a greater level of specificity and to be tied in more explicitly to the client-counsellor context.

Connor's and Mearns' curricula also both include aims that relate to professional autonomy and personal learning process *per se*. These emphasise trainees' acquisition of broad transferable skills such as an ability to self-reflect, monitor and evaluate their professional work. Mearns gives this dimension particularly strong emphasis through his separate 'Self as Learner' category. He highlights the need for trainees to become able to tolerate uncertainty, and the importance of openness and personal responsibility for learning and development. Similar areas, such as self-reflection and the development of an 'internal supervisor', are addressed in points 6 and 7 of the intrapersonal dimension of Connor's curriculum.

Also notable is that Mearns' curriculum is the only one of the three to explicitly mention trainee sexuality as an area for developing self-awareness. In contrast, Connor's curriculum is the only one to give special consideration to skills that are important to effective learning in the training context itself. For example, she includes aims that require trainees to learn appropriate self-sharing techniques and how to give feedback within the training group.

In sum, despite differences in terms of how the three curricula may categorise or emphasise aims and objectives, there appears to be a significant degree of crossover between all three. In terms of detail, John's work seems the broadest and to provide the lowest level of specificity. In contrast, Mearns' curriculum seems to be the most comprehensive and finely tuned of the three, while Connor's curriculum might be located between the other two.

It is also worth noting that the authors of these curricula all have a basic grounding in the person-centred counselling tradition, and align their work with the framework of BACP training guidelines (as opposed to BPS counselling psychology guidelines). However, given that the person-centred approach has traditionally placed the greatest importance on the counsellor's personal development, it seems logical that the counsellors who have gone furthest in articulating aims and objectives for personal development work in training should come from a person-centred background. Moreover, the shared person-centred basis of the three authors may go



some way to accounting for the high degree of correspondence between the three curricula. Indeed, their shared emphasis on the core conditions clearly reflects a person-centred orientation.

However, the curricula may also be considered theoretically eclectic or integrative, to a degree. For example, both Mearns and Connor make references to concepts of psychodynamic origin. Indeed, Connor explicitly advocates the usefulness of concepts such as transference, countertransference, resistance and projection in helping trainees to understand the effects of their past on their present selves. Furthermore, although they may stem from the person-centred tradition, each author also states that their curricula are, to some extent, flexible and adaptable to other orientations. These curricula may therefore have some relevance to personal development in counselling psychology training and provide useful touchstones for counselling psychologists.

Counselling psychology's perspective on the person of the counsellor, as inferred from its training regulations, seems broadly consistent with the aims and objectives of three curricula discussed here, for example, in their emphasis on the counsellor's self-awareness of personal issues, values, motivations and blind spots, and the primacy of the client-counsellor relationship. However, counselling psychology's view presents more of a broad rationale for personal development work in counsellor training than a specific curriculum of aims and objectives for trainees. This may be left for individual courses to develop for themselves (see BPS, 1997; 8; 7.4.5).

A further point to note is that the three curricula are based on the experiences and theories of the authors, rather than on wider systematic research. This may reflect the traditional tendency within the counselling profession (as opposed to counselling psychology) to emphasise theory and practice more than research (Corrie, 1997). Of course, the experiential and theoretical nature of this work does not detract from its inherent value, especially when specialist literature on personal development is scarce.

However, an awareness of this does help to place the work within a wider critical perspective, and highlights the imbalance of methods that have been used to study personal development. It also indicates that the views in the literature regarding the aims and objectives of personal development for counsellor trainees have so far

failed to benefit from comparison with a broader research perspective that might facilitate further development in this area. This point directly parallels comments made by McLeod about the available literature on counsellor competence. He suggests (McLeod, 1996a; 38) that:

*'The existing knowledge base is dominated by the writings and observations of clinicians and trainers. While beliefs and collective wisdom of experienced practitioners undoubtedly possess a great deal of validity, it is also necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the views of 'experts'... it is essential that practical knowledge about competencies is approached critically and supplemented by the findings of appropriately designed research studies.'*

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## 2.6 Trainee definitions

One possible limitation to the 'views of experts' is that they do not directly represent the views and experiences of the trainees who are actually undergoing the experience of personal development during training. The trainer-expert bias and lack of systematic research seems to have resulted in the views of trainees being under-represented in the personal development literature. Yet it might be suggested that trainees possess knowledge and experience that is highly relevant and valuable to developing effective approaches to personal development in training, and that it is therefore important for training courses to be familiar with and understand this, through appropriate investigation.

Two instances have appeared in the literature that give direct representation to the views of trainees regarding the definition of personal development. Firstly, Johns (1996; 5) provides a sample of responses from a group of new counselling trainees to her question: *'As you begin this counselling training course, what does personal development mean to you?'* Their responses are interesting and varied:

- *Understanding myself better*
- *Finding my hang-ups*
- *Building skills with people*
- *Knowing what I want from other people and for myself*
- *Being not doing*



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- *Learning about my weaknesses*
- *Developing my strengths*
- *Growing-up!*
- *Finding what blocks my learning and my counselling*
- *Liking myself more*
- *Reaching my potential as a person and a counsellor*
- *Owning my good and bad selves*
- *Past, present and future*
- *Being less self conscious and more conscious*
- *Moving from anxiety to confidence*
- *Facing my fears*
- *Being angry and OK*
- *Realising my prejudices about others*
- *Becoming more aware*

Secondly, an Irish survey of recently graduated counselling and clinical psychology trainees by Rothery (1992) provides further insights into the way trainees view personal development. Rothery, explicitly asked her 80 participants to define and rate the importance of 'personal growth work' (Rothery does not make any distinction between the terms personal growth and personal development, as Irving & Williams (1999) have recommended). In terms of its importance, all 40 counselling psychologists and half of the clinical psychologists rated personal growth work as an 'essential' part of their training. She also includes in her report a selection of extracts from their responses to a question about the definition of personal growth work. Given the unique richness of this data, their responses to this question are reproduced in full below.

*'A process whereby we examine our thinking, behaviour and unconscious so as to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and become more mature and well-rounded individuals.'*

*Time, effort and commitment dedicated to identifying, working on and hopefully unblocking one's blind spots and defence patterns.*

*For me personal growth work involves anything which promotes healing of past and present hurts that stop me from living up to my full potential as a human being.*

*That process which allows us to know ourselves more fully, that we become fully aware of own blocks, difficulties, personal traumas, etc. More especially, that process which enables us to take the mote out of own eyes before we dare to take it out of others.*



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*Work which would involve working through your own issues - both those which you bring with you on the course and those which arise from your work on the course. The nature of the work will obviously vary from person to person and I feel the depth of the work desired can only be decided by the student, and not dictated by either course staff or by therapist/counsellor. Training is intensive and some people can only cope with so much at a time. My own experience was that on coming onto a clinical training course I was dead set against doing any personal work, not that I didn't want any personal growth - I thought in my innocence that one could 'grow' without stirring up all the old unresolved 'shit'. I did want to do the work at a later stage, but felt that I needed to get through the course first. One thing at a time! And I would need all my energy for the course. The other could be done later. However, I'm very glad that I was proved wrong. As the course progressed I realised that one cannot do the training without personal work. They go hand in hand and I certainly feel that the work I did not only makes me a better person, but also a better psychologist, and of course, I still have a long way to go.'*

There is clearly a degree of correspondence between the trainee definitions of personal development reported by Johns (1996) and Rothery (1992) and the trainer curricula described previously (i.e. Mearns, 1997; Johns, 1996; Connor, 1994). Similar areas are again represented, such as increasing self-awareness of personal issues, strengths, weaknesses, blocks, defences, fears, prejudices, improving relationships skills, and appropriate and therapeutic interpersonal response.

However, compared with the trainer curricula, the language used by the trainees is perhaps less theoretical (e.g. knowing what I want from other people and for myself, being angry and OK), more abstract (being not doing, past present and future) and more focused upon the improvement of personal well-being and growth rather than on the enhancement of therapeutic effectiveness. These trainees' definitions do not explicitly mention the issue of taking personal responsibility for one's learning.

Some differences between the personal development definitions of trainees and trainers might seem logical and expected given that both groups are at significantly different stages in their careers and lives. Indeed, as previously discussed, research by Skovholt & Ronnestad (1996) has suggested that counsellor's at different stages of their careers are characterised by distinct views, preoccupations, needs and developmental themes. Such differences would also be consistent with the previously discussed theory that the 'self', and therefore personal development needs, are continuously evolving over the career and life course (e.g. Johns, 1996).

The last longer extract from Rothery's (1992) survey also includes a number of interesting and distinctive features that echo key points previously discussed. Firstly, the respondent explicitly distinguishes between two kinds of personal development issues: those that a trainee may bring onto the course and those that may arise out of their experiences on the course. Secondly, they strongly emphasise the idiosyncratic nature of personal development and the importance of the trainee's autonomy in deciding what personal issues they explore and how far they explore them.

In addition, this respondent describes an interesting personal learning process through which they came to fundamentally re-evaluate their initial reluctance to engage in personal development work. Again, this respondent's experience attests to several previously discussed points. Firstly, it supports the idea that trainees' personal development needs go beyond their personal preferences or their ability recognise their own needs and blind spots (e.g. 'I'm very glad that I was proved wrong'). It also supports the idea that a counsellor's personal and professional development are inseparable (e.g. 'one cannot do the training without personal work'), and that personal development work in training may rub off on the individual's personal growth or well being, as well as improving their therapeutic competence (e.g. 'the work I did not only makes me a better person, but also a better psychologist'). And finally, it supports the view that personal development is a dynamic and long-term process (e.g. 'of course, I still have a long way to go').

Johns (1996) and Rothery's (1992) reports suggest that there may be differences, as well as similarities, in the ways that trainers and trainees define and view personal development. Furthermore, these reports also suggest that asking trainees about their perceptions of personal development can provide insights and information, of which trainers might be usefully aware. For instance, it seems important that trainers are well acquainted with the particular way that trainees may approach and understand personal development. It also seems important that trainers are able to appreciate and work productively with any differences between their perspectives and expectations as trainers and those of their trainees.

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## 2.7 Chapter review

- A number of significant criticisms have been made about personal development in counselling training, most notably that it suffers from a lack of definition and literature. As the definition of personal development is a fundamental issue in counsellor training, it has a number of implications for other core areas, such as the facilitation and assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees. These areas are also subject to similar criticisms.
- Defining personal development in counsellor training from an integrative perspective and within an academic teaching and learning context is particularly complex and problematic. Some literature implies that counselling psychology does not pay sufficient attention to (1) the philosophical issues associated with an integrative view of personal development, or (2) the integration of personal development work into the main body of training.
- Although the area of personal development has a small specialist literature, a considerable but diffuse body of work exists that is relevant to it. Attempts have been made to define personal development more clearly and specifically, through terminological distinctions and conceptual refinements with inter-related concepts, such as professional development, personal growth and self-awareness. It has also been suggested that distinctions may be insufficiently recognised and understood, contributing to a confusion of aims and a lack of specificity regarding personal development in counsellor training.
- Three sets of detailed curricula for personal development work in counsellor training have been proposed by experienced counsellor trainers. These set out specific lists of developmental aims and objectives for trainees. The curricula are rooted in the person-centred counselling tradition, but are also flexible to other orientations and can be viewed, to some extent, as theoretically integrative. There is considerable crossover between the content of the curricula. For example, all emphasise the development of self-awareness and therapeutic interpersonal qualities.



- There may be limitations regarding the extent to which something as idiosyncratic and evolving as personal development can be defined. There is an apparent tension in the literature between the view that it is essential for training courses to define personal development more concretely and specifically and the view that complete definitions of personal development must be created and constantly modified by individual trainees themselves. This mirrors a broader intractable tension in training between the individual needs of trainees and the professional responsibilities of training courses, to ensure that trainees are fit to work with clients.
  - It may be possible to define personal development on 2 levels: one which focuses on the basic professional aims of personal development, which are the same for all trainees, and one in which these professional aims are personalised with individual trainees, in a way that reflects their own idiosyncratic constellation of issues and needs. Such a distinction may also assist in the assessment of trainees' personal development.
  - To date, personal development curricula have been based on the 'expert' views of individual counsellor trainers, rather than on systematic study. Consequently, it is not currently possible to compare, validate or develop these views with a wider research perspective. Furthermore, the potentially salient views of trainees regarding personal development are somewhat under-represented in the literature. Available work suggests that differences and similarities may exist in the way that trainers and trainees view personal development. Understanding these views seems important to effective training provision.
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## **2.8 Conclusions and research questions**

In concluding this review it is timely to reflect on the criticisms of the area of personal development put forward by Williams & Irving (1997), which the review set out to evaluate, and which have therefore provided a critical focus for the foregoing discussions.

It seems fair to say that there is both evidence which supports and refutes Williams & Irving's (1997) criticisms that personal development is a poorly defined area that lacks literature. For instance, given the contemporary significance of personal development, the amount of specialist literature on it does indeed seem rather small, particularly in terms of research. But in spite of this, it is still possible to collate a pool of relevant and useful data on this topic, through a wider trawl of the professional counselling literature.

In attempting to answer the questions 'Why might defining personal development be important?' and 'To what extent *has* personal development been defined?' the foregoing review has thrown up a mixture of partial answers and further questions. The arguments supporting the need for a clear definition are logical and compelling, especially in today's evidence-based climate of health care provision. But the complexity of the area, and basic questions about the degree to which personal development *can* be defined, warn against a simplistic or prescriptive approach.

Furthermore, particular concerns and complexities have emerged in relation to the way that personal development is defined and addressed in integrative and academically-based trainings, like counselling psychology. It also seems significant that very little of the specialist literature and research on personal development has come from counselling psychologists, especially as the discipline particularly emphasises the importance of research and of personal development. A sense of counselling psychology's view of personal development can be gleaned from its training regulations and guidelines, but these may be intentionally broad. There is consequently little published information currently available on how counselling psychologists see personal development and, indeed, to what extent they differ in their views and approaches. In particular, there is a scarcity of information on how *trainees* see personal development, and how their particular perspectives might inform training practices.

Furthermore, so far, the present research has attempted to evaluate the area of personal development on the basis of published literature and professional training documents. This approach may highlight, to some extent, the status of current knowledge and areas where questions remain. But clearly, the conclusions that can be drawn on this basis about *actual* experiences and practices regarding personal development in counselling psychology are limited.

### 2. 8. 1 Questions and aims of the present research

It is therefore concluded that fuller and more accurate answers to important questions about how personal development is defined and approached in counselling psychology training in the UK might be gained by sampling the actual views and experiences of those currently engaged in this process (i.e. trainers and trainees). The noted lack of research that has been conducted, to date, in the areas of counsellor training (McLeod, 1993) and personal development (Williams & Irving, 1997), would seem to lend further support to this proposal.

Consequently, there are 4 core questions that the present research will aim to address:

1. How do those involved in counselling psychology training (i.e. trainers and trainees) define and view personal development? *AND*
2. To what extent do those involved in counselling psychology training differ in their definitions and views of personal development?
3. How satisfied are those involved in counselling psychology training with the way that personal development is defined, facilitated and assessed in training, and with the way that trainees are selected? *AND*
4. What are their dissatisfactions and how do they think these could be addressed?

More broadly, it is hoped that by asking these questions, the discipline of counselling psychology might:

- gain a better sense of itself in relation to this core aspect of its identity



- begin to uncover, generate and articulate responses to important questions about personal development
- find ways to improve upon its current approaches to personal development in training and create new agendas for personal development research, theory and practice;
- sustain and evolve itself as a reputable professional discipline at the cutting-edge of counselling training and practice, in an increasingly evidence-based, consumer-led climate of health-care provision.

The following chapter explains how the present research set out to address these questions.

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## ***CHAPTER 2: THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT***

# CHAPTER 3



### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW & RATIONALE**

# MEDTHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW & RATIONALE

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## 3.1 Overview

Having defined the area of interest and identified specific questions for the present research, progression to the active data generation phase was preceded by a critical consideration of what methods of investigation would be most appropriate to the aims and philosophy of the project. Therefore, before commencing a detailed account of the investigations themselves, an overview of the broad methodological framework within which these studies are located, and its underlying rationale, will be presented. The discussion that follows adopts a format and argument similar to that employed by Corrie (1997) in a methodological discussion with similar aims.

The overall methodology selected for the present research incorporated a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods. A mixed methodology was chosen because it was anticipated that such an approach would facilitate engagement with the complexity of the subject whilst also permitting a degree of 'generalisation' beyond the immediate participant sample (Corrie, 1997). This research methodology was implemented in two stages: an in-depth qualitative study, which would enable the elicitation of key themes, and a wider quantitative study to enable broader conclusions to be made.

Ethical clearance for the research design was obtained via the University's Research Committee (see Appendix A for a copy of the university ethics release form and an information sheet that addresses ethical dimensions of the research design).

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### 3. 2 Rationale for a Qualitative Methodology

As Bryman (1988) has suggested, choices about research methodology may be informed both by technical and philosophical considerations. A technical approach emphasises the essentially practical nature of research and the belief that, in the 'real world', decisions about methodology are often determined more by professional inheritance and pragmatic considerations about goals and available resources, than by the researcher's ideological or philosophical commitments (Hammersley, 1996). Technically, qualitative research has been identified as being particularly useful when investigating topics that are characterised by complexity, ambiguity or a lack of prior theory or research (Richardson, 1996; McLeod, 1996b), or as a preliminary foundation for more deductive research (Oppenheim, 1992).

Within the context of the present research, personal development has been clearly identified as a topic characterised by complexity, ambiguity and a relative lack of prior theory or research. Moreover, the literature in this area has not sufficiently developed to present the researcher with a pre-defined set of research questions that could be readily investigated using a more deductive methodology. Given the complexity of the topic and undeveloped nature of the literature, it seemed appropriate to employ a research methodology that would enable a more exploratory approach, and the possibility of generating a foundation for more confirmatory work.

At the philosophical level, decisions about research methodology may also be influenced by consideration of the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality (ontology) and ways of gaining access to that reality (epistemology). Such a consideration contributes to the researcher's view of what approaches are considered appropriate to scientific



inquiry. Qualitative research tends to be rooted in an ontological and epistemological perspective that emphasises a search for meaning and how meanings are constructed and experienced by individuals and societies, primarily through the medium of language. Consequently, qualitative research frequently focuses on the analysis and interpretation of textual, rather numerical, data (McLeod, 1996b).

Furthermore, through their emphasis on individual and social constructions of meaning, qualitative methods can also be viewed as broadly consistent with a constructionist philosophy (McLeod, 1996b). As a post-modern movement, constructionism is predicated upon a belief that there is no unitary way of perceiving or explaining reality or meaning, but that multiple constructed realities and meanings may co-exist. The qualitative paradigm also takes a view of the research process that regards the researcher as someone who is subjectively participating in a creative process of data generation, rather than as an impartial objective observer and discoverer of 'facts'. The qualitative researcher is thus believed to exert an influence on the object of their inquiry, as well as to be affected by it. Researchers in the qualitative paradigm are therefore expected to engage with reflexive aspects of the research process and to create a record of their studies that reflects the development of their relationship to their field of inquiry (McLeod, 1996b).

In relation to the present field of inquiry, the philosophical predicates (as well as the technical characteristics) of a qualitative research methodology seemed particularly appropriate. For instance, it seemed important to employ a methodology that would be capable of engaging with the multiple meanings, views and experiences of those involved in counselling psychology training regarding a complex topic. Given the 'personal' nature of the subject matter and the critically reflective approach of the present research, it was also anticipated that a qualitative method would enable attention to be paid the impact of the research upon participants.

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### 3.3 Rationale for a Quantitative Methodology

In terms of its philosophical basis, quantitative research methods have their origins in the natural sciences and traditional conceptions of empiricism, such as 'positivism' (Richardson, 1996). The ontological and epistemological foundations of the positivist perspective regard reality as something that exists in a unitary sense and which can be independently and objectively perceived by rational observation. Its primary focus is the elucidation of causal relationships between phenomena and their reduction to natural laws and propositions that can be tested (Pidgeon, 1996). However, as a number of writers have pointed out (e.g. Annells, 1996; Hammersley, 1996; Mason, 1996), the original positivist underpinnings of quantitatively based science have undergone significant revision, in response to wider shifts in cultural epistemologies. For example, Annells (1996) has discussed a 'post-positivist' conception of science, which asserts that, although a reality beyond socially constructed meanings may exist, this can only be inferred in terms of *probability* rather than *fact*.

This modified view of quantitative science also mirrors a research perspective outlined by Lynch (1996), who identifies a ontological-epistemological position located somewhere between the extremes of positivism (which proposes that there is an objective reality and we can have object knowledge of this through reason) and radical constructivism (which contends that there is no objective meaning to reality, and all meaning is created by individuals and socio-cultural forces). Lynch articulates a middle way: a moderate post-modern position, which contends that an objective order and meaning in reality does exist, but that our knowledge of this is always constrained by our social context and is therefore only a partial understanding. Adopting such a position does require the researcher to engage with questions of how 'truthful' their findings are, but it also acknowledges that there may be no factually absolute way of doing this. Rather, the researcher is left with a moral responsibility to make judgements about what is truthful as best they can. Additionally, Lynch suggests that one way of increasing confidence in the *probable* truthfulness of one's findings is through the process of methodological 'triangulation'. This approach seeks to build a more comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon on the basis of the degree of convergence between different perspectives (e.g. qualitative and quantitative) on that phenomenon. The concept of methodological triangulation is discussed more fully in the next chapter.



These developments in ways of perceiving quantitative methodology appear to support its continued use as a valid approach to research (Corrie, 1997). Moreover, viewed from Lynch's moderate post-modern position, it also seems possible to regard quantitative and qualitative methods as contributing different but valid perspectives that together may enhance the researcher's ability to perceive the whole causal picture with greater accuracy.

On a more technical level, quantitative methods have also typically also been identified as possessing the capacity to gather and assimilate data from larger numbers of participants and to make assertions and generalisations that go beyond the immediate participant sample. Thus, the applicability and relevance of locally generated and contextually-bound understandings and experiences to a wider population can be tested and refined. Given the current project's aim to generate data that is sufficiently representative of views and experiences of personal development to provide a reliable basis for critically considering and developing this aspect of training, it seemed crucial to incorporate a quantitative, as well as qualitative, approach.

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### **3. 4 Rationale for Combining Qualitative & Quantitative Methodologies**

The emergence of post-modern critiques of science and its methods has led some writers to suggest that the traditional dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research is in fact simplistic, misleading and limiting. For example, Hammersley (1996) has argued that the boundary between qualitative and quantitative is far from clear cut, and that each paradigm contains a significant diversity of philosophical positions and methods that makes the notion of, or search for, methodological purity seem somewhat naïve. Moreover, Hammersley warns that 'such dichotomies obscure the range of possibilities that is open to us' (1996; 167).

One issue that arises from such arguments is a question about whether methods from different paradigms might be effectively combined or integrated. Indeed, the notion of 'methodological pluralism' has become increasingly prominent in contemporary research



discourse and practice, with some writers advocating the complementarity of qualitative and quantitative methods and the benefits of incorporating the two within the same study (e.g. Hammersley, 1996). A key argument put forward in support of methodological pluralism is that, by combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the researcher is able to harness the strengths of each while compensating for their weaknesses. For example, Hammersley (1996; 168) suggests that:

*'Qualitative research is sometimes regarded as being better able to produce information about interactional processes and about participant's perspectives, whereas quantitative research is presumed to be better at documenting frequencies and causal patterns... Equally, qualitative research is sometimes regarded as more capable of providing detailed and accurate information about a small number of cases, while some kinds of quantitative research establish the basis for wider generalisation.'*

Hammersley (1996; 167) also identifies the use of qualitative methodologies as a basis for further quantitative study as another potential benefit of methodological pluralism. For example, he suggests that qualitative interviews can be used as a preliminary to a wider survey, both as a way of generating hypotheses and of developing questionnaire items that are 'intelligible to the intended audience'. Hammersley also considers the benefits of triangulation, also referred to above by Lynch (1996), suggesting that findings from qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to corroborate one another, and that the different markers of validity used by each can contribute to a more comprehensive set of criteria for validating findings. As further chapters will illustrate, all of the above benefits identified by Hammersley (1996) have directly informed the manner in which the two approaches were employed in the present research.

Methodological pluralism may be regarded as a purely pragmatic approach to selecting a research protocol (Hammersley, 1996). However, it is still possible for a pluralistic approach to possess what Lynch (1996) has referred to as 'internal consistency'.<sup>1</sup> For a mixed methodology to possess internal consistency it must be developed in relation to an overarching philosophical system that is able to comprehend, manage or transcend apparent tensions between the methodologies employed, as well as being consistent

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<sup>1</sup> Lynch (1996) argues that internal consistency is a universal criteria of validity that can be applied to any piece of research, and requires the research to demonstrate congruence at all levels: from philosophical basis, to research questions, to methods used, to the nature of the conclusions drawn.

with the broader aims and philosophy of the project. Within the context of the present research, such a framework is provided by Lynch's previously stated 'moderate post-modern position'. Consistency is also evident between the use of an integrated methodology and the fact that the discipline of counselling psychology has itself been identified as being founded on a post-modern, pluralistic and integrative philosophy (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996).

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### 3.5 Rationale for using Grounded Theory

As is indicated by Hammersley's (1996) above arguments, qualitative research is not itself a unitary phenomenon, but one that is characterised by a diversity of philosophical positions and methods. Furthermore, Richardson (1996) has noted a dilemma for the qualitative researcher of the relative absence of rules or consensus for guiding the choice of one particular qualitative approach over another. Corrie (1997) has suggested that, within such a context, a researcher's decisions about which qualitative method to adopt are largely determined by their own preferences and where they locate themselves on the qualitative-quantitative philosophical continuum.

Grounded theory has been described as an approach to research that seeks to produce theory that is grounded in an iterative and dynamic process of continual sampling and analysis of qualitative data (Pidgeon, 1996). Although it is a highly creative approach, grounded theory is rooted in a set of systematic procedures that guide the analytic process. These include the methods of refining and expanding a data categorisation system, constant comparison between the data and the researcher's expanding conceptualisations, and integrating and articulating relationships between significant aspects of the data at increasing levels of abstraction. This process leads to the production of a theory, which may then be tested and extended within a 'broader framework of inquiry' (Corrie, 1997; 98).

The fact that, compared with other qualitative approaches, the grounded theory method is interested in the subsequent refinement and transferability of its findings 'from the original context to other settings' (Pidgeon, 1996) has led some writers to suggest that the approach has some affinity with aspects of the quantitative paradigm (Corrie, 1997; Pidgeon, 1996). This suggests that grounded theory may provide a particularly appropriate choice of qualitative methodology where there is an intention to subsequently examine and develop the data generated through further quantitative investigation, as is the case in the present research.

Furthermore, the grounded theory approach has also been described as placing 'great emphasis upon attention to participants' own accounts', and as being 'particularly suited to the study of local interactions and meanings as related to the social context in which they occur' (Pidgeon, 1996; 75). Such comments support the potential suitability of this approach to the current research, which is concerned with eliciting and understanding the views and experiences of individual counselling psychology trainers and trainees as they relate to their immediate training context.

However, it has also been suggested that, in its original form (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), the grounded theory approach exhibits some characteristics that subtly imply an underlying positivist/empiricist stance, which is at odds with a basic qualitative philosophy. For example, Pidgeon (1996; 81) points out that Glaser & Strauss' (1965) early descriptions of how theory is 'discovered' using the approach implies a 'classical notion of induction', which fails to convey the subjective, creative character of the research process, and the co-constructed nature of meanings. Consequently, Pidgeon has argued for a constructionist revision of grounded theory that brings it more up-to-date with contemporary post-modern understandings of science and the nature of research. He suggests that such a view would conceptualise the grounded theory approach as *generating* rather than discovering, theory. Given the post-modern philosophical standpoint of the present research, Pidgeon's revised conceptualisation of grounded theory was adopted in the subsequent analysis.

It should also be noted that the selection of a grounded theory approach for the qualitative phase of the present research was made following due consideration of a number of possible qualitative methodologies. For example, discourse analysis (Potter &



Wetherell, 1987) is an approach to qualitative data that is concerned with deconstructing the content, rhetorical organisation and socially active functions of language. This approach was rejected in the present research because of its primary focus on the discursive devices that people use to manage their interests in social interaction and construct their social reality. Such an approach was not considered well suited to the broader level of analysis that would be required to enable the articulation and representation of participants' personal and shared meanings and experiences, as well as the generation of pertinent themes and theories to account for these.

Content analysis (Weber, 1985) is an approach to qualitative data that attempts to describe manifest and latent levels of meaning present in textual data and to reduce these to discrete, mutually exclusive and quantifiable sets of categories that will comprehensively account for what is of interest to the researcher. This approach was rejected because its approach to data classification was regarded as being overly rigid and reductionistic. It was felt that a more flexible, fluid and organic approach to the generation of categories would be more appropriate to the exploratory nature of the study and the complex character of the topic, as well as more consistent with the post-modern constructivist epistemology of the research.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 1995) has been described as an approach to qualitative data that seeks to gain the 'insider's perspective' regarding the phenomenon of interest. It places an emphasis on the researcher's own interpretation of the data, rather than trying to separate this out from 'the analysis', and ultimately attempts to produce a coherent narrative account of participants' subjective inner experience of a particular topic or issue. In principle and epistemology, it is quite similar to a grounded theory approach, though it adopts a simpler analytic method and places less emphasis on the generation of an overarching theory to account for what emerges from the data. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was rejected in favour of grounded theory because it was felt that its emphasis on inner experience and subjective phenomenology would make it less suited than grounded theory to providing, where necessary, a more straightforward account of participant's views and opinions regarding how personal development is addressed in counselling psychology training. Furthermore, given the relative lack of theory in the existing literature on personal

development, a grounded theory approach was regarded as particularly well suited to the aims of the present research.

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### 3.6 Reflections & Conclusions

Considering fundamental questions about research methodology for the present investigation has proved a stimulating reflective process that has elaborated my appreciation of the importance of, and complexity involved in, designing a piece of research that is both philosophically and technically sound.

The decision to unite qualitative and quantitative methodologies for the present research effort reflects my own ontological and epistemological stance as a researcher. However, this decision was also significantly influenced by a consideration of two fundamental aims of the research: 1) to engage with, rather than shy away from, the complexity and richness of the subject of personal development in counselling psychology training; and 2) to generate data that is sufficiently representative of views and experiences of personal development in counselling psychology training that they provide a reliable basis for critically considering and developing this important aspect of training. To achieve these ends it would seem necessary to employ a methodology that would be able to embrace both the depth of the topic and the breadth of its professional importance.

In examining the studies that follow, the reader is invited to consider for themselves the degree to which these aims were achieved and the methodology chosen justified.

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## **STUDY 1:**

# **A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF TRAINERS' AND TRAINEES' VIEWS & EXPERIENCES OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING**





# CHAPTER 4





# RESEARCH PROCEDURES

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## 4.1 Overview: Design & Aims

The following study employed a qualitative methodology, based on a Grounded Theory approach (Pidgeon, 1996; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996), to elicit themes and patterns from data generated through in-depth interviews with counselling psychology trainers and trainees in the UK about their views and experiences of personal development in counselling psychology training.

The study aimed to explore in particular how counselling psychology trainers and trainees viewed and experienced the issues and key research questions identified in Chapter 2. It has hoped that this process would produce themes, theories and hypotheses about personal development in counselling psychology training, and that these could then be further explored, refined and tested within the context of a wider quantitative study.

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## 4.2 Interview Design

Given the concern of the research to incorporate a qualitative methodology that would be sensitive and responsive to its complex and emotive nature, an in-depth face-to-face interview approach was selected as the most appropriate way to generate data amenable to qualitative analysis (as opposed to using telephone interviews, or open-

ended questionnaires, for example). The ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the use of interviews in research (i.e. that people's views and experiences are meaningful properties of the social reality that is being investigated; and that interacting, talking and listening to people is a valid way to gain knowledge about these) were also considered consistent with the philosophical standpoint of the research.

Mason (1996) has identified a number of different styles of research interview. These vary from a completely unstructured free-form approach - where the interviewer wishes to discuss a topic of relevance to the interviewee but does not have a pre-defined set of questions, to a highly structured linear approach - where the interviewee is asked to respond in a particular order to a set of standardised questions.

Within the context of the present study, it was decided that a semi-structured interview approach, located between the above two extremes, would be most appropriate. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the present research was concerned with a specific constellation of critical issues and questions relating to personal development in counselling psychology training.

Secondly, although I was approaching the discussion of personal development in counselling psychology training with prior knowledge and interests<sup>1</sup>, my research questions were specifically concerned with developing an understanding of what *others* felt to be important issues and experiences within this field of interest. This suggested the need for an interview approach that would strike a balance between defining areas of discourse that would address my research questions, whilst allowing sufficient flexibility and scope within discussions to adapt to the unique perspectives and concerns of individual interviewees. Indeed, in discussing an interview style that is appropriate to a grounded theory approach, Henwood & Pidgeon (1996; 90) have discussed the difficulties involved in striking this balance. They identify the challenge of trying to have 'a directed conversation' that does not lose 'sight of interesting theoretical issues that might require more directed questioning', without overly directing interviewees or 'becoming overly constrained by pre-formulated questioning'.

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<sup>1</sup> Pidgeon (1996) suggests that, although it has been a point of debate for grounded theory researchers, some prior awareness of the literature and pre-formed ideas about what one believes and is interested in is not only logically inevitable, but practically necessary to provide a starting point and guide for the analytic process.



Thirdly, a central aim of grounded theory is to generate ideas and theory that are faithful to, or grounded in, the meanings and experiences of individuals within their social sphere. These should emerge from the data without undue pressure or distortion from the researcher. In this light, it seemed inappropriate to employ a highly structured interview format, as the prescriptive and standardised nature of the questions and narrow parameters of the interaction would hinder a collaborative exploration of emergent issues, and the generation of theory grounded in the actual views and experiences of participants.

#### 4. 2. 1 Interview preparation

Mason (1996; 48) has suggested guidelines for designing a semi-structured interview that strikes a balance between direction and free exploration. She describes a process of preparing for interviewing which begins with the articulation of 'big questions'; the key concerns which the study is designed to explore. These big questions are broken down into 'mini' research questions, and the researcher then begins to generate possible ways of asking questions within the context of an interview that tap into what they wish to know. Mason advises that, although the researcher should possess a clear overview of the issues and types of questions they wish to discuss, the actual structure of the interviews should be loose, and flexible. She also suggests that there may be certain standard questions that the researcher will want to ask all interviewees.

The interviews conducted for the present study followed Mason's (1996) recommendations. The 4 key research questions outlined in Chapter 2 were identified as the 'big questions'. Mini research questions were then derived from these, based on a consideration of related and contextual issues in the literature, a variety of possible avenues of response and sub-questions implied by the key questions. Possibilities about how to phrase actual interview questions relating to these issues were then generated and their appropriateness discussed in the context of research supervision, until a satisfactory range of possibilities was agreed. An emphasis was placed on ensuring that questions would be phrased in an 'open-ended conversational style' (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1996; 90).



A guide for the interview process was then prepared, to provide a light framework (see Appendix B). This was divided under a number of headings relating to the key concerns of the research. Within each section, questions were included to provide an *aide memoir* the interviewer, as well as a resource that could be drawn upon, as necessary, to facilitate the interview process. The first question of the interview, 'What is personal development?', was the only standardised question asked of every interviewee. This was intended not only to provide an introduction to the interview that would help orient interviewees to the reflective nature of the inquiry, but also to provide a meaningful starting point and context for further explorations. Responses to this broad question also conveyed an immediate sense of each interviewee's particular perspective in relation to the topic. A number of basic demographic questions were also asked of all participants.

#### 4. 2. 2 Interview summary

A content summary of the interview's principal sections is outlined below:

##### ***The definition of personal development***

This section was concerned with exploring participants' definitions of personal development; their views about its professional importance; and their views and experiences regarding how well it is defined in training.

##### ***The facilitation of personal development***

This section was concerned with exploring participants' views regarding how personal development is facilitated in training; what experiences seem most significant, including the role of personal therapy/counselling; and how well the issue of personal development is addressed and integrated on the course.

##### ***The assessment of personal development***

This section was concerned with exploring participants' views regarding the issue of how to assess personal development during training; to what extent it can be formally assessed; and how to deal with trainees who do not seem to develop.

### ***The selection of trainees***

This section was concerned with exploring participants' views and experiences relating to the assessment of personal suitability for training during selection; how this might be assessed and how effective current selection methods are in this respect.

### ***Concluding questions***

Here participants were given an opportunity to raise any additional issues or concerns that they felt were important or relevant to the present inquiry or to further research, and to reflect on the experience of the interview itself.

### ***Personal and professional information***

Information relating to participants' gender, age, theoretical orientation, professional status and experience was recorded.

## **4. 2. 3 Interview piloting**

The interview was piloted with two trainers from the BPS accredited counselling psychology training programme provided within the psychology department where I was based as a researcher. This process provided uniformly positive feedback on the appropriateness of the flow, content, length and style of the interview. Therefore, no alterations were made to the interview, and the data generated in these two interviews were used in the subsequent analysis.

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## **4. 3 Selection & Recruitment of Participants**

### **4. 3. 1 Theoretical sampling**

The way that participants are selected and recruited when using a grounded theory methodology constitutes a defining feature of the approach. Grounded theory employs a



method called *theoretical sampling*. Theoretical sampling is a purposive approach that is driven explicitly by concerns about what kinds of participants would be most likely to provide informative, conceptually rich and diverse perspectives on the subject of interest. This can be contrasted with the sampling techniques typically associated with experimental and survey research, which aim to achieve a balanced and representative sample of a wider population in order to increase the 'generalisability' of the findings. An additional feature of theoretical sampling is that the selection of participants proceeds in tandem with the ongoing analysis of the data. This enables the researcher to seek further informants and perspectives based on what early analysis suggests would further elaborate the emerging conceptual framework. As part of this, the grounded theory researcher will seek to recruit a sample of participants whose views and experiences may contrast with one another, in the belief that the analysis of such contrasts or 'negative cases' (i.e. new instances of data that do not appear to fit the emerging conceptual system) will help to build a more complete and robust theoretical picture (Pidgeon, 1996; 78).

In line with the precepts of theoretical sampling, the basic prerequisite characteristics of potential participants for the present study (including pilot interviewees) were that they should be currently involved in counselling psychology training, either as a trainer (i.e. a member of the teaching staff) or a trainee on a BPS accredited counselling psychology training programme. From a theory building perspective, past literature (e.g. Johns, 1996; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996; Rothery, 1992) seemed to indicate that the trainer-trainee distinction may be a potentially important 'unit of comparison' within the sample (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; 59). The individuality of each participant was also regarded as a key dimension, given that an explicit aim of the study was to examine the variety of individual experience and perspectives within the social group under investigation (i.e. the counselling psychology training community). These potentially salient sample characteristics could therefore be pre-specified. However, within these basic parameters, selection of actual participants was not entirely pre-specified and choices were made about further selections as initial data analysis began.



#### 4.3.2 Recruitment procedure

As I was based as a researcher in a Psychology Department that ran a BPS accredited counselling psychology training programme, I decided to focus my recruitment efforts there, in order to take advantage of the ready availability of potential participants. Initial contact with potential participants was made in different ways for trainers and trainees. Four trainers within the department, who had considerable experience of counselling psychology training, were approached either via email or in person. Following an explanation of the aims of the study, all 4 trainers agreed to participate, and a time and date were arranged for an interview.

Contact with potential trainee participants within the Department was made in a number of ways. Two were first encountered as visitors to the Psychometrics Library within the Department, where I worked as a tutor. Within this context, students would sometimes inquire about my own research interests. After hearing about my current project, two counselling psychology trainees offered to be interviewed, commenting that they were interested in the topic. I recruited another trainee-interviewee in a similar way at a student committee meeting, after hearing them express some views about personal development. Through a process of 'snow balling' (Oppenheim, 1992), one further trainee was suggested as a potential participant by another interviewee, as someone who was known amongst their peers to have strong views on the subject of personal development. Telephone contact was made with this trainee, who also agreed to be interviewed. Mutually convenient times and dates for interviews with all these trainees were arranged.

#### 4.3.3 Sample characteristics

Eight participants: 4 trainers and 4 trainees, all involved in counselling psychology training within the UK, agreed to participate in the study. Five were female (2 trainers and 3 trainees), and three male (2 trainers and 1 trainee). Participant's ages ranged from 27 to 55 years (*Mean* = 38.75).

All 4 trainers were chartered counselling psychologists with considerable experience of professional teaching and clinical practice. Two of the trainers had chartered via the 'Grandparent Route'<sup>2</sup> and 2 via an accredited course. Two of the trainers had experience as supervisors of counselling psychology trainees and one also had experience as a personal counsellor to trainees. All 4 trainees were currently engaged on the M.Sc. in Counselling Psychology at City University, 2 as full-time and 2 as part-time students. All had had previous career experience, one as an academic psychologist. In terms of theoretical orientation, the sample consisted of participants who expressed allegiances to cognitive-behavioural, person-centred, systemic, existential-phenomenological, personal construct and integrative models.

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#### 4. 4 Interview Procedure

The interviews with the trainers took place in their individual offices at the university. It was anticipated that participants would feel more relaxed if interviewed in the familiarity and comfort of their own office, rather than mine. The interviews with trainees took place in my office at the university, as it was agreed that this was the most mutually convenient location. Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes with most lasting approximately 60 minutes. Each were audio-taped using a Sony TCM-77V cassette recorder.

At the beginning of each interview, each participant signed a consent form for participation in the study and recording of the interview, which I had prepared in line with recommendations made by Mason (1996) (see Appendix C). I began each interview with a few introductory words, recapitulating the nature and aims of the study before inviting interviewees to consider the opening question: 'What is personal development?'

During the interviews I employed basic counselling skills, such as attentive listening, paraphrasing and summarising (Jacobs, 1999). This served a number of purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> The 'Grandparent Route' refers to the process of having one's prior clinical experience and qualifications recognised as meeting the requirements for chartership as a counselling psychologist (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996).



These skills helped to convey my interest in participants' views and experiences; to establish a sense of rapport and collaboration with interviewees; and to facilitate the deeper and fuller exploration of participants' meanings. As MacDonald (2000) has pointed out, the use of reflective and clarificatory counselling skills in interviews can serve a useful checking/verification function; helping the interviewer to establish the veracity of their understanding of the concepts and themes as they emerge.

In addition, because they were taking place in tandem with preliminary data analysis, the interviews themselves became a forum for introducing, cross-checking, elaborating and contrasting ideas about themes that I was developing *between*, as well as during, interviews. In this respect, I experienced myself as co-ordinating an exchange of ideas, not just between myself and the present interviewee, but between the present interviewee and those I had already spoken with. Furthermore, this highly reflexive process seemed to illustrate that the grounded theory techniques of *constant comparison* and *negative case analysis* can be incorporated into the interview process itself, as well as during subsequent data analysis. MacDonald (2000) has reported strikingly similar experiences and observations about the process of research interviews within a grounded theory framework.

During the conclusion of each interview, participants were invited to reflect on the experience of the interview itself. Many of the interviewees remarked that the experience had been an interesting and stimulating one, and some expressed a belief in the importance of researching the topic. A selection of biographical and background information was recorded, and then a brief period of 'debriefing' time was spent chatting more generally about my research and other points of interest. Immediately after each interview, I spent a few minutes reflecting myself on the experience, and made some field notes about the content and process of the interview.

#### 4. 4. 1 Interview transcription

The whole of each interview was transcribed using Word 6.0 for Windows. Each interviewer-interviewee turn, paragraph, and line of text was numbered to facilitate subsequent analysis, categorisation, cross-referencing and access to salient features of



the interview. The transcribing process proved to be a very useful way of beginning to engage with and become more familiar with the data. While transcribing, I often included notes and observations as they occurred to me. This created a valuable resource of initial ideas that provided a starting point for much subsequent theorising.

The transcripts provided the primary material for the analysis. However, analysis was often carried out while listening back to the original interview recording and reading the transcript simultaneously. The audio recording enabled access to potentially informative paralinguistic features of the interview, such as tone of voice, pace and mood.

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#### 4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded following an approach to grounded theory laid out by Pidgeon & Henwood (1996). Pidgeon & Henwood's method was adopted partly because it was developed from constructionist standpoint, but also because the authors offer a clear and coherent set of instructions to guide the researcher through the analytic process. A clear guiding structure is particularly important, given that grounded theory analysis is a creative process that begins with a large quantity of unstructured qualitative data (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). In the following analysis, I was also influenced by the work of MacDonald (2000), a colleague whose own presentation of a grounded theory analysis I had found to be particularly accessible. MacDonald also highlights concepts and ideas that in some aspects mirrored, and helped to make sense of, my own experience of using this approach.

The primary tool in grounded theory data analysis is the method of *constant comparison*. This, combined with *theoretical sampling*, creates the iterative 'flip flop' process that is the essence of the approach. The researcher travels continually to and fro between the data and their emerging conceptualisations to gradually refine a 'data representation language' that moves to ever increasing levels of theoretical abstraction, while keeping its roots firmly grounded in the original data source (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996; 87).

The researcher begins this process by combing the text for concepts that appear to have relevance to the research questions, asking themselves 'What categories, concepts or labels do I need in order to account for what is of importance to me in this paragraph?' (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996; 92). Instances of significance, sometimes termed 'meaning units' (MacDonald, 2000), are then given labels called 'codes'. Through constant comparison of these codes, within and between participants, the researcher elicits what they perceive to be 'commonalities of meaning' (MacDonald, 2000; 31). These groupings of related codes are termed 'categories'. Then, through further ongoing comparisons, the researcher looks for a shared higher order meaning between the categories, which is termed a core category or theme. This theme therefore sits at the top of a conceptual hierarchy or tree, whose roots pass down through its categories and codes back to the data itself. Thus, a conceptual system or *theory* is developed which is *grounded* in the data.

In the present study, I adopted a manual system for organising and documenting this creative process involving the use of index cards (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). Each meaning unit was given an initial label and written onto an index card, with a brief summary of the relevant text and its location details (i.e. interview, paragraph and line number). Moving through the data, codes that appeared related were recorded together on the same card and tentative category labels assigned to them. Through further coding, categories quickly developed in content and complexity and, as core meanings emerged, categories were refined through a process of *relabelling* (where earlier labels could be improved to 'fit' the data more accurately or succinctly), *merging* (when it became clear that two or more categories were actually descriptions of the same basic phenomenon), *splitting* (where it became evident that divergent strands within a previously single category warranted separate conceptualisation and categories of their own), and *definition* (where the researcher writes a description of each category that attempts to make explicit its properties and membership criteria). Other categories also became relatively redundant as a predominant structure that accounted for the main features of interest emerged.

Eventually, a point was reached where further examination and coding of the data did not yield further insights or categories. At this point, Pidgeon & Henwood (1996) describe the categories as having become 'saturated' and suggest progression to the



final analytic stage of 'category integration'. This moves the analysis to the theory development level, at which the researcher searches for higher order relationships between categories, within the broader theoretical context of their research questions. Here, I brought together remaining categories in groupings around four core themes. In all cases, these core themes happened to be previously identified categories of a more abstract nature.

Furthermore, in line with Henwood & Pidgeon's suggestions for presenting the more theoretical products of a grounded theory analysis, I was able to represent these hierarchical category inter-relationships using simple schematic diagrams (created using Powerpoint for Windows). I also experimented with a manual cutting and pasting approach to generating theoretical ideas about the more dynamic levels of relationship between particular categories. This involved typing each relevant category onto a small label and trying out different theoretical arrangements, based on the conceptual inter-relatedness and proximity of the categories. Eventually, these ideas were also transferred into a Powerpoint format. The results of these analyses are provided in Chapter 5.

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#### 4.6 Assessing the Quality of the Data

In research based on traditional 'positivist' epistemology, attempts to assess the quality of findings are typically based on techniques that seek to compensate for or eradicate the effects of observer bias (McLeod, 1996b). The associated assumption here is that one can and should attempt to separate the researcher from the researched in order to produce more objective and truthful findings. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, qualitative research makes no such claims to objectivity or ultimate truth, and the researcher is viewed as much as a participant and co-creator of data, as an observer of phenomena. As a result, it has been necessary to establish ways of evaluating findings in qualitative research that are consistent with its underlying 'constructionist' epistemology. A number of possible methods for doing this have been



proposed (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996; Smith, 1996). The following sections outline some of these and how they were applied in the present research.

#### 4. 6. 1 Auditability

Auditability relates to the concern that the research process should be made as transparent and open to external scrutiny as possible. For instance, Smith (1996; 192) has suggested that a good piece of qualitative research should present evidence for its explanations by providing 'enough of the raw data to allow the reader to interrogate the interpretation that is being made', so that what is presented is not merely an undifferentiated third person account of the findings. In the present study, excerpts of raw data from the interviews themselves have been incorporated throughout the presentation of findings (see Chapter 5) to illustrate each category, and to provide the reader with a basis for judging for themselves the appropriateness or degree of 'fit' between the researcher's interpretations and the data (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). Longer excerpts from two of the interviews are also included in Appendix D. The traceability of interpretations back to their source in the data is also facilitated by the method of constant comparison and the resulting hierarchy of concepts and categories that develops from this, which show the reader a clear conceptual path from the raw data at the bottom to the core categories at the top. Copies of the full transcripts are also available from the author together with the card indexing system used to code and categorise the interviews.

#### 4. 6. 2 Reflexivity & 'researcher perspective'

As explained previously, in qualitative research, the researcher is considered an active participant in the research process, with a subjective perspective that both affects and is affected by the meanings they perceive. I have attempted to document my own reflexive process throughout the present research. This has included being open about, and remaining sensitive to, how my own readings of past literature and present data may have influenced, and been influenced by, my own 'researcher perspective', which has been defined as referring to:

*"substantive interests that guide the questions to be asked, a philosophical stance or a school of thought that provides a store of sensitising concepts, and the researcher's own personal experiences, priorities and values" (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996; 83).*

I have attempted to explicate these issues in the Prologue & Epilogue sections. They are also evident throughout the literature review in Chapter's 1 and 2. However, I would summarise here the substantive interests that have guided the research questions in this project in terms of a curiosity about the extent to which it may be possible to define the area of personal development more clearly, and in a way that enhances its delivery in counselling psychology training. This curiosity is motivated primarily by a belief in the clinician's personal development as the most fundamental ingredient of effective practice, which is in turn based upon my own personal experiences of therapeutic relationships. I would describe the philosophy that has provided a store of sensitising concepts for the present research as an essentially integrative/constructivist philosophy, in that I have been influenced by literature and concepts drawn from a diversity of therapeutic perspectives. Finally, I would define the priorities and values that have influenced the present research in terms of those that are at the heart of the discipline of counselling psychology itself: namely, a commitment to critically reflect on practice and to use research and theory to inform and enhance this. I use the term 'practice' here to refer to training procedures, as well as clinical work.

#### **4. 6. 3. Theoretical sampling and negative case analysis**

As described previously, sampling in grounded theory is driven explicitly by theoretical concerns about recruiting informants who are likely to provide rich and diverse perspectives on the phenomenon of interest. The search for 'negative cases' (instances of data that contrast with the emerging conceptual system) can provide a useful quality control mechanism in grounded theory research, as it serves to challenge the researcher's initial assumptions and interpretations about the data and therefore guards against the construction of a simplistic, incomplete, or indefensible theoretical account (Pidgeon, 1996).



As previously mentioned, I also employed the method of constant comparison during interviews (as well as during the subsequent analysis), by sharing with interviewees conceptualisations I was developing based on the comments of previous interviews, in order to find out if they would view these issues in the same or contrasting ways. One example of this was my sharing with an interviewee the belief expressed by some previous interviewees that it is impossible to assess a trainee's personal development quantitatively. The interviewee disagreed with this view and provided a coherent and interesting explanation for this, thereby adding an important new dimension to my emerging conceptual system. As described previously, I also actively recruited a participant who was known to have some unconventional views on personal development.

Furthermore, Smith (1996; 192) has suggested that in qualitative analysis it is important that the researcher deals with any 'contradictions and alternative ways of viewing the data in a coherent and ordered way'. In relation to the present study, a number of contradictions and alternative perspectives emerged as an important theme in the data itself. A conceptual meta-structure was developed which enabled these to be viewed as coherent parts of the emerging theoretical system.

#### 4. 6. 4 Respondent validation

Reflexivity, basic counselling skills and the technique of constant comparison provided useful ways for me to check and receive immediate feedback on the validity of my interpretations during the interviews. However, this was also done in a more focused and concerted way through a separate procedure termed 'respondent validation' (Pidgeon, 1996; 84). Respondent validation refers to the method of taking the developing analysis back to the interviewees at a point subsequent to the interview to allow them to check and comment on the emerging theory. The basic principle here is that 'If participants agree with the researcher's account, then greater confidence can be attached to it' (Pidgeon, 1996; 84).

A summary of the main categories or themes emerging from each interview was prepared and sent to each of the 8 participants, along with a covering letter and a copy



of their interview transcript (an example of a summary and covering letter are included in Appendix E). To help participants cross-reference my interpretations with the raw data, supporting examples from the interview were provided for each category or theme, referenced within the summary by the relevant interview paragraph number. Meetings were then arranged to discuss the analysis and receive constructive feedback. Seven of the 8 participants agreed to be re-interviewed (one had indicated their basic agreement with the interpretation and felt that discussion of the analysis was unnecessary). Each of these interviews was audio taped and memos based on their outcomes were written, which included transcriptions of salient new data.

Despite the potential usefulness of respondent validation in qualitative research, the limitations that may be imposed on this process by the inherent power imbalance between the participants and the researcher are also well acknowledged (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996; Smith, 1996). For example, Smith (1996; 194-195) suggests that an interviewee may find it difficult to question or disagree with the researcher's interpretation. However he also adds that:

*"Given the right circumstances, it is possible for participants to do much more than just concur with the analysis. Sometimes their interpretations of a text and their response to the researcher's analysis helps to expand the reading that is given."*

In relation to the present study, my attempts to foster a collaborative relationship with participants, as well as my connection with the university, seemed to attenuate the effects of this power imbalance and to enhance respondents' readiness to modify or build on my interpretations. Respondents often went beyond simply concurring with my analysis to provide significant further elaborative information. They frequently provided significant new insights and clarifications, which facilitated the development of more accurate or succinct category definitions or titles and, in some cases, required the development of important new categories. My experience of using respondent validation within the context of the present study therefore seemed to confirm its effectiveness as a significant way of continuing the iterative 'flip flop' process of grounded theory production.

#### 4. 6. 5 Generativity & transferability

The term 'generativity' refers to the extent to which a piece of research facilitates the generation of further research questions (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). 'Transferability' is concerned with the extent to which the findings from a study are transferable from their original context to other settings, and can therefore be said to have more general significance (MacDonald, 2000)<sup>3</sup>. Evaluating transferability thus serves as a check to over-interpretation of the data.

In the present research, the theoretical framework that emerged from the grounded theory analysis enabled the generation of further research questions and hypotheses, and the development of a survey instrument that was used to evaluate the wider transferability of key categories and themes. Thus, evaluating the transferability of the findings from the grounded theory was intended as an explicit aim of the second study.

#### 4. 6. 6 Triangulation

Like respondent validation and transferability, the use of triangulation in research can also help to increase confidence in the researcher's readings of the data. Triangulation is the use of multiple research methods to create different perspectives from which to view the phenomenon of interest. The basic principle is that by using a number of different sources of information to tackle a question the resulting answer is likely to be more accurate and well-rounded. Thus, although triangulation does not guarantee the 'truth' of the findings, it may help to provide a richer account that can strengthen the research's claims (Smith, 1996; 193-194).

By using both in-depth qualitative and broader quantitative research methods, within an over-arching constructionist framework (see Chapter 3, sections 3. 3 and 3. 4), the present research aimed to provide two divergent but valid viewpoints from which to observe and interpret the views and experiences of counselling psychology trainers and trainees regarding the topic of personal development. Thus, the two studies included in

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<sup>3</sup> In qualitative research, the concept of transferability replaces the quantitatively based notion of generalisability.



the present research have been explicitly designed to have a basis for mutual corroboration and the evaluation of the transferability of findings.

#### 4. 6. 7. Theory integrated at diverse levels

Henwood & Pidgeon (1995; 105) have stated that 'good theory should be rich, complex and dense and integrated at diverse levels of generality'. The complexity of the process and outcomes of theory generation in the present research is conveyed in detail within the context of the following chapter. In terms of theoretical generality, the model of personal development presented in Chapters 5 and 7 incorporates categories from several of the core themes. Furthermore, the core theme 'Tensions' provides an abstract level of analysis that serves to integrate into the main theoretical framework some of the contrasts and dilemmas that emerged as complex but important features of participants' accounts. In addition, categories and themes identified generally, though not always, appeared to be equally applicable to both trainers and trainees, as well as to participants who expressed 'different' theoretical allegiances.

#### 4. 6. 8 Re-visiting the data

Pidgeon (1996; 78) has described the method of constant comparison as one of 'continually sifting and comparing elements.. *throughout the lifetime of a research project*' (emphasis added). I had initially developed my grounded theory analysis during the Autumn of 1999 until it appeared to reach a level of structure, clarity and coherence sufficient to enable the development of a survey instrument for the quantitative phase of the project. During the summer of 2002, while compiling the research, I returned to this analysis and re-immersed myself in it by re-reading interview transcripts, respondent validation notes, card indexes, category definitions and memos. Re-visiting these materials after this interval, I found myself viewing them with a renewed perspective that had inevitably evolved through carrying out a quantitative study in the interim. However, overall, I was struck by the enduring resonance of the original analysis, and the economical way it seemed to address the complexity of the topic. I therefore felt



renewed confidence in it.<sup>4</sup> However, I did make a few minor modifications to the original analysis at this point (e.g. re-phrasing some category titles and merging some of the lower level categories), which seemed to enhance the clarity of the conceptual framework, without altering its structure.

#### 4. 6. 9 Further readings

Although I had read the majority of the literature that is reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2 before defining my research questions, there was a handful of relevant papers and books, usually newly published, that I discovered at a later point in the research process after carrying out my initial interview analysis. This was not problematic, as some grounded theorists actually advise researcher's to limit their prior reading of the literature so that their ability to accurately perceive respondent's own meanings is not unduly biased by prior concepts or theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Of particular significance was Irving & Williams' (1999) paper, which outlined their argument for a distinction between the concepts of personal growth and personal development (previously discussed in Chapter 2, section 2. 3. 3). The distinctions the authors made seemed to parallel a divergence I had observed within my interviewees' definitions of 'personal development', but which I had not conceptualised in terms of a personal growth-development distinction. However, Irving & Williams' distinction seemed to offer a clear and highly relevant framework for interpreting these aspects of my own data, as well as to facilitate the integration of my research with other literature. The ideas presented in Irving & Williams' paper therefore became influential in my emerging theory, and provided one of several comparative frameworks for exploring links between the present findings and prior literature, which are discussed within the following Chapter.

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<sup>4</sup> The principle at work here seemed reminiscent of the concept of 'test-re-test reliability', which is traditionally rooted in the epistemology of the quantitative paradigm, and not normally applied in the evaluation of qualitative research. However, within the context of the present study and moderated constructionist epistemology, the principle can perhaps be regarded as relevant. For instance, the notion of visiting the data at 2 separate points in time might be considered

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analogous to the principle of triangulation, in that on each visit the researcher is viewing the data from a different perspective, and that these perspectives may be mutually corroborating.

# CHAPTER 5



**STUDY 1, CHAPTER 5: GROUNDED THEORY FINDINGS**

# GROUNDED THEORY FINDINGS

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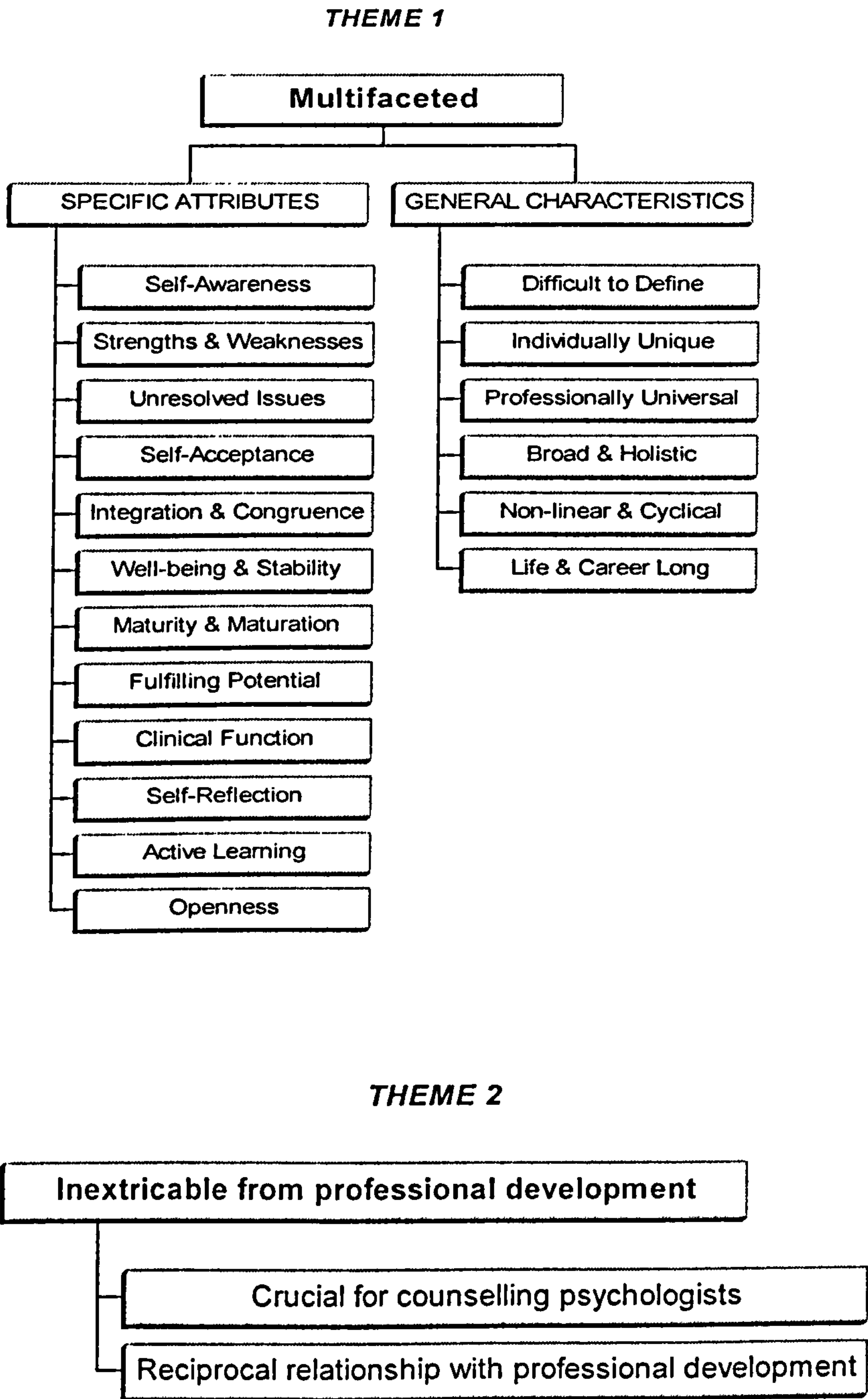
## 5.1 Overview

Findings from the grounded theory analysis will be presented in terms of 4 core themes that emerged from the interviews. Figure 4 below provides a graphic representation of these themes, and the categories within them, which illustrates their hierarchical structure.

Themes 1, 2 and 3 can be characterised as lower level themes that relate to the more manifest or descriptive content of interviewees' views and experiences. Theme 4 is a higher level theme relating to a more latent and interpretative dimension of analysis, which explores some of the emergent contrasts and complexities within the data.

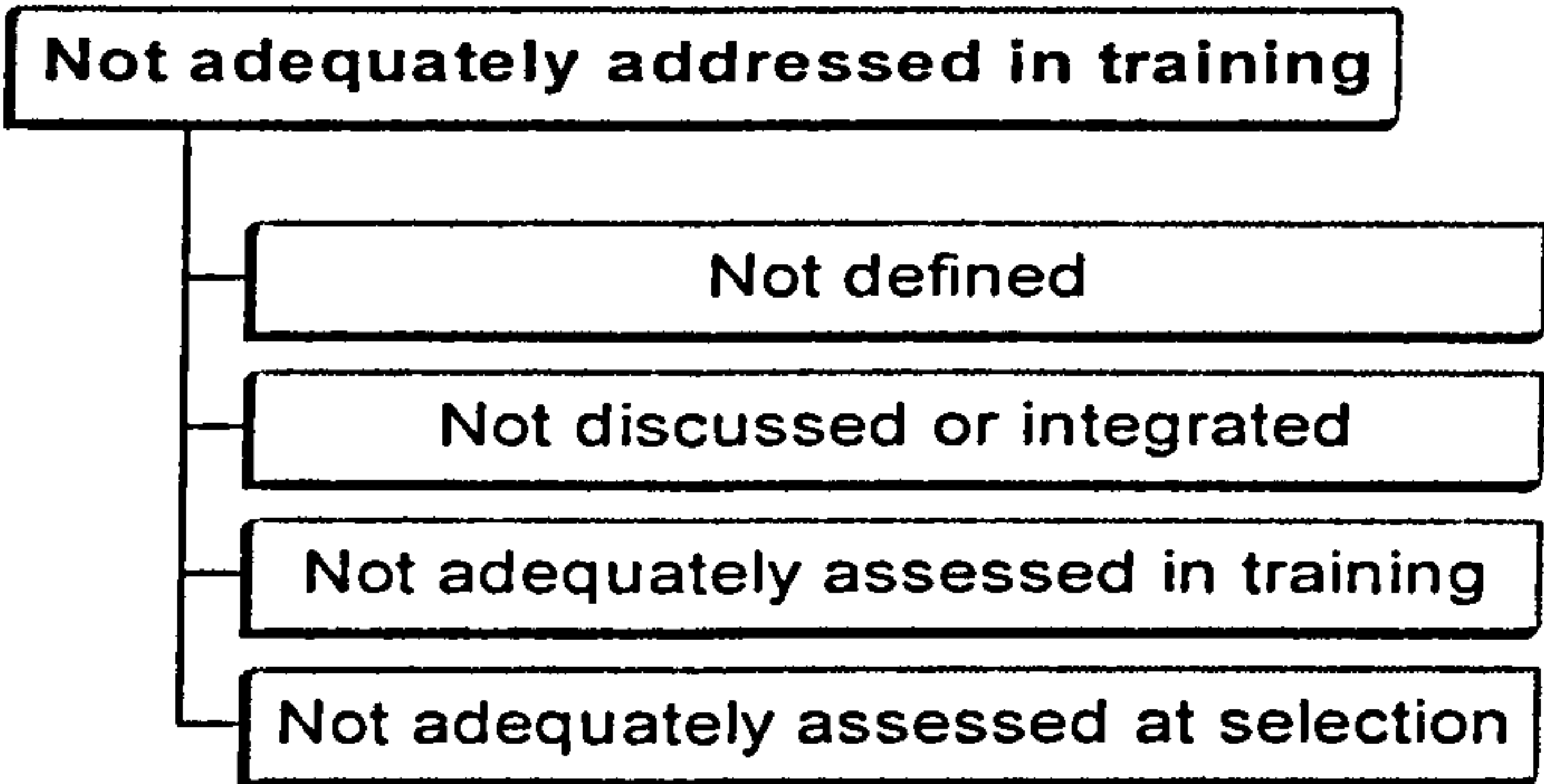
The chapter will proceed by describing each theme in turn, using illustrative excerpts from the interviews to provide 'grounded' evidence. Following the presentation of Theme 1, a tentative model of personal development based upon the data will also be proposed. After all four themes have been introduced, the emerging findings will be discussed in relation to the key research questions and the prior literature. Finally, the way that the grounded theory analysis was used to provide a basis for the second quantitative study will be explained.

Figure 4. A graphic representation of the themes and categories that emerged from the grounded theory analysis

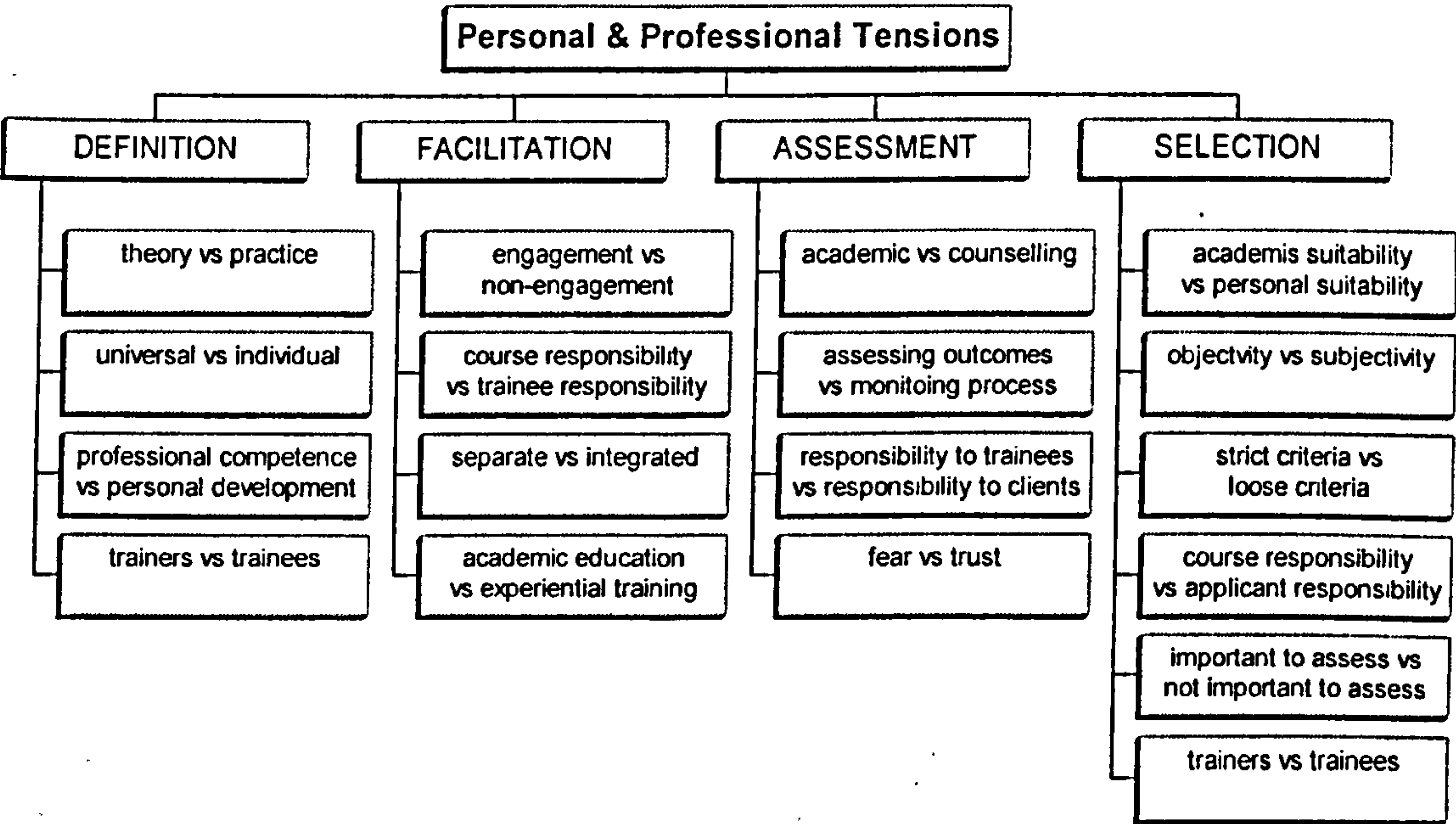




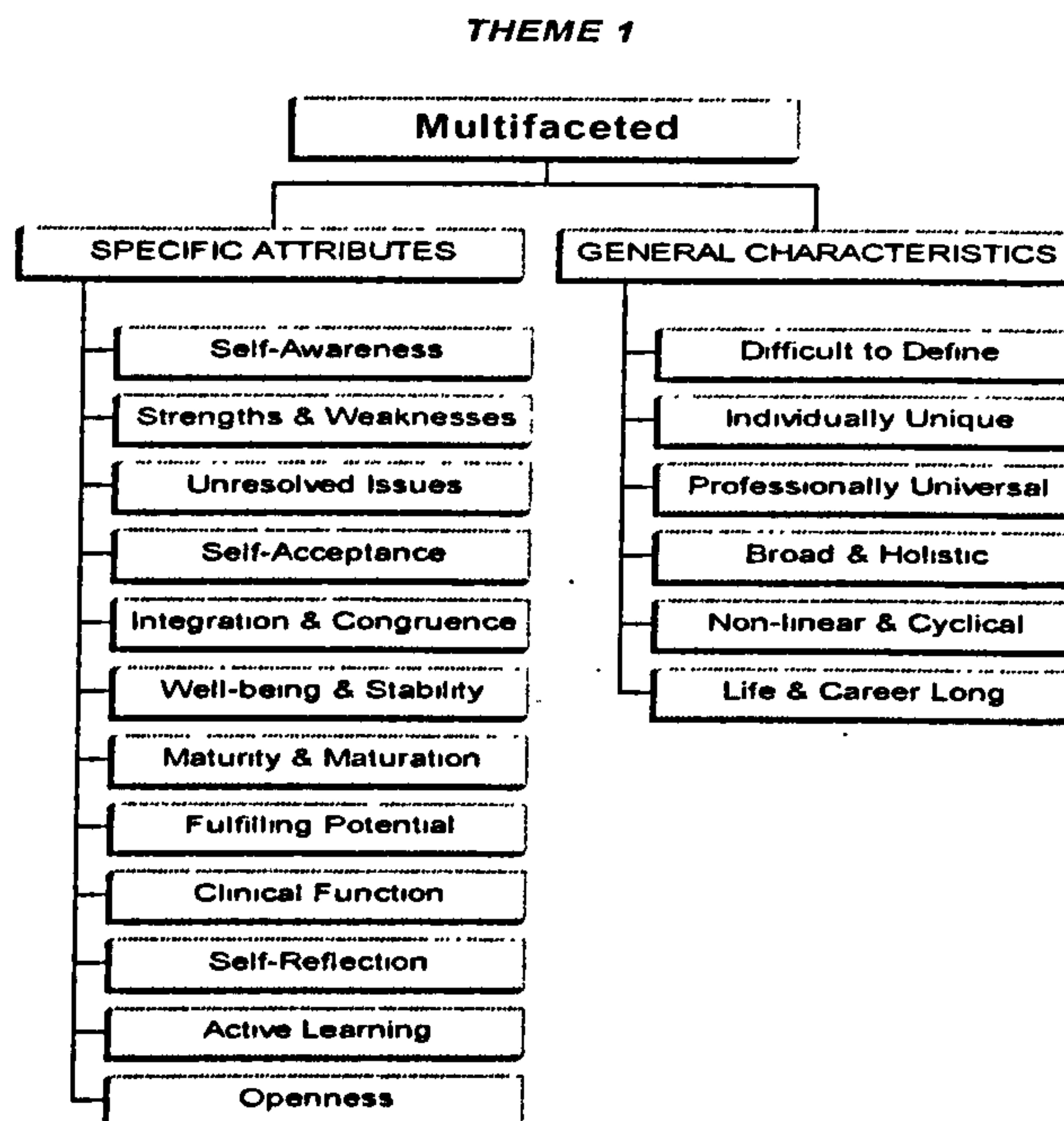
THEME 3



THEME 4



## 5.2 Theme 1: 'Multifaceted'



The theme 'Multifaceted' emerged clearly from the interviews in both implicit and explicit ways. It was implicit in the range of ways that interviewees responded to the question 'What is personal development?'. This diversity, which is represented by the numerous categories contained within this theme, suggested that personal development should be regarded as a multifaceted concept or process. The multifaceted nature of personal development was also identified in explicit ways by respondents: *"I suppose it consists of several things"* (4.2), *'various facets'* (1.6), *'I'd have to break it down into a number of areas'* (7.10).

The definitional elements that emerged were categorised as either 'specific attributes' or 'general characteristics'. Specific attributes related to what appeared to be the core features of personal development, while general characteristics represented broader qualities of personal development. The following sections describe each of the elements contained within these categorisations.

### 5.2.1 Specific Attributes

Twelve specific attributes of personal development were identified from participants' responses to the question 'What is personal development?'.

#### **Self-awareness**

Self-awareness was a strongly emphasised attribute: "[personal development is] all about self-awareness.. the two go hand in hand" (6.128). Furthermore, it was suggested that personal development and self-awareness were so closely related that they were virtually the same:

*"Well, to me that's what personal development is. You know.. personal development is about gaining personal awareness. To me the two terms are almost synonymous." (2.88)*

However, for others personal development and self-awareness were regarded as intimately related, but not equivalent. Self-awareness seemed more present-focused, while personal development was more future or action-oriented:

*"Personal development and self-awareness: they're not dissimilar, but are they the same? I mean, you're aware of yourself as a person at a point in time. But personal development's about growth and leading on into the future from where you are now." (4.92)*

It was also suggested that for personal development to take place "having self-awareness is not sufficient. It's necessary, but not sufficient." (8.129).

A number of specific kinds of self-awareness that were viewed as important to trainees' personal development were also identified. These included increasing awareness and understanding of one's personal history, personality structure, beliefs and values. Respondents often appeared to use the terms 'self-awareness' and 'self-knowledge' interchangeably.



### **Strengths & Weaknesses**

The ability to recognise one's strengths and weaknesses was also regarded as a core feature of personal development. This concept appeared as a capacity for *"humility"* (6.34) or *"realistic self-appraisal"* (4.96), or *"Insight into strengths and limitations"* (3.79). This capacity was also suggested as important in trainee selection.

### **Unresolved Issues**

Working on *"unresolved issues"* (2.10) was identified as an aspect of personal development. Trainees were regarded as having a professional obligation to address their own personal problems, traumatic experiences, relationship issues, and unfinished business from the past, which might affect interpersonal and clinical functioning. One respondent described this as *"dealing with your own stuff"* (2.8).

The process of dealing with one's unresolved issues was described as not always enjoyable and a painful process that has *"nothing to do with having fun"* (2.54). However, others emphasised that the personal development does not have to be a painful process and is not about aiming to change basic aspects of personality:

*"it really isn't about totally restructuring the self; that's not what I mean by personal development in the context of this course... The course does not wash people clean. It's not meant to do that. And it isn't the case that [trainees] have to suffer. That's also not the case. You don't have to suffer in order to learn."* (rv.4)

### **Self-Acceptance**

Personal development was also characterised by increased self-acceptance and the importance of being *"critical but non-judgemental"* (5.6) about oneself:

*"Learning to live in your skin a bit better.. it's about the bad bits and the good bits all together, all ok; nothing like: 'Oh god, I don't want to think about that!'"* (5.4)

This feature was also described as an increased capacity *"to be with"* oneself, and it was suggested that *"a kind of self-acceptance"* (3.41) was a sign that personal development had taken place. A theoretical relationship between self-acceptance and self-awareness

was also articulated: *"self-acceptance implies, or requires, a foundation of self-knowledge"* (3.42).

### ***Integration & Congruence***

An increased level of personal integration and congruence was also identified as another possible aim or outcome of personal development: *"Becoming more the person you are.. Becoming more integrated; less bits here and there."* (5.2). *"[H]ow congruent a person is"* (5.26) was also identified as a signifier of personal development.

### ***Wellbeing & Stability***

Psychological wellbeing, stability or resilience were also identified as central markers of personal development, and important qualities for prospective trainees to possess, given the emotionally demanding nature of the training:

*"I guess that's how I see personal development: are you emotionally stable enough to undertake something like this.. I think that people have to be at a point where they are able to take sitting down and working through some very difficult issues which might arise, without it affecting them to a very great degree".* (1.40, 45)

### ***Maturity & Maturation***

Maturity and maturation also emerged as important features of personal development, which was viewed as being commensurate, to some extent, with an individual's life experience:

*"[Personal development] is about general maturity; that I don't think it's sufficient to have [trainees] straight from school, and going into the field without some kind of element of development and maturity. So that's one of the reasons that people can't become chartered until they've been in the field for three years; it allows for that maturity."* (2.11)

Maturity was also mentioned as an important criterion when assessing a personal development during training.

***Fulfilling Potential***

Personal development was also described as a growth process that leads towards greater personal authenticity and the fulfillment of individual potential: *"it implies some idea of growth"*(6.12) and is *"a process of becoming"* (4.56). In this sense, personal development was also likened to the Rogerian concept of *"self-actualisation"* (4.12).

***Clinical Function***

Personal development was often implicitly referred to as being something that enhances clinical functioning. However, this clinical function of personal development was incorporated into some respondents' definitions (usually trainers') in a more explicit and central way. Such definitions emphasised the fundamental importance of therapists working on themselves, so to that they are able to manage the powerful issues that clients may bring up:

*"To me, the whole area of personal development would be about, in terms of psychologists and their training, I would say that it's extremely important that psychologists have had an opportunity to deal with their problems, their blind spots, their anxieties, their neuroses, and so on, in order to be able to effectively help the client. Because there are things that clients say and do that will bring up issues, you know, personal issues, that may resonate. And it's very important that people have dealt with those issues"* (2.8)

The clinical function of personal development was also described in a way that was consistent with the psychodynamic concepts of transference and countertransference, where self-awareness enhances the practitioner's ability to accurately perceive and understand important aspects of the therapeutic process, and to separate out their own personal material for the client's benefit:

*"... the ability to be able to recognise... and I think this is the essential thing.. what belongs to the client and what belongs to you. So in this process, when you experience something or note something happening.. you can work with that in the confidence that you know it's not yours. Or if you know it's yours, then you deal with outside of this relationship."* (3.43)



It was also argued that, because the function of personal development for therapists is primarily a clinical one, the most appropriate and effective way to define it in this context is in terms of its clinical function. Hence, it was suggested that courses should find ways to “operationalise” personal development that emphasise its intended effects on ‘professional competencies’ such as the development of specific “*interpersonal skills*” (3.61).

A sharp distinction between personal development for its own sake and personal development that takes place within a specific professional context, with a specific professional function also emerged. It was suggested that this issue is sometimes confused by course applicants who appear to view the programme primarily as a personally therapeutic experience, rather than as a professional training.

### **Self-Reflection**

Like self-awareness, self-reflection emerged as recurring theme amongst definitions of personal development. This was typically described as the capacity to monitor one’s self and to one’s intrapsychic/developmental processes. The activity of self-reflection seemed to be central to the process of personal development on a number of levels.

For one respondent, the concept of the “*reflective practitioner*” provided an important reference point here, and was described as:

*“To be looking at one’s process and how one is learning.. evaluating what one does; looking at one’s competence and.. reviewing how one is doing; how one’s developing.”*  
(2.13)

Self-reflection also was identified as serving a pivotal role in the development of self-awareness: “*How would I encourage someone to develop self-awareness? I think reflecting on one’s work is a very key one*”. (7.127). Another interviewee highlighted how important self-reflection had been for her own personal development: “*The reflection has been, I think, one of the biggest growth areas for me. This course has given me the opportunity to reflect.*” (4.61)

In addition, self-reflection was tied into the clinical context as: *"the ability to monitor as well as participate in the therapeutic encounter"* (3.27). Furthermore, the reflective aspect of personal development was also highlighted by as being a key focus during training, which attempts to incorporate *"exercises which are specifically targeted at encouraging a reflective capacity"* (3.47). The *"reflective diary"* (3.47) that trainees are required to keep was mentioned as a core mechanism for this.

Furthermore, a *"questioning frame"* (3.88) was identified as underpinning the whole process of personal development more broadly and the ability *"to critically reflect"* was viewed as a fundamental capacity that helps to sustain personal development *"on a continuous basis"*.(iv.4). Good reflective ability was also highlighted as a core requirement for course applicants. It was also suggested that a capacity for self-reflection may be more fundamental than actual levels of self-awareness, because:

*".. one can never be totally self aware. I think 'the self' is a fuzzy concept: it shifts about.. [But] there has to be reflective processes, I think, definitely."* (4.125)

Self-reflection was also defined as incorporating an ability to be constructive, so that the individual is able to reframe and address emerging issues or problems, as well as identify them. This idea seemed to connect with other meanings expressed about self-reflection as a professional commitment, and something that enables the monitoring and planning of further development.

Reflection was also proposed as something that could also be applied by training courses, with regards to their own learning and evolution: *"It's a case of learning as we go along. We have a developmental function as well! Because the course has to develop as well as the individuals in it."* (4.123).

### **Active Learning**

The concept of self-reflection, and the capacity to reframe and act autonomously in the planning of further learning, also emerged in relation to the view of personal development as an active learning process, for which trainees are required to take a significant degree of responsibility. This was an aspect of personal development that

seemed to be particularly emphasised by trainers. Thus, personal development was defined as being predicated upon *"an active model of learning" (rv.4)*, which requires:

*"a recognition of one's own learning needs and taking responsibility for discovering what they are, and as much as possible finding ways in which to progress along them in the right direction (4.2).. a positive capacity for learning (4.61)"*

While it was regarded as a course's responsibility to provide opportunities and tools for development, trainees were regarded as being responsible for making the best use of them:

*"You have to provide a range of possibilities and a structure. The structure is really there to help individuals steer their own way through it and, in a way, they have to select the content." (4.93)*

However, this emphasis on trainees' autonomy with regards to their learning was complemented by the view that prospective trainees also need to demonstrate an ability to recognise when they need help and support and to seek it out:

*".. you're looking for people who are modest enough to received help and advice, but at the same time are not wholly dependent, who don't want spoon feeding, you're looking for some level of autonomy, but at the same time a capacity to absorb new things. It's a balance" (4.55).*

### **Openness**

The quality of *openness* was also emphasised as important to the personal development process. Personal development was described as helping to keep practitioners *"open"* to new learning throughout their career (*rv.1*) and to avoid the danger of becoming *"cocky"* and thinking one has nothing left to learn. Openness was also identified as having an important function at points in development where a trainee is faced with difficulties. It was suggested that, when faced with aversive experiences, individuals may respond either by narrowing or broadening their *"construing"* (*rs.3*). A narrowing of construing is a defensive response that may lead to a blinkered view, while a broadening of construing is a more open and creative response, through which the individual remains open to uncertainty or discomfort until a more elaborative solution is found.



Similarly, other respondents described personal development in terms of the cultivation of an ability to tolerate uncertainty, ambiguity and anxiety:

*"... an ability to accommodate contradictions, accommodate different ideas without feeling threatened.. There must be a certain level of openness to things... open-mindedness."*  
(6.09)

A capacity for openness was also associated with an ability to constructively reframe problems, so that trainees are able to perceive negative experiences (e.g. with a personal therapist), as valuable opportunities for learning and further development, rather than as unwelcome obstacles. As one respondent commented: *"there's always something useful that comes out of reflection"* (4.97).

The concept of openness also emerged in a discussion of the importance to personal development of *"transparency"*: *"I would hope that [transparency] would be one of those qualities of personal development that one would want to promote"* (4.233). Transparency was described in similar terms to the Rogerian concept of 'genuineness', where an individual feels sufficiently secure to *"show themselves"* (4.235) and be open with others about their experience without hiding behind defenses.. More broadly, transparency and an *"ethos of sharing"* (4.230) were also regarded as a qualities that should be built into course design and modelled by trainers in their interactions with students.

### 5. 2. 2 General characteristics

Six general characteristics of personal development were identified.

#### ***Difficult to Define***

Difficulty was expressed by some interviewees when trying to define personal development. It seemed that something abstract about the concept made it difficult to clearly define: *"I'm having immense trouble defining it!"* (3.22), *"I'm not sure I can define*

*it. It's quite tricky, isn't it? But that's part of the problem, I think, even finding a sentient language to describe it" (4.2).*

### ***Individually Unique***

An individually unique quality to personal development was implied by the tendency to begin definitions using qualifying prefixes such as *"For me.." (4.2; 2.6)* or *"To me.." (2.2)*. However, this quality was also emphasised in more explicit ways, particularly by trainees:

*"[Personal development] can mean so many different things, because you're talking about yourself as an individual. And so what I see as personal development might be completely different for someone else." (2.6)*

Furthermore, an individually unique quality to personal development in relation to its process within training was also described:

*"Personal development does not originate from a stable baseline.. People begin [training] interprogrammed with varying degrees of insight and awareness" (3.124)*

*"I might have been developed in one area before I came on the course, and my.. neighbour might have been developed in another area.. we all develop at different rates at different times with different needs" (4.28).*

A number of possible factors associated with these individual differences were also identified, including an individual's age, culture, life experience, professional background and prior experience of personal therapy.

Some implications of this individually unique quality for the training process also emerged. For example, it was suggested that the individually unique quality of personal development necessitated *"a customising approach" (4.91)* to its facilitation in training, through making a number of different personal development methods or *"structures" (4.93)* available for trainees to use and adapt to their own learning needs. This implied that individual differences in personal development might also extend to the methods which trainees find effective: *"personal therapy may not always be the best way for*

*some people*" (2.82), and it is useful *"to have as many different ways as possible so that students will fit into one of them, at least"* (2.32).

### ***Professionally Universal***

Despite personal development's individually unique quality, a view merged that it was possible to define it in a more consensual or universal way for counselling psychologists. This was implicit in responses to the question: 'What is personal development?', which typically began with qualifications such as *"in terms of psychologists and their training.."* (2.8) or *"Well, in the context of being a counselling psychologists, personal development is.."* (3.2).

However, it was also argued more explicitly that defining personal development more broadly was not only possible, but necessary: *"otherwise it makes no sense to talk about it as a professional criteria, as opposed to something you do.. for other reasons."* (2.30). While it was regarded as important to *"allow"* and *"encourage"* individual definitions, it was suggested, *"there has to be a meeting ground as well... You have to have certain things in common."* (3.8). However, it was also suggested that definitions of personal development can only be *"generalised up to a point"*, and *"have to be individualised too"* (2.30).

### ***Broad & Holistic***

The multifacteted nature of personal development suggested that it may be best conceptualised as a broad, rather than a narrow, concept. This view was supported by other emerging features of the data. For instance, one clear indicator of the broad nature of personal development was the variety and number of experiences identified by respondents as impacting significantly upon trainees' personal development. This included personal therapy, personal development groups, reflective journals, client work, supervision, counselling skills workshops, written work, theoretical learning, peer group contact and personal life experiences outside of the course. Even the experiences of searching for a personal therapist and for a placement were mentioned as having been significant.

Furthermore, a more collective or holistic influence of experiences on personal development was also described:



*"I think that everything that goes into one's experience, on the course and outside of it, is part of personal development. You know.. in that conversation you had over tea with fellow trainees and things that happen in your personal life.. They all have an impact.. It's a combination of all of them" (3.69)*

### **Non-linear & Cyclical**

Personal development was described as a non-linear and cyclical process, in the sense that development may not always seem to move in a straightforward positive or growthful direction:

*"it's certainly possible to develop blind spots, and that's how I would understand regressing back to an earlier level. Or maybe what one would do would be to rely on old and outdated forms of coping, which are less than helpful" (3.183)*

*"..it's a dynamic process. I don't think it's necessarily a linear one; that once you've got to this point there's no going back. I think you know, if you're a counsellor, that people do that." (1.26)*

As a possible implication of this non-linear/cyclical quality, it was also suggested that personal development should be assessed over a period of time in order to be more reliable and representative:

*"It's not a steady line. It's almost an up and down thing. But you need to get the average score". (4.30)*

### **Life & Career Long**

Personal development was also defined as a process that continues indefinitely, throughout one's life and career:

*"It's.. just something that continues. I don't think you reach an end point of personal development: 'Yes, now I have come to this far and I don't need anymore anything anymore .. I think it's a continuous process" (1.26)*

### 5. 2. 3 A model of personal development

Taken together, the specific features and general attributes that emerged in response to the question 'What is personal development?' can be viewed as representing a pooled definition of personal development, which provides insights into its constituent parts. This definition may also be used to construct a more dynamic conceptualisation or model of personal development, based on postulations about inter-relationships between its constituent parts.

Some inter-relationships between constituent parts were described by participants themselves, while others were more implicit in the data; for example, where there appeared to be a significant semantic overlap or proximity between concepts. Figure 5 below shows a graphic representation of the constituent parts and their possible inter-relationships to form a model of the process of personal development in counselling psychology training.

At the top of the model are the various personal and professional experiences that participants identified as being influential to trainee personal development. The left side of the model contains the more 'professional' dimensions of development (e.g. client work and supervision), and the right side relates to the more 'personal' dimensions (e.g. personal therapy and personal life experiences).

The central part of the model represents the 'core process' of trainee personal development. This might begin with the trainee's consideration of the *broad, holistic* and *multifaceted* nature of personal development, and an attempt to reach a personal *definition* or understanding of this.

As suggested by participants, a commitment to *active learning* and an *openness* to the personal changes and challenges that lie ahead are pre-requisite qualities for personal development to take place. Personal development will only occur if the trainee is prepared to take a significant degree of personal responsibility for their learning process, which must be actively planned, implemented and monitored if its to be effective. Personal development will not take place if the trainee is closed to change and unable to take on new ideas.

As implied by its description in the present study, *self-reflection* is dependent upon a degree of openness, as it requires a preparedness to step back and observe oneself in an critical and objective way, even if what is perceived is not favourable. Indeed the concept of openness itself implies the existence of a reflective space within the individual for assimilating new experience. Self-reflection is also related to a capacity for active self-learning, as an important function in both is to monitor and review the learning process. Self-reflection is also defined as a core capacity that underpins the development process and maintains it in the long run. It is also the core mechanism by which self-awareness will be developed.

Thus, taken together openness, active learning and self-reflection might be considered the three capacities that underlie the personal development process. Furthermore, this suggestion would be consistent with the fact that these capacities were also identified by respondents as key qualities for prospective trainees. Thus, if an applicant possess these qualities, they may be regarded as possessing the basic tools of personal development.

The enhancement of *self-awareness* then forms the crucial first step in generating developmental movement. An awareness of personal history, personality structure, beliefs and values provides a basis for more accurate self-knowledge. Through self-awareness trainees will begin to recognise and appraise their personal strengths and weaknesses, and to highlight unresolved issues from the past that require work. The patterning of each dimension of self-awareness (e.g. personal history, personality, beliefs, values, strengths and weaknesses, unresolved issues) will be *unique to the individual* trainee. As suggested by a respondent, *self-acceptance* "implies, or requires, a foundation of self-knowledge" and is a sign that some personal development has occurred. Hence, once this self-knowledge has been established through reflection and awareness, self-acceptance may then follow. By developing an increased understanding of the dynamics of one's personality and by actively working on unresolved issues and weaknesses, the trainee may be able to develop a more realistic but compassionate attitude towards themselves.



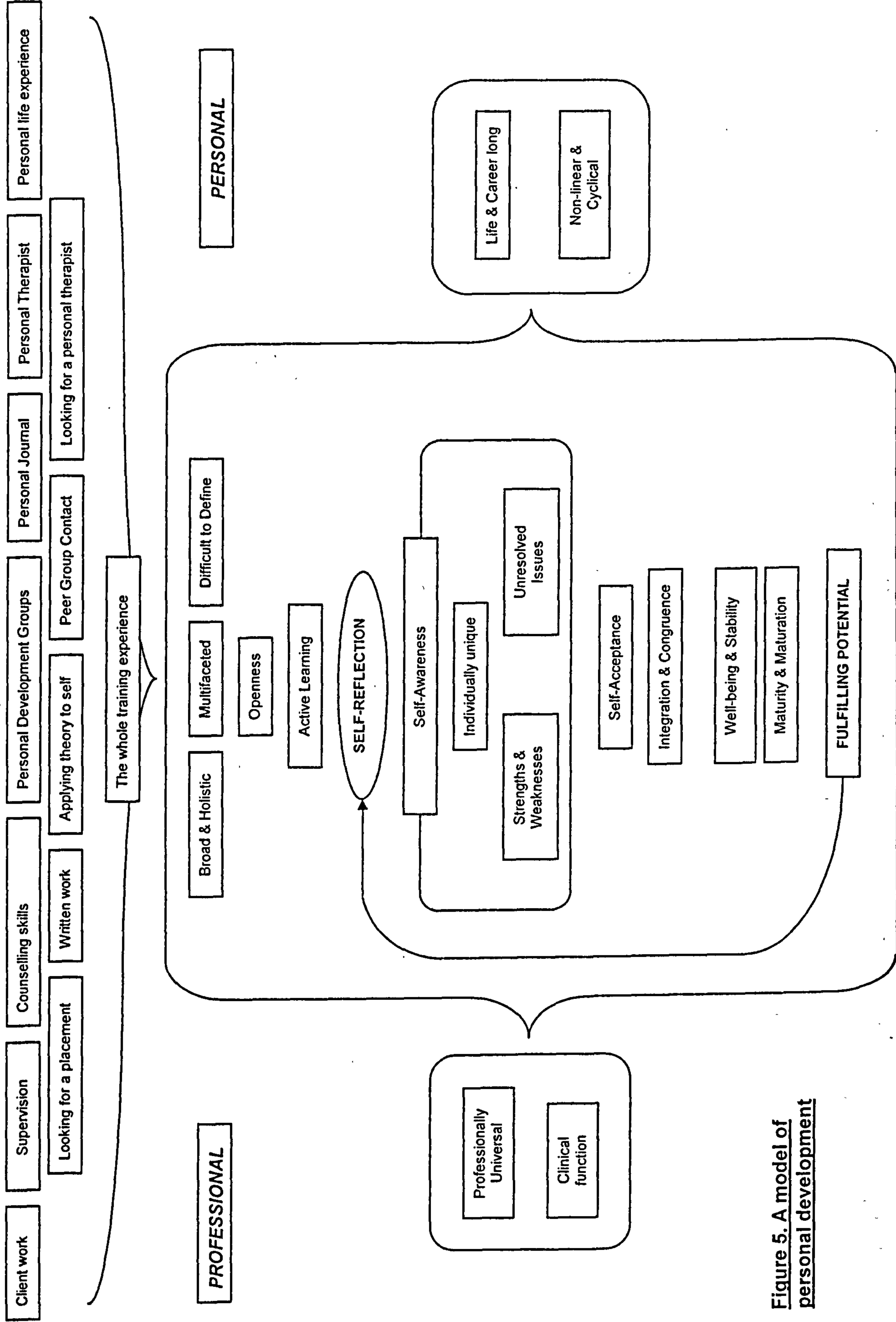


Figure 5. A model of personal development

It was also implied in the present study that increased *integration and congruence* may be possible outcomes of greater self-acceptance. A process of intrapsychic integration may therefore take place once the individual has become aware of, and is able to own, aspects of themselves that had previously remained unacknowledged and unintegrated. Increased self-acceptance and integration may then generate a greater capacity for congruence with self and others.

Greater inner integration and congruence may provide a firmer foundation for the individual's progression through life. Thus, personal development may therefore create an enhanced sense of *stability and wellbeing*, which provides a basis for further *maturation*, and a definite sense that the individual is moving towards the *fulfilment of their potential*.

Furthermore, all of these experiences may be fed back into the learning process via the central mechanism of reflection, which will perpetuate the developmental process and move the individual cyclically towards the fulfilment of their potential.

To the right of the 'core process' of the model, the broader personal development characteristics *life & career long, non-linear & cyclical* are represented. The life/career long and non-linear cyclical nature of the process of personal development are implied by the ongoing reciprocal relationship between the fulfilment of potential and self-reflection. Furthermore, as one respondent suggested, the individual's capacities for openness and self-reflection may be particularly crucial when they arrive at difficult or stuck points in the developmental process, enabling them to reframe problems or negative experiences as further opportunities for learning.

To the left of the core process, the relationship between personal development and professional development is represented. This includes the *clinical function* of personal development and the sense in which personal development can be defined in a *professionally universal*, as opposed individually unique, way for clinical practitioners. Via this relationship, gains made in a trainees' core process (e.g. enhanced self-awareness, self-acceptance, integration and congruence) may feed into and enhance clinical functioning by improving sensitivity to the therapeutic process and relationship.

#### 5. 2. 4 Summary

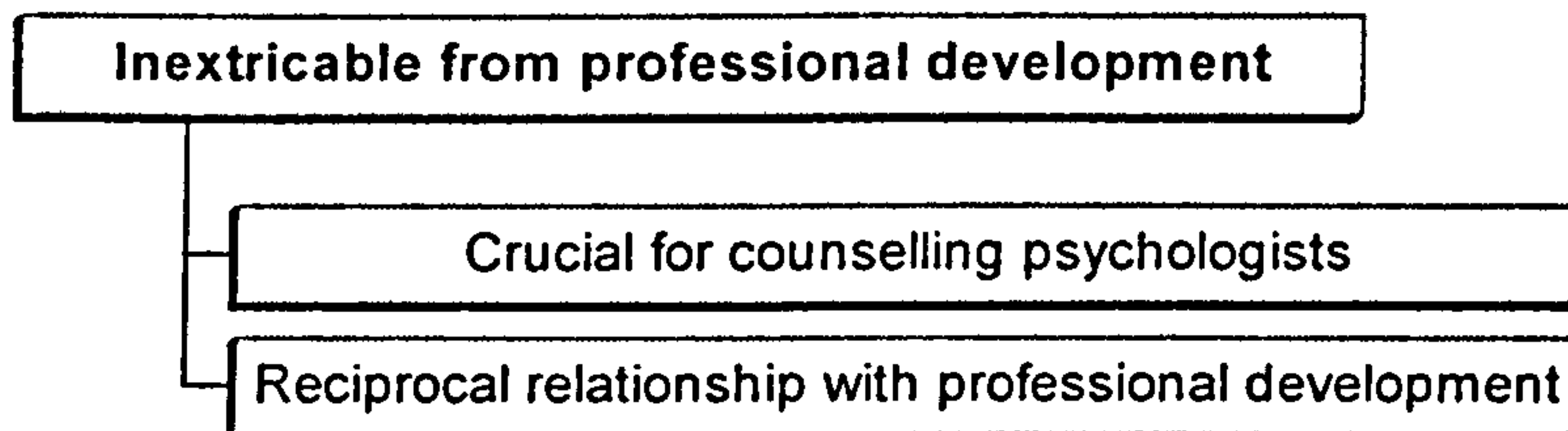
Personal development emerged as a multifaceted concept consisting of 12 specific attributes (self-awareness, unresolved issues, strengths and weaknesses, self-reflection, active learning, clinical function, self-acceptance, integration and congruence, well-being and stability, maturity and maturation, fulfilling potential and openness) and 6 general characteristics (individually unique, professionally universal, broad and holistic, non-linear and cyclical, life and career long and difficult to define). A diversity of personal and professional experiences was reported as affecting personal development. These included personal therapy, personal development groups, reflective journals, client work, supervision, counselling skills workshops, written work, theoretical learning, peer group contact and personal life experiences outside of the course. The components of the emergent definition were used to propose a dynamic model of personal development in counselling psychology training.

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### 5.3 Theme 2: 'Inextricable from Professional Development'

#### THEME 2



The idea that personal development is inextricable from professional development emerged as a clear theme from the interviews. This was evident in the professional importance that was attached to personal development; in the variety of ways that personal and professional development were felt to interact; in the importance attached to integrating the personal and professional domains during training; and in the general importance of personal development for a healthy profession.

Categories and concepts relating to this core theme were conceptualised in terms of two main branches. These are described below.

#### 5.3.1 Crucial for Counselling Psychologists

It was clear that personal development was regarded as being of crucial importance for counselling psychologists. Key reasons for this included the arguments that *"You can only take someone as far as you've been yourself"*, and that in order to help others grow, *"it's vital that you are in the process of doing it yourself"* (5.12). Personal development was generally regarded as being of equal importance to practitioners in all theoretical orientations. This was primarily associated with a view of the real relationship, an understanding of *"process"* (rv.1), and the therapist's use of self as therapeutic factors that are of universal importance. Furthermore, it was suggested that personal development has a particularly important role to play in integrative training and practice, because it helps trainees to find their *"own path"* (7.96).

In discussing the professional importance of personal development for counselling psychologists, the experience of personal therapy was also emphasised, and regarded as a justified training requirement. However, personal therapy was not regarded as the only or best way to facilitate personal development. It was suggested that the personal therapy requirement could be justified solely by the argument that therapists should have some experience of what they will be offering to clients. However, it was also argued that there was a need for greater empirical evidence to support personal therapy. Moreover, the stipulation of a 40-hour minimum requirement was criticised as an arbitrary figure that seemed to have been *"plucked right out of the air"* (7.160). However, another respondent expressed the view, that although *"it's an arbitrary time.. it seems to work"* but that it could *"be reviewed at some point: there wouldn't be a minimum or even a maximum"* (4.168).

In discussing the role and importance of personal therapy, the view emerged that trainees do not need to have particular issues or problems in order to benefit from the experience of personal therapy:

*"Personal counselling doesn't have to be about pathology"* (3.149)

*"Whether you've got any 'issues' or not, I think it probably starts off the self-awareness process, and personal development can move on from that".* (8.97)

It was also suggested that trainees who believe that they have nothing to gain from personal therapy might be exhibiting a lack of self-awareness or defensiveness about addressing unresolved issues. Furthermore, the way in which initial reluctance or resentment about having personal therapy may give way to a more positive view once it has been experienced it was also described:

*"when I was a trainee myself, I resented the idea of having to do it.. But in the end, I persuaded myself that it would be a useful thing to do and, in the end, actually enjoyed it.. Even if what you go through is painful, you can take joy out of the actual broader development.. I think [personal therapy's] important for the reasons that have often been stated. I've come to agree with them"* (4.148)

It was also suggested that trainees who regard themselves as having little need for personal development can sometimes be surprised to find, once the experience of training begins, that they do have issues to work on:

*"people come onto the course having no sense that they need to undergo major personal changes, and that they have baggage to be dealt with. And, of course, as soon as they start on some of the more evocative parts of the course and their own personal therapy, then all this stuff is let out of the bottle and they discover to their surprise that they have things to work through." (rv.4).*

A view also emerged that even 'negative' experiences of personal therapy can be used in a constructive way that benefits practice:

*"when I'm reflecting on the tutees that I've had and the negative experiences of personal therapy, I'm aware that it's affected their practice enormously: they have identified issues of practice for which they consciously monitor in their own practice, to ensure that these things don't happen. And I think that's been very valuable for them; disappointed that they didn't have what they construed as a satisfactory or enjoyable or expansive experience, but really very formative in terms of their experience." (3.143)*

Encouraging trainees to feed their negative experiences of personal therapy back into the therapy itself, rather than terminating the work, was also identified as a potentially constructive approach to dealing with problems:

*"There's something about hanging on in there and dealing with that process, because that's all part of it. If they're feeling it's not beneficial that says something about their process, and that can be dealt with in the therapy" (2.135)*

### 5. 3. 2 Reciprocal relationship with professional development

The inextricability of personal development from professional development also emerged in more specific comments about the ways in which the personal and professional domains of the practitioner inter-relate and affect one another. This reciprocal inter-relationship appeared to be present at a number of levels, some of



which have already been mentioned in previous categories. For example, as discussed within the context of Theme 1, the specific *clinical function* of personal development was emphasised. This related to the way in which the clinician's self-awareness and own personal development work can enable them to recognise and moderate the potential impact of their own emotional responses and personal issues. This clinical function of personal development is predicated upon a belief that practitioners are inevitably affected in a *personal* way by the *professional* work that they do.

Furthermore, the way that certain *professional* experiences can impact *personally* on trainees was also described:

*"... developing professionally: I think that impacts on you personally to a great extent. I mean, if you're comfortable with the model you're using; to be able to feel that you're doing some effective work with your clients; a lot of reading around your field. I think all these things contribute to it.(1.83)*

One respondent also spoke about how the experience of professional training can sometimes create dramatic personal changes in trainees:

*"... people did change enormously, and to some extent even look different. And these [changes] are not restricted to their professional domain, you know, I think the professional constructs permeate personal lives and they bring a kind of stance that comes with this development." (3.14)*

Developing a sense of professional competence seemed to be particularly emphasised by trainees. In one personal development definition, "*growing in professional competence*" (5.20), was highlighted while another trainee remarked that finding out she could be an effective counsellor had been a major milestone in her development. The need for trainees to feel they are professionally competent was also noted from a trainer's perspective:

*I think they have to jump over the first hurdle, as they see it. And once they can get to that point of being competent, then they can engage in all these other things; they have the luxury to do it." (rv.4).*

Another clear example of the professional-personal relationship, was how the experience of clinical work was often emphasised as having a major impact on trainee personal development:

*"You learn a lot from the client. That does develop you quite quickly, I think... It's particularly relevant that each new client that you.. see gives you a whole new range of experience" (8.74)*

*".. dealing with clients: the actual 'live' client work.. you know: what comes up with clients helps you to examine what's going on in yourself. So I suppose that was something that really moved me on developmentally" (2.86)*

Working with difficult clients was also noted as being particularly useful.

Another example of the impact of professional experiences on personal development emerged in relation to the importance that was attached to supervision. The way that supervision requires the trainee to bring together the personal and the professional realms in order to understand a case was highlighted as useful. The impact that the whole training experience can have on trainees' personal lives and relationships was also mentioned, as was trainees' theoretical learning, which could provide useful new perspectives from which to view oneself, as well as clients.

Personal and professional development were also described as being inter-related at a broader level, through the core developmental mechanism of reflection. The view was expressed that reflection and self-awareness were essential, not only for individual practitioners, but also for the profession of counselling psychology as a whole. Furthermore, it was suggested that critically reflective research, like the current project, might help to encourage this:

*".. the profession needs self-awareness as well as the individuals, and I think it hasn't got that. And what I see you doing is wonderfully reflexive like that. And I hope that whatever comes out from your various interviews about what is needed at a personal level will be somehow a mechanism which allows that to also apply to the profession. Because I don't think it's a reflexive profession.. and I want us to practice what we preach." (4.244)*

### 5.3.3 Summary

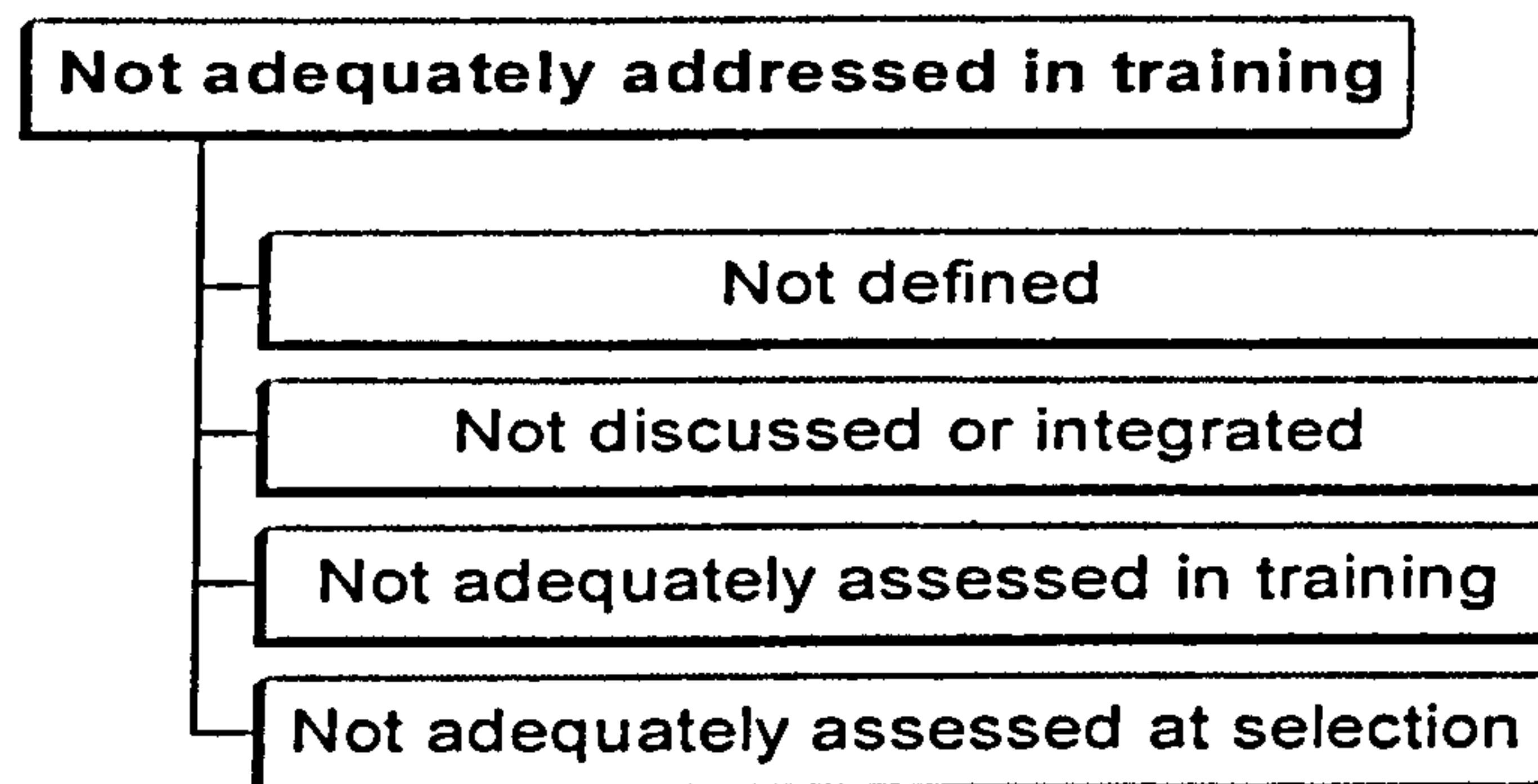
Personal development was viewed as a process that is inextricable from professional development; one that is crucial for counselling psychologists; and which shares an ongoing reciprocal relationship with professional development. The basic importance of personal development and personal therapy for all counselling psychologists was widely agreed on, and a number of ways in which personal and professional development affect one another was identified. This included how individual personal development can impact on the broader evolution of the discipline as a whole.

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#### 5.4 Theme 3: 'Not adequately Addressed in Training'

##### THEME 3



A clear theme emerged from interviewees' comments, criticisms and dissatisfactions regarding how personal development was addressed in training. There were a number of areas in which it was felt that current training practices could be improved, and ways were suggested in which this might be done. Particular concerns emerged in relation to the definition of personal development, its discussion and integration in training, and how it is assessed, both during training and at selection. Concerns were conceptualised in terms of 4 categories. These are described below.

##### 5.4.1 Not defined

A view was commonly expressed that, as a concept, personal development was not clearly defined. Rather, implicit and shared meanings were felt to exist: *"I think there's some tacit kinds of agreements made about what it is"* (3.69); *".. I haven't found it defined in any books"* (7.22).

Opinions were also expressed that personal development should be more clearly defined: *"I think it's possible perhaps to define it more clearly than it is.. There must be something that could be articulated"* (5.18); *"I think it's fundamental"* (6.22). The importance of a clearer definition of personal development was also argued from a

professional/ethical standpoint, although some uncertainty was expressed about to what extent it would be practically possible:

*"I think certainly from the perspective of say, for example, on a Diploma Document, that if we're going to make a requirement of something we need to be able to operationalise it. And we also need to be able to determine it's centrality to the process [of training], not from a perspective of historical truisms, but actually based on fact. I'm very much in touch with the dilemma. And I think philosophically you could argue a reasonable case. But I think empirically you would be very hard pushed."* (3.33, 35)

The importance of consistency between different counselling psychology courses and the professional importance attached to personal development in training were also suggested as potential reasons for defining it more clearly:

*"otherwise we're going to have differing views between unis with different ideas of what this 'self-awareness' means. And if I'm making the point that it really is important, this personal development thing, then clearly it is necessary to have some kind of consensus about what it is."* (2.37)

The articulation of clearer learning aims and objectives to help trainees was also identified as a justification of a clear consensual definition:

*"We've got to start defining what [personal development] means, for us and what it means individually for each student. We can't just assume that people know what the hell it means.. What exactly are we asking them to do?.."* (1.121)

Similar concerns arose in relation to the aims and objectives of personal therapy, which seemed to be interpreted and used in a diversity of ways by trainees. This scope was regarded as one interviewee as being "out of control", and as making it easy for trainees to "avoid certain things" (3.24) if they wished to. For this participant, greater professional regulation regarding the admissible scope of personal therapy for counselling psychology trainees seemed warranted:

*"I think the profession has a voice in this. And just as it tells us there should be forty hours, it should have something to say about what those forty hours should cover"* (3.24)

A view also emerged that, although it made sense to try to define personal development more clearly, definitions should remain flexible to their constantly evolving cultural context:

*"Yeah [a clear definition is] always helpful. I'm not sure I'd want it frozen though.. I think that'd be a problem because, by definition, personal development implies changes. And it may be that that has to change in the context of social changes anyway; that as our society changes, evolves, develops, even goes backwards, whatever it does, so facets of personal development have to change to meet it." (4.30-38)*

However, some reservations about the idea of trying to define personal development in a more general or systematic way were also raised (by a trainee): *"it's a bit like putting people in a box, in a way"* (8.26). It was instead suggested that individual trainees should be free to decide for themselves how they wished to define personal development.

#### 5. 4. 2 Not discussed or integrated

The view that personal development was not adequately discussed or integrated in training emerged in a particularly clear way from the interviews, particularly in the accounts of trainees. It was typically suggested that the topic of personal development had been mentioned on the course, but never really discussed in the kind of depth that would have been useful, and in a way that trainees had been hoping for. Although, it was felt that the subject had been addressed quite openly in the context of the personal development groups, if not within the main body of the course.

*"They ['personal development' and 'self-awareness'] are words that are thrown around, but no-one never stops to unpack them for you. And I think that's one of the things that the tutorial groups could have addressed, and which I was expecting and that never happened." (5.64-66)*

The feeling was also expressed that, when the topic had been addressed at the beginning of the course, it had been done in a way that equated it with the personal



therapy requirement, rather than in a way that conveyed to trainees its deep professional significance:

*"It [personal development] was talked about in a very matter-of-fact, very general, kind of way, like: Forty hours personal therapy is required to fulfil the course requirements of the BPS, blah, blah, blah. It was talked about in that kind of a way.. It wasn't talked about in a way that makes you realise that it's very important for you to be a competent counselling psychologist.. I.. think it it should have been emphasised more and talked about in some kind of discussion. There was never any discussion as far as I can remember.. I got the impression that that part of your development on the course will be addressed in personal psychological counselling." (6.120)*

It was also suggested that the subject of personal development had remained peripheral, even though it was a core concern of trainees:

*It hasn't been addressed explicitly. It's one of those background things.. You know, yes we are all becoming this or doing this, but how we're all doing this and what we should say about it and to who is not looked at.. I think these are key simmering underlying issues. So in some senses, the key issues aren't being addressed.. It's not talked about. It's in some ways assumed to be not talkable about. But of course, you can talk about it. And we [i.e. trainees] do talk about the fact that course isn't addressing it.. We are talking about these things, but never is it addressed in the course directly." (7.100-104)*

However, an alternative view also emerged that perhaps it was appropriate for personal development to remain separate from the course, because trainees should be responsible for addressing and defining it for themselves.

Trainer-interviewees also seemed to recognise this issue and to have a perspective on it. The issue was described in terms of a problem integrating the, currently separate, personal and professional dimensions of training; a situation which was not considered adequate:

*"The problem is that it's [personal development] on the outside, it's detached. I think that this is another problem with some of the words we use: 'personal development' and 'professional development', they're like separate dimensions. And of course, in a way, they are. But the problem is how you integrate all this stuff. That's the central problem: is*

*one of integration... At the moment the problem is that they're dis-integrated. These things live in entirely separate worlds and nobody knows what's going on except the student, which is OK, but isn't sufficient.. I think it has to go beyond that."* (4.117)

The view emerged that it was quite possible for trainees to pay "lip service" (3.110) to the process of personal development; in other words, that trainees could psychologically not engage in personal development work, even if they attended their personal development groups of their forty hours of personal therapy:

*"These things can be in place, but it's quite possible for people to duck out of them. I don't mean by not attending, I mean by not engaging very well.. It's very possible to go through forty hours of personal counselling and be totally avoidant and not really deal with any issue at all".* (2.76)

However, it was suggested that integrating personal development more closely into the training programme might make it more difficult for trainees to do this, because their development could be more closely monitored, so that *"if people are being avoidant.. it's picked up"* (2.47). Another suggestion was to develop closer links with trainees' placements, as a context in which personal development problems might first become apparent. It was also suggested that courses might combat trainee non-engagement by acknowledging more openly the fact that some trainees may not like the idea of having personal therapy or find it a useful experience. These issues might be usefully discussed *"up front"* (2.211) with trainees at the beginning of the course in order to prepare them for the experience and to encourage a more positive and constructive attitude towards it.

It was suggested that the role of personal tutors on a course was *"essentially.. to help the student link their personal and professional development"* (4.113) and, consequently, that they might play a more central role in ensuring that trainees engage fully in the personal development process:

*"I think tutors could engage their trainees quite early on during the process and say: 'How are you getting on? Are you finding it helpful? Are there things that you want to bring forward?'"* (4.212).



Some explanations for the lack of integration of personal development on the course also emerged. It was suggested that counselling psychology training essentially follows an *“academic model”* (rv.1), and that this is reflected in a quantifiable ‘40-hour’ personal therapy requirement. The intensive nature of the training was also highlighted as something that generated a pressurised and goal-oriented learning climate that provided little space for trainees *“to really grow”* (1.133). A lack of group *“cohesion”* (rv.1) within the training group was also highlighted as a consequence of this intensive climate, which could make for an *“impersonal”* (2.213) training experience that seemed inappropriate to counselling training.

The tendency towards an academic/theoretical, rather than a personal/experiential model in counselling psychology training also emerged in trainee-participants’ comments, which typically highlighted a lack of experiential, role play and skills-based work within the programme. The importance of counselling skills practice to personal development was also emphasised by trainees as being something that would contribute greatly to a sense of professional competence: *“I’d like to see more skills-based workshops.. It’d make you more confident as a counsellor”* (4.191).

#### 5. 4. 3 Not adequately assessed in training

The view that assessing trainees’ personal development was important and that it could be done more effectively also emerged from the interviews. As personal development was a core component of professional training, it seemed a logical necessity that it should be assessed: *“I think if it’s a requirement then it has to be assessed in some way.”* (7.34). Furthermore, courses were also viewed as having an ethical responsibility to ensure that its trainees are personally fit to practice.

However, despite its importance, respondents also commented on the difficulty of assessing personal development, due to its complex, idiosyncratic and abstract nature:

*“Because it’s not a tangible thing, you know, and it’s quite idiosyncratic as well. It’s gonna be different for each person. And it’s a lot to do with one’s self-awareness, and things like that are very difficult to quantify”* (6.26).



Because of this complexity, some participants highlighted the necessity of a “*qualitative*” approach to assessment, and argued that personal development could only be quantified in terms of “*the amount of time and effort*” (4.81) that trainees put into the process (i.e. attending 40 hours of personal therapy). But such a quantitative approach was regarded as insufficient as the sole assessment criterion: “*it’s not something that you tick off as a shopping list where, since you’ve done forty hours.. yes, you’re a better person*” (1.17).

Others suggested that, because of personal development’s complex subjective nature it was necessary to have a diversity of individual perspectives from which to draw in order to formulate a fair and balanced view. It was therefore suggested that assessment should be “*a joint effort*” (5.38). A number of potential assessors were also identified, including personal tutors (who were generally felt to be in ideal positions from which to view trainees’ personal development), placement supervisors, personal development group facilitators, personal therapists, the trainee themselves, even trainees’ clients, friends and family were felt to have a valid perspective; although some practical and ethical limitations and boundary concerns were perceived regarding the involvement of some of these people (e.g. personal development group facilitators, personal therapists, clients, friends and family).

Despite concerns about the inappropriateness of trying to quantify personal development, views also emerged about how personal development could be formally assessed within the training context. One participant felt that it was “*possible to apply grades*” to personal development, through the marking of course work in which trainees are required to demonstrate their reflective capacities and sensitivities:

*“it was possible to discriminate, you know.. not everyone got the same mark” (3.37).. Certainly, I’ve been aware of it in.. case studies and process reports, where listening to the transcript, counsellors have missed things” (3.45)*

However, it was also suggested that assessing trainees’ personal development in this way requires conscientious marking using clear criteria, which must be clearly understood by trainees in order to guard against “*a tacit system*” of assessment (3.232). As well as through coursework, it was suggested that personal development is assessed

in a more indirect and global way, which reflects its ubiquity in all aspects of training: *"The personal development doesn't appear in any one place. It appears spread through [the course]." (rv.4)*. Consequently, trainee assessment was done *"ultimately, through the award they get at the end of the day" (rv.4)*.

It also emerged that a kind of negative/reactive approach to assessment was in use, whereby a trainees' personal development only warranted separate attention if it emerged that they were encountering significant difficulties:

*"It's more that if someone's really having a problem it's picked up, rather than looking at someone's level of development" (2.45).. it's possible to see.. what isn't there, as opposed to what is" (1.34).*

Despite the broad consensus about the importance of having some way to assess personal development during training, a distinct sense of discomfort was often apparent, particularly for trainees, when discussing the finer points of the issue. This discomfort seemed associated with a perceived clash between the non-judgemental values of counselling and the traditional 'pass-fail' criteria of academia, with a desire to remain faithful to the former:

*"I mean I think the word 'assessment' is kind of a scary word, isn't it? It's saying are you developed enough? Or do we have to develop you more?.. It kind of makes me cringe to think that student can be failed.. You know, what about Rogers' core conditions?" (1.38)*

The idea of assessing personal development also seemed to stir up anxiety for trainees about comparisons and rivalries with their peers, and about courses transgressing the private and idiosyncratic boundaries of a trainee's developmental process: *"I don't think that's one of the things you need a competition about. I think it's very much up to the individual" (8.46)*

One response to these dilemmas was that it may be more important for courses to ensure that trainees are engaging effectively in the *process* of personal development, rather than try to 'assess' it at a *content* level:



*"To look for an outcome that says that someone's achieved a certain criteria of development is never going to produce reasonable results. What you have to do is ensure that people are engaging in the process of it effectively" (rv.4).. so, ultimately.. there should be no 'assessment', other than the requirement that people do it. But I think the process features can be engaged in order to help that other journey along: personal development, and how you weave that into professional development." (4.205)*

However, it was also suggested that such an approach would need to be founded on a closer integration and monitoring of trainees' personal development, using a tutorial system that would permit regular progress reviews and the re-setting of new developmental objectives. Furthermore, it was emphasised that the informality of this approach should not be perceived as neglectful of trainees, but rather as an attempt to provide a secure base for independent development:

*"although what I'm suggesting might sound liberal to the point of.. the institution not being involved, that's not what I mean. The institution also has a very serious responsibility to help the student to monitor their progress and to ensure that they don't fall into traps, and other kinds of problems." (4.107)*

The idea also emerged that this kind of constant monitoring approach to personal development would be likely to reduce the chances of trainees ever reaching a point on the course where they have to be 'failed' for not developing sufficiently. Moreover, the view was expressed that having to fail a trainee would indicate that the training institution has failed to meet its responsibilities to its students, rather than *vice versa*: *"if it got to that point, then I think the system's failed." (7.54).*

In addition to a discussion of practical and philosophical issues, the view also emerged (particularly from trainers) that more could be done to improve upon current approaches to assessing personal development in counselling psychology training: *"It's a complex process that's probably very inadequate at the moment" (rv.4), "I think it's possible to look at it more than it's currently looked at." (2.39)* It was also suggested that courses should not *"shy away from"* trying to assess personal development in a more systematic fashion just because it is a particularly complex and sensitive issue, and that they should try to seek *"a better marriage"* between the science of psychology and the art of counselling in this area (rv.1).



Although there was some uncertainty about what exactly should be done to improve the assessment of personal development, a need to develop a more integrated system was highlighted. This need was underscored for some respondents by the failure of current approaches to ensure that questionable practitioners do not qualify:

*"[It] is perhaps something that's necessary. I'm not sure how you'd do that. But I think we all know that there are people who are qualified as a counselling psychologist or a counsellor.. who do damage to their clients. Now I suspect that some of that could be stopped, if where they were at was looked at and they weren't qualified until they had reached a certain level of development, if that could be measured."* (2.45, 47)

In addition, establishing a clear definition of personal development was identified as a necessary starting point for a better assessment system: *"I think before we assess it we've got to define it. I think that's where the problem is."* (1.30).

The potential role of the tutorial system was also highlighted as an important context in which the assessment of personal development could be more effectively addressed:

*"to have personal tutors taking a bigger role with their students; having closer links with placement supervisors, just in order to really be able to assess how that person's doing, to be clear about their personal development, to know more about that person, and therefore to be able to pick up where that person is in their development: are they doing OK? Are there being problems? And, so just tho have that close personal attention I think would highlight a lot of those things."* (2.213)

It was also suggested that a tutorial system where personal development was closely monitored might effectively merge facilitation and assessment into one reciprocal process of ongoing self-reflection, feedback, evaluation and movement, whereby:

*"the student, and whoever's working with them - let's call them the 'facilitator' - does some kind of stock taking of their progress.. The purpose would serve to allow the person on the journey, the student, to get a sense of how far they've progressed, to re-think about what it is their needs are and where they need to go, to take a critical on their progress, on their development, and to try to shape it into a new form, and to identify pathways that would allow that to move forwards."* (4.105)

However, it was also suggested that such a high level of personal attention to trainees might present a significant challenge for programmes with large training cohorts and staff-student ratios.

#### 5. 4. 4 Not adequately assessed at selection

A clear emphasis emerged from the interviews regarding the relevance and importance of assessing the personal dimension during the selection process, as well as during training. From a trainer perspective, there was also a sense of an increasing awareness of this importance, gained through experience in the trainer role:

*"I've become more and more aware.. of how very important that is: that we look not only for the obvious features such as qualifications and experience, but we look for capacity for personal development" (3.56)"*

A variety of reasons for this emphasis were raised, including the importance of applicants' psychological fitness and readiness to engage in a personally demanding and affecting process:

*"I think that people do have to be at a point where they are able to take sitting down and working through some very difficult issues which might arise, without it affecting them to a great degree" (1.45)*

It was also suggested that effective assessment of personal readiness was a key way to reduce the probability of admitting people onto the course who were likely to experience significant difficulties in personal development later on. Moreover, there was a sense in which the training institution was considered responsible for ensuring that trainees did not find themselves out of their depth: *"I think we've failed the student if we've let them on the course and then half way through we say you have to get off because you just can't take this" (1.40).*



Assessing the personal dimension at selection was also regarded as crucial for the well-being of potential clients, as well as prospective trainees. It was expected that selectors should be concerned with establishing that all successful candidates possess a minimum “threshold” (rv.3) level of interpersonal skill and personal adjustment, primarily because they will be working with clients almost as soon as the training starts:

*“There has to be a baseline level of competence, given that most courses require practitioners to go out [to see clients] almost immediately.. so I think course selectors have a responsibility to ensure client well-being” (3.210).*

However, despite the importance attached to assessing the personal dimension during selection, the belief also emerged that this was a difficult thing to do practically, because the salient personal factors were felt to be capacities that could only be qualitatively and subjectively assessed:

*“But of course [the relevant capacities] are very difficult to quantify. They’re very difficult to pin down, as such. And it is a qualitative decision. It’s not a decision that is rational” (4.52)*

Moreover, it was suggested that selectors commonly experience “a gut feeling” (rv.1) about applicants which, as counselling psychologists, they should realise is likely to reflect personal biases. It was suggested that the admissions process should force selectors to externalise these subjective responses through rational dialogue with other selectors in order to ensure that their own evaluations do not go unchecked or unquestioned.

A number of personal qualities or selection criteria also emerged, several of which were previously highlighted within the context of other categories relating to the definition and assessment of personal development. These included basic interpersonal skills, openness, reflective ability, compassion, emotional stability and readiness, self-responsibility and a positive capacity for learning, achievement motivation, transparency, prior counselling experience, academic ability, and minimum age of 25, though it was also noted that age was not necessarily a reliable indicator of life experience or personal maturity.



Despite the specification of certain personal qualities, the importance of a non-prescriptive and flexible approach to trainee selection was also commonly emphasised. It was felt that individual diversity within the profession was essential to its vitality, and that this would be threatened if only trainees who fitted a narrowly defined personal profile of the ideal trainee/counsellor were admitted into training:

*"I wouldn't want to prescribe too narrowly what I thought a counselling psychologist should consist of, because there are a whole number of people who work well in different ways, and I wouldn't want to stop that... You've got to keep your criteria loose." (7.190)*

A range of methods for assessing applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training were highlighted. Personal statements, incorporated into application forms, were identified as potentially useful ways to evidence candidates' reflective abilities and self-awareness. As one trainee commented: *"they made it so soul searching and hard.. one hopes that they weeded out a lot of people at that stage" (5.124).*

Interviews with individual applicants were also highlighted as potentially useful ways of gauging personal suitability. It was suggested that course selectors naturally draw upon their clinical skills and sensitivities when doing this. It was also pointed out that they may work upon the assumption that how they experience a candidate in the interview may provide some guide as to how the candidate are likely to be experienced by clients, although some allowances should be made for nervousness and anxiety in the interview situation. One-to-one interviews were also described as providing useful opportunities for ensuring that applicants have given sufficient consideration to their decision to train at this point in time: *"It's about allowing them to stand back" (1.49)* and think. Moreover, it was proposed that interviewers should also ask direct questions of interviewees about themselves and their reasons for wanting to train, to see *"if people can actually answer that" (1.48).*

Group interview scenarios were also identified as being particularly effective for highlighting applicants' interpersonal abilities and underlying neuroses: *"putting people in groups and raising levels of anxiety.. increases the chances that pathologies or perspectives are going to emerge" (3.203)*

However, questions were also raised about how incisive these methods could be: *"how well do you know someone at interview and what's in their personal statement"* (1.42). This was seen as a particularly pertinent issue when candidates are strongly determined to make it onto a course, and are not naïve as to the objectives, techniques and criteria employed by selectors:

*"at any selection process, people are gonna say what they feel the selectors want to hear.. And.. sophisticated psychology students are very aware of how questions are phrased and what people are looking for behind it!"* (2.187).

*"everyone who applies to the course wants to get on it, so you pull the wool over people's eyes"* (5.122)

The constraints on interviewing at psychological depth imposed by the limited time and resources available on busy training programmes were also highlighted as potentially significant factors affecting the quality of selection procedures: *"I think it's quite difficult because of the time pressures and resources that are required to really interview people"*. (3.141)

Furthermore, it was generally agreed that selection errors, where personally unsuitable candidates get through onto the programme, do occur: *"one can make mistakes as well"* (4.222) *"It's inevitable" because selectors are "human beings"* (5.122), *"Absolutely, it happens"* (1.51). However, it was also argued that, when selection errors do occur, trainers have a professional and ethical responsibility to ask: *"why does this happen?"* (iv.1) and to take appropriate action.

However, concerns about selection failures were balanced somewhat by another emergent perspective: that, although some trainees may enter the course with serious personal/psychological problems, they can and do sometimes change dramatically through the training experience to emerge as competent practitioners: *"I've actually been able to be with and observe trainees change.. remarkably.. so I'm drawing upon that experience when I answer these questions"* (3.10). Consequently, a view which emphasised how well candidates make use of the training experience, rather than how healthy they appear at selection was also evident:



*"For me, it's not necessarily about selection onto the course, it's about the process of the course and how people end up. So you can have someone who starts off with difficulties who actually does move on from that (2.203)*

Interestingly, despite the fact that both trainers and trainees seemed aware of dilemmas associated with assessing the personal dimension at selection, trainees appeared to feel more uncomfortable with the idea of making judgements about the personal suitability of their peers: *"I can make that judgement in my personal capacity, but I wouldn't presume to do that for people in training" (3.190).*

Agreement also emerged, especially from trainers, that significant improvements could be made to current approaches to assessing the personal suitability/readiness of prospective trainees, even if it was not an easy task: *"I think it's something we could work on" (2.231), "I think it definitely could be made more rigorous" (1.57).* However, a view was also expressed that, although with greater resources there might be room for improvement, a more rigorous approach was currently not necessary due to the wealth of high calibre applicants: *"the market has created a high degree of competition which has pushed quality up" (3.240).*

The role of clear consensual selection criteria for assessing applicants on a personal level, and skilled sensitive selectors, were identified as key ways in which trainee selection could realistically be improved:

*"It's about having clear criteria... about what you are looking for, what you do want to assess at interview, and to have the appropriate professionals there to pick those things up" (2.194)*

It was also suggested that there was scope for greater discussion of selection criteria between trainers, which one trainer said were not addressed *"as explicitly as we might" (4.201).* Furthermore, as had emerged in relation to the assessment of personal development *during* training (see section 5.4.3), a tendency towards a negative or re-active (as opposed to a positive pro-active) approach was also described, where



selectors focus more on identifying the kinds of trainees they did *not* wish to admit onto the course:

*"We do have a lot of conversations about what would make an appropriate trainee, what kinds of qualities we're looking for. And it's often, in fact.. the negative feedback: what we don't want, a kind of steering away from students [who] may be unsuited for the course."*  
(4.59)

Negative or undesirable trainee qualities that were mentioned here included absolutist, aggressive, or passive-aggressive attitudes (4.61).

The view was also proposed that an inadequate consensus over selection criteria might exacerbate the incidence of selection errors:

*"We all have a different emphasis on what we're looking for, and that's why people fall through, I think.. I don't think there's.. a uniform consensus, and I think that's unfortunate and something that needs to be developed, at least to some extent. I'm not saying let's have a shopping list.. but at least some core attributes that students have to have to get on."* (1.51)

From a trainee perspective, it was also suggested that more thorough use could be made of the one-to-one and group interviews. For one trainee, these seemed to have been experienced as superficial information sharing exercises that contrasted sharply with more in-depth counselling-type interviews that they had encountered when applying for other training programmes. This trainee drew a comparison between the approach taken on the present course and the intensive residential setting selection procedures that tend to be used for the selection of trainee priests:

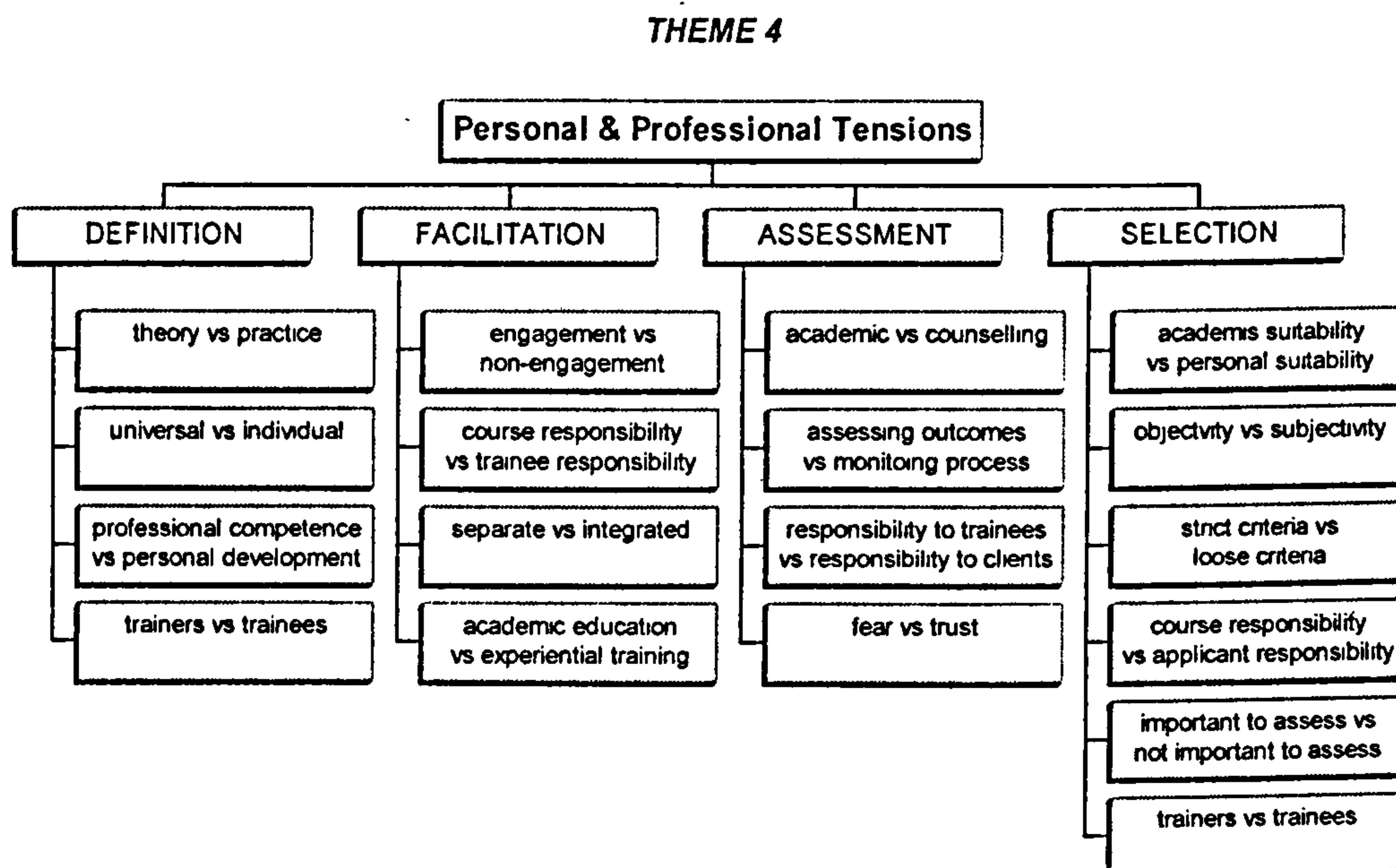
*"When it came to the interviews, the group interview was mostly informative from their side, and the individual one was just clarifying points on the application form.. I'm steeped in the Church of England, so I'm very familiar with their way of doing things. And the way they select trainee priests is a 3-day residential selection conference, where they have to lead discussion groups and be observed and have interviews with 3 different people. And while I wouldn't recommend that City stick us all in a hotel for 3 days, I think there is scope for more than they do at the interview stage"* (5.124)

#### 5.4.5 Summary

Personal development was generally felt to be inadequately addressed in training. Inadequacies were identified in relation to the definition, discussion, integration, monitoring and assessment of personal development, and in relation to the selection of trainees. Trainers and trainees both expressed dissatisfactions in relation to these areas. To some extent, these seemed to be a by-product of the academic model on which counselling psychology training is based. This places greater emphasis on academic and theoretical as opposed to experiential and practical approaches to learning.

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## 5.5 Theme 4: Personal and Professional Tensions



Up to this point, the grounded theory analysis has generated themes and categories that have provided a framework for organising and describing a range of key views and experiences expressed by the interviewees about personal development in counselling psychology training. These themes and categories have mostly been descriptive, in that they have largely been concerned with describing the manifest content of participants' views and experiences (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1996). However, as the analysis progressed, it became apparent that there was more 'going on' in the data that needed to be explored. While carrying out the interviews and analysis, I had often been struck by the complexity and dilemmatic nature of some of the issues encountered, and felt that this was an important characteristic of the data that needed to be explicitly accounted for in my emerging theory.

Viewed from an elevated analytical perspective, the observed complexity seemed, in many ways, to revolve around a tension between ideals and values about personal



development or counselling on the one hand, and how to actually address and apply these within the context of a professional/academic training course, on the other. In other words, there appeared to be a tension between the *personal* and the *professional* dimensions of counselling psychology training<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, a comment by one interviewee seemed to be articulating this very tension:

*"The professional and the personal are fighting each other. They are in conflict for me in some ways. So if I was on the BPS committee accrediting people's personal development, I'd have to work within my guidelines, whatever they were. But as a person I'd want very broad guidelines. So I'm a bit stuck with at the moment, I can't see a way around it. Because I would hate counselling psychology to narrow itself down, so that it wouldn't accept as part of personal development some of these holistic issues. I think that would be a loss, and I'm sure a lot of people within the field would agree. But how you encompass that, I don't know."* (7.151)

This tension seemed to arise in many forms, in relation to the definition, facilitation and assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees. The following sections describe and elaborate how this core theme of a personal-professional tension, emerged in relation to these four key areas. This will be done by highlighting previously identified manifest features of the interviews, but re-viewing them from a more interpretive abstract perspective.

### 5. 5. 1 The definition of personal development

Tensions emerged in four key ways in relation to the issue of defining personal development.

#### ***Theory vs. Practice***

The desirability of a clearer definition of personal development was identified on a number of grounds. On a broad professional level, it was felt to be important that the

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<sup>1</sup> In conceptualising these tensions, I was influenced by the Kellyian concept of personal constructs (Kelly, 1955). In Kellyian psychology individuals are believed to develop personalised sets of psychological constructs that help them to make sense of and discriminate between events, and to make predictions about future events. Constructs are always bi-polar, in that a particular idea, belief or prediction cannot exist, or have meaning, without its opposite. Furthermore, the notion of bi-polar constructs can help to make sense of complexities or paradoxes of meaning, by providing a superordinate construct system (i.e. a core theme) that subsumes a set of sub-ordinate constructs (i.e. categories).

discipline of counselling psychology shared a clear consensual definition of personal development to promote a sufficient degree of consistency across various accredited counseling psychology programmes. At a more local level, it was viewed as desirable that individual course documentation should also provide a clear definition of what is meant by 'personal development'. From a practical point of view, establishing clear learning objectives was also regarded as important in order to effectively facilitate personal development during training. In terms of assessing personal development, a clear definition was identified as something that would provide a necessary basis for generating clear criteria against which trainees' progress could be evaluated more objectively.

However, while the desirability of a clearer definition of personal development was emphasised *in theory* for a number of reasons, uncertainty was also expressed about the degree to which such a definition might be achievable *in practice*. This uncertainty was partly based on the view that personal development is an inherently complex, individually unique, and private process.

This tension between *theory* and *practice* seemed to be well encapsulated by one participants' comment:

*"I think certainly from the perspective of say, for example, on a Diploma Document, that if we're going to make a requirement of something we need to be able to operationalise it. And we also need to be able to determine it's centrality to the process [of training], not from a perspective of historical truisms, but actually based on fact. I'm very much in touch with the dilemma. And I think philosophically you could argue a reasonable case. But I think empirically you would be very hard pushed."* (3.33, 35)

### ***Universal vs. Individual***

The view also emerged that the incorporation of personal development into a professional training course implied that it had some universal professional meaning and function for all those engaged in it. This universal dimension was articulated (usually by trainers) in terms of the fundamental role that personal development plays in clinical practice, chiefly through the clinician's use of self-awareness, their ability to reflect on process issues and to establish a therapeutic relationship with clients. It was even



suggested that, because its primary role for a counselling psychologist is to enhance clinical functioning, the most appropriate way to define it is in terms of its *clinical* function, for example the acquisition of specifiable and clinically relevant interpersonal skills, rather than in terms of the kind of *person* the trainee has become.

However, it was also clearly expressed (particularly by trainees) that personal development was highly idiosyncratic, both in terms of its process and content. As a result, personal development could only be meaningfully defined by the individual. From this perspective, trying to define personal development in a universal sense therefore seemed at odds with its very nature, and was described as being “*a bit like putting someone in a box*” (8.26).

These apparently opposing viewpoints on defining personal development seem to give rise to a tension between its *universal* and the *individual* dimensions. Furthermore, there is some suggestion in the data that this tension is associated with a divergence between the perspectives of *trainers*, who seemed to define personal development much more readily and explicitly in terms of its universal clinical function, and *trainees*, who seemed to conceptualise personal development more as an individually unique, process of becoming. The universal-individual tension also seemed evident in relation to the question of whether personal therapy should be professionally defined and regulated in terms its aims and their clinical relevance or left up to individual trainees to decide how they wish to define and make use of the experience.

However, a third position did also emerge, which seemed to incorporate views of personal development as *both* individually and universally definable for counselling psychologists. In this position, both levels of definition seemed to have a valid place. A universal definition was viewed as a logical necessity; otherwise it made no sense to think of personal development as a core component of professional training and practice: “*you’ve got to have certain things in common.*” (3.8). However, a universal view could only be taken up to a point, as it was still viewed as important to encourage trainees to think about their own individual personal development needs and goals.



### ***Professional competence vs. Personal development***

An emphasis was given (usually by trainees) to the development of professional competence as a primary goal of their personal development. However, an interesting counterpoint to this was offered by a trainer. He suggested that, although such a preoccupation seemed understandable for inexperienced trainees, this might actually represent a misguided reversal of the direction of effect between personal and professional development at this stage in the learning process, because *"it's only by personal development that you get to be competent"* (rv.4). This suggested another possible tension between the perspectives of trainers and trainees in terms of their definitions of personal development.

### ***Trainers vs. Trainees***

Trainers and trainees appeared to diverge concerning the extent to which they defined personal development in terms of its clinical function (more trainers) or in terms of its individually uniqueness (more trainees). There also appeared to be a divergence between trainers and trainees in terms of the emphasis given to the development of professional competence as a core aim of personal development, as opposed to the view that personal development must precede the development of professional competence. Consequently, there appeared to be some potential tensions between the personal development definitions or perspectives of trainers and trainees.

## **5. 5. 2 The facilitation of personal development**

Tensions emerged in four key ways in relation to the issue of facilitating personal development.

### ***Engagement vs. Non-engagement***

A key tension emerged in relation to the issue of the engagement or non-engagement of trainees in the process of personal development. The view was expressed that although trainees do not necessarily have to suffer in order to learn, they do have to fully engage in the learning process. However, it was also suggested that it is possible for trainees to 'duck out' of, or pay lip service to, the personal development component of the training.

A number of possible factors associated with whether or not a trainee engages sufficiently were also highlighted, particularly with reference to the issue of personal therapy. These factors included previous life experience and personality, which could produce trainees with significantly different levels of openness/defensiveness to change, and ability to take responsibility for learning. Prior experience of personal therapy was also highlighted as something that could stimulate self-awareness and openness to further personal exploration. It was also proposed that non-engagement might be associated with poor self-awareness, which might be reflected in an inability to think of personal material that can provide a basis for personal work. The belief that some trainees perceive a stigma about having personal therapy was also viewed as relevant (i.e. that having personal therapy indicates you are personally unstable and therefore unfit to be a therapist), and it was suggested that such a stigma would be less prevalent amongst those who have had therapy before. Having a poor or insufficiently experienced personal therapist was also highlighted as a potentially significant factor in whether or not a trainee engaged, as was a tendency to over focus on the process of one's personal therapy from an intellectual standpoint, rather than involve oneself at a more direct and challenging emotional level. The freedom that trainees are permitted in deciding how they wish to use their personal therapy was also highlighted as something that may facilitate non-engagement and avoidance. Another suggestion was that a trainee's culture might sometimes affect their willingness or ability to engage in personal therapy, particularly if they came from a background in which therapy, or an emphasis on 'personal development, are less pervasive. It was also proposed that a lack of integration and monitoring of trainees' personal development within the training course might significantly affect the extent to which a trainee engages in the personal development dimension of training.

#### ***Course responsibility vs. Trainee responsibility***

The tension between trainee engagement and trainee non-engagement gives rise to the question of to what extent courses or trainees should be held responsible for non-engagement?

A view was expressed that it is the course's responsibility to provide the opportunities, tools and structure for personal development, but it is the responsibility of trainees to bring the material or content, and to make the most of the learning opportunities on

offer. In terms of course structure, it was suggested that course were responsible for providing clearly articulated basic learning objectives for trainee personal development, and should not to assume that trainees will already know what this involves. In terms of opportunities and tools, training programmes were described as having an obligation to provide a range of personal development methods, which would enable a customising approach that would accommodate the diverse needs and learning styles of individual students.

A suggestion was also made that courses might provide forums for trainees to discuss key personal development issues, such as the personal therapy requirement. This might help trainees to express any negative attitudes or experiences, and provide trainers with an opportunity to address or reframe these issues and model a more positive and constructive view. The view was also expressed that a training course should try to integrate as far as possible the personal and professional dimensions in training, even though this is challenging to do. This would include a rigorous tutorial system where personal development is closely monitored, supported and evaluated, so that non-engagement or avoidance can be spotted and addressed.

The training course was also regarded as being responsible for providing what was referred to as "a safe home" (rv.4), on the basis that trainees need to feel secure and supported in order to feel able to really challenge and stretch themselves:

*"People won't take risks in development if they don't feel safe. And part of that safety is to know that it can be 'held', to use psychoanalytic jargon. It provides a backbone to the course. It provides a skeleton to all the organic growth." (rv.4)*

Ensuring that individuals do not take on training for which they are unready or unsuited was also highlighted as a course's responsibility. Close and ongoing monitoring and support of trainees should mean that they never reach 'failure' point. Rather, a course might be regarded as having failed to meet its own responsibilities to its trainees should their continuation on the course ever come into serious question.

On the other hand, as well as being responsible for bringing their own material to the process, it was also argued that trainees need to be able to strike an appropriate



balance between autonomy and seeking help/support when it is needed in relation to their development. In addition, the suggestion was made that a trainee's ability to reflect and constructively reframe problem issues and negative experiences (e.g. in personal therapy) can be a critical factor in their ability to sustain developmental progress in the face of inevitable challenges. This constructive capacity would also seem relevant to a trainees' ability to perceive and make the most of available learning opportunities.

### ***Separate vs. Integrated***

A tension was also apparent between personal development as something that is separate from the main body of the course and something that is integrated into the training experience. It was clearly suggested that personal development currently seemed to be a peripheral, rather than a focal, aspect of the training. It was described as a topic that was generally not discussed in any depth within the course and which had been addressed primarily in terms of the personal therapy requirement, which takes place independently from the main body of the training. From a trainer perspective, the separateness of the personal and professional dimensions of the training was regarded as inadequate. However, increasing integration was believed to be a complex and dilemmatic issue. One solution identified was the development of a more clearly defined and rigorous tutorial system that would monitor trainees more closely.

However, from a trainee perspective, a different point of view emerged where the separateness of personal development was regarded as a potentially positive rather than negative feature. Separateness was regarded as appropriate to the private and idiosyncratic nature of the personal development process, and as allowing trainees the freedom and flexibility to define their personal development and use of personal therapy for themselves.

### ***Academic education vs. Experiential training***

A tension also became apparent between a traditional 'academic' approach to education and a more experiential 'counselling' approach. It was suggested that counselling psychology training tends to follow an academic model of training, and that this is evident in a number of ways: the separateness of the personal and professional dimensions, the quantification of 'enough' personal development through a 40 hour

personal therapy requirement; an intensive goal-oriented climate; a lack of group cohesion; and a lack of experiential and skills-based work.

### 5. 5. 3 The assessment of personal development

Tensions emerged in four key ways in relation to the issue of assessing personal development.

#### *Academia vs. Counselling*

A broad underlying tension between the values of academia and the 'person-centred' values of counselling seemed to be present throughout discussions of the issue of assessing personal development. Many of the practical complexities and philosophical dilemmas expressed about how, or even if, to 'assess' personal development, seemed in some sense to stem from this tension. 'Academic' values emerged in themes about the judgement, scrutiny and evaluation of trainees; establishing an objective and concrete basis for assessment; the quantification of trainee competence; and the issue of passing and failing trainees. On the other hand, 'person-centred' counselling values emerged in the themes of non-judgement, trainees' right to privacy, confidentiality and freedom from external evaluation, trainees' development of an internal locus of self-evaluation, a subjective basis for assessing competence, and a discomfort with the idea of trainee 'failure'. To some extent, this tension appeared to be a product of the location of a professional clinical training course within a traditional academic/university setting. The tension is further explored in the context of the following two tensions.

#### *Assessing outcomes vs. Monitoring process*

A tension emerged between the view that it was important to assess trainees' personal development in a formal way and the view that it was more important and appropriate to ensure that trainees were engaging effectively in the process of personal development.

It was regarded as professionally and ethically important that a course develops a way of assessing the outcomes of trainees' personal development in a concrete or quantifiable manner. A key reason given for this was the need to have a more rigorous evidence-based way of dealing with trainees who may have fulfilled the course's

'professional' criteria, but still do not seem 'personally' fit or suitable to trainers. It was suggested that currently these kinds of trainees are able to slip through the system, because trainers have no explicit way to evidence their concerns. Implicit in this position is the notion that it is possible, and sometimes necessary, for a trainee to 'fail' a course on the basis of inadequate personal development.

On the other hand, the view was expressed that it is neither appropriate nor effective to try to assess trainees' personal development in terms of content or outcomes. What is more important is that a course recognises its responsibility to ensure that trainees are engaging effectively in the process of personal development. Furthermore, if this is done thoroughly, there should be no need to 'assess' personal development at all; sufficient monitoring, feedback and ongoing support should ensure that satisfactory progress is made. From this perspective, the only way that personal development can be quantified is in terms of the amount of time and effort that trainees invest in it, for example attending 40 hours of personal therapy. Moreover, it is a *course's* responsibility to ensure that personal development problems are not allowed to reach a point where the candidate's training has to be terminated. In such instances, it is the course that has failed to meet its responsibilities to the trainee, rather than the trainee failing to meet course requirements.

### ***Responsibility to clients vs. Responsibility to trainees***

It was also possible to discern a third tension that related specifically to the apparent dual roles and responsibilities of trainers. Implicit in discussions about the necessity of developing a more systematic approach to assessing personal development was the belief that trainers have an ethical responsibility to protect clients from unfit trainees/practitioners. However, discussions of the importance of monitoring and supporting trainees, and the impossibility of failing them for personal development-related reasons, suggest that trainers also perceived themselves as having a genuine responsibility to their trainees - to ensure their wellbeing and development as well.

In assessing trainee personal development, trainers therefore have to balance two sets of contrasting concerns and responsibilities. Trainers' responsibilities to safeguard client wellbeing, and to act acting as gatekeepers for their profession, clearly emphasise the client's and profession's interests. In order to meet these responsibilities, trainers are



obliged to make judgements about trainees, and to sometimes 'fail' trainees. On the other hand, trainers' responsibilities to provide a training environment that will maximise trainees' learning and development, relies on providing a "safe home" (rv.4) and supportive environment in which individual trainees are free to develop without excessive fear of evaluation. In this second role, trainers would seem to be extending the non-judgemental, person-centred values of counselling to their trainees, whilst in the former role they appear to take on a more critical perspective that emphasises professional regulation and ethical imperatives.

### ***Fear vs. Trust***

The dual roles of trainers may also give rise to a tension between fear and trust in the training setting. A climate of trust and support seems necessary for learning and growth to occur, as reflected in one respondents' comment: *"People won't take risks in development if they don't feel safe"* (rv.4). But the spectre of 'assessment', regarded as a "scary word" (1.38) (mostly by trainees), brings with it the potential for an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Trainers are therefore in a situation where they must encourage trainees to develop and take risks, but simultaneously manage trainees' fears about being evaluated by them.

Furthermore, it was also implied that the separateness of personal development from training may make it difficult for courses to create the cohesive and supportive learning environments that would promote this climate of trust. From a trainee perspective, there was a sense in which the separateness of personal development could feel quite reassuring, in that it can be viewed as representing a course's respect for the trainee's privacy, individuality and need to feel free from evaluation in order to grow.

#### 5. 5. 4 The selection of trainees

Tensions emerged in 6 key ways in relation to the issue of selecting trainees.

##### ***Academic suitability vs. Personal suitability***

In discussing the issue of selecting counselling psychology trainees, a tension was evident between what might be considered an *academic* approach and a *counselling* approach. Selection procedures in academic settings typically emphasise standardised qualifications and experience required for entry. However, it was clear that, in selecting candidates for counselling psychology training, personal suitability and qualities that cannot be gleaned directly from academic qualifications or levels of professional experience are equally, if not more, important criteria.

##### ***Objectivity vs. Subjectivity***

A tension emerged between the roles of objectivity and subjectivity in assessing the personal suitability of course applicants. It was suggested that assessing personal suitability is difficult and inevitably based on subjective appraisal. Furthermore, selectors may use a negative/reactive approach, where they focus on avoiding the kinds of applicants they do *not* wish to admit. However, it was also argued that, despite or even because of the subjective nature of evaluations of personal suitability, it is essential for a course to employ a rigorous and systematic approach that enhances reliability and objectivity. It was suggested that this should include using more than one selector in the admissions process and ensuring that selectors employ clear consensual criteria.

##### ***Strict criteria vs. Loose criteria***

A tension was also apparent between the importance of having clearly specified and agreed upon selection criteria and the importance and not over-prescribing a rigid profile of the ideal trainee. It was suggested that, while it is important to identify qualities that will ensure a successful experience for the trainee, it is also important to allow for scope for personal diversity within the training cohort and the profession. Furthermore, it was observed that trainees with personal characteristics or problems, who might not fit the 'ideal' trainee profile, may still go on to become competent practitioners. This was felt to underscore the importance of taking a loose and flexible approach to the specification of selection criteria. Furthermore, the emphasis on rigorous criteria might be viewed as



reflecting academic values, such as objectivity, consistency and predictive validity. In contrast, the emphasis on -looser less prescriptive criteria mirrors the values of counselling, which emphasise the importance of individuality, freedom and non-judgement.

***Course responsibility vs. Applicant responsibility***

The issue of trainee selection also gave rise to a tension between course responsibility and applicant responsibility. It was argued that a course has a responsibility to have in place selection procedures which ensure that individuals do not take on training for which they are personally unready or unsuited, and which protect potential clients. This required establishing clear selection criteria and encouraging applicants to seriously reflect on their decision to train. It was also suggested that a course has an obligation to ask 'Why?' when selection mistakes occur and to try to reduce the chances of this reoccurring. On the other hand, applicants were also viewed as having a responsibility to reflect honestly on their own readiness for training, and to strike a reasonable balance between selling themselves well during selection and presenting selectors with an unrealistic impression.

***Important to assess personal suitability at selection vs. Not important to assess personal suitability at selection***

A tension was evident between a view that emphasised the importance of assessing personal suitability before training starts and a view which emphasised the greater importance of how an individual develops *once training starts*. A number of reasons were proposed for the importance of assessing personal suitability at selection. These included the course's responsibility to ensure that trainees do not take on training for which they are unready and to protect clients. On the other hand, the view that how a trainee progresses once they are on the course is more important than the level of personal development they demonstrate at selection was argued on the grounds that trainees can change dramatically during the training process, and that trainees who do not fit the 'ideal' trainee profile may still turn out to be competent practitioners.



### ***Trainers vs. Trainees***

There appeared to be a divergence between trainer and trainee perspectives regarding the trainee selection issue. Compared with trainees, trainers seemed more aware of, and concerned about, current problems in trainee selection, such as how to reduce the occurrence of selection 'errors'. In contrast, trainees seemed more reluctant and uncomfortable to make 'judgements' about the personal suitability of trainees (as had also been the case when discussing the assessment of personal development during training). This difference may also be associated with the fact that trainers have a dual professional responsibility that trainees do not share.

### **5.5.5 Summary**

A number of tensions stemming from the interface of personal and professional development in the context of training were identified. These related to four key areas: the definition, facilitation and assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees. The tensions represented contrasts of opinion, and philosophical and practical dilemmas about how to appropriately and effectively address personal development issues within the training context. These tensions emerged as significant properties of the topic itself. Table 2 below provides an overview of the various manifestations of the personal-professional tension amongst the four areas of discourse.

AREA	TENSIONS		
	PROFESSIONAL	vs	PERSONAL
<b>DEFINITION</b>	Theory	vs	Practice
	Universal	vs	Individual
	Professional competence	vs	Personal development
	Trainers	vs	Trainees
<b>FACILITATION</b>	Engagement	vs	Non-engagement
	Course responsibility	vs	Trainee responsibility
	Separate	vs	Integrated
	Academic education	vs	Experiential training
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	Academia	vs	Counselling
	Assessing outcomes	vs	Monitoring process
	Responsibility to clients	vs	Responsibility to trainees
	Fear	vs	Trust
<b>SELECTION</b>	Academic suitability	vs	Personal suitability
	Objectivity	vs	Subjectivity
	Strict criteria	vs	Loose criteria
	Course responsibility	vs	Applicant responsibility
	Important to assess	vs	Not important to assess
	Trainers	vs	Trainees

Table 2 Manifestations of the core theme 'personal and professional tensions' amongst the four key areas of discourse



**5.6. Discussing the findings in relation to the research questions and prior literature**

Having described the findings of the grounded theory analysis through the various themes and categories that emerged from the eight interviews with counselling psychology trainers and trainees, it is timely to consider the significance of these findings in relation to the research questions and the prior literature, as reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2.

The research questions are:

1. How do those involved in counselling psychology training (i.e. trainers and trainees) define and view personal development? *AND*
2. To what extent do those involved in counselling psychology training differ in their definitions and views of personal development?
3. How satisfied are those involved in counselling psychology with the way that personal development is defined, facilitated and assessed in training, and with the way that trainees are selected? *AND*
4. What are their dissatisfactions and how do they think these could be addressed?

Consideration of these questions will be made through an exploration of the relationship between the present findings and the prior literature. Questions 1 and 2 will be addressed first, followed by questions 3 and 4.



1. How do those involved in counselling psychology define and view personal development? *AND*

2. To what extent do those involved in counselling psychology training differ in their definitions and views of personal development?

Overall, the findings from the grounded theory analysis suggest that those involved in counselling psychology training define and view personal development as a multifaceted concept that is inextricable from professional development. Some interesting differences in views and definitions of personal development also appeared within the present study, and these will be highlighted throughout the following discussions.

#### 5. 6 1 The specific attributes of personal development

The multifaceted nature of personal development that was evident in the present study is clearly consistent with the view of personal development presented by the curricula of Johns (1996), Connor (1994) Mearns (1997), each of which identify a diversity of aims and objectives for trainees. Furthermore, many of the features or characteristics of personal development that were identified in the present study also correspond with those identified in these curricula/previous literature.

The emphasis on the development of greater *self-awareness* as a core feature of personal development evident in the present study clearly matches the emphasis it consistently receives in the curricula of Johns (1996), Connor (1994) and Mearns (1997) and in the personal development rationale of counselling psychology training, as defined by the BPS guidelines for accredited courses (BPS, 2001). Furthermore, the kinds of areas in which it was suggested that trainees should develop greater awareness, for example in relation to their personal history, beliefs, values and ways of relating to others, also clearly corresponds with the areas suggested in this literature. These areas can also be viewed as encompassing the different dimensions of self-awareness identified by Bayne *et al's* (1994) model of self-awareness. In addition, the distinction found in the present study between the concepts of self-awareness and personal development (for example, that self-awareness is necessary but not sufficient for

personal development) also supports Mearns' (1997) 3-stage model of personal development, which views self-awareness as just the first of three necessary phases. Moreover, the view of personal development as an active, goal-oriented process for which the trainee must take personal responsibility that emerged from the present study is also consistent with the active experimentation stage of Mearns' model, as well as the 'Self as Learner' dimension of his personal development curriculum.

The centrality of *self-reflection* to the personal development definitions that emerged from the present study also corresponds with its association to personal development in the literature, for example in the BPS syllabus for accredited counselling psychology courses, which refers to the core training component of '*Self-Reflection and Personal development*' (BPS, 2001). The conceptualisation of self-reflection as a core capacity that plays a fundamental role not only in the development of self-awareness but also in sustaining openness, learning and development in a broader more long-term sense, also replicates findings from Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) study of counsellor development. These researchers found that the maintenance of a 'reflective stance', and 'continuous professional reflection', were the major determinants of whether counsellors developed healthily throughout their careers or whether they reached a point of stagnation or burnout.

The definition of personal development a *professionally universal* requirement which has a *core clinical function* found in the present study also confirms previously expressed ideas. For instance, the BPS (2001) rationale for personal development work in counselling psychology training is clearly argued in terms of its universal necessity to therapeutic work that is sensitive to relationship and process issues. Both Johns (1996) and Williams & Irving (1996) also put forward views of personal development that emphasise its universal clinical function, as opposed to its individual 'personal growth' function. The curricula of Connor (1994) and Mearns (1997) also view personal development as a way for practitioners to increase their ability to convey core therapeutic conditions (i.e. empathy, genuineness and acceptance) to their clients. Furthermore, the idea that it may be ethically appropriate and practically helpful to define personal development in terms of its universal clinical function directly mirrors a view put forward previously by Irving & Williams (1999).



In addition, a number of other specific attributes that were incorporated into the personal development definitions of the present study are also found in prior literature. For example, recognition of *strengths and weaknesses* is included in the curricula of Johns (1996) and Connor (1994). Increased *self-acceptance* is included in Mearns' (1997) curricula as a goal and sign of personal development. Increased personal *integration, maturity* and *fulfilling potential* were highlighted in Johns' (1996) trainees' definitions. *Wellbeing & stability* and *openness* also correspond to personal qualities that have been identified as important for prospective trainees (Mearns, 1997; Dryden *et al*, 1995).

### 5. 6. 2 The general characteristics of personal development

In terms of broader characteristics there is again much correspondence between the present findings and past literature. The view that emerged of personal development as *individually unique* is consistent with the perspectives of Mearns (1997) and Dryden *et al* (1995), which have emphasised the unique patterning of trainees' individual personal development needs. The suggestion that individuals may differ significantly in their capacity to benefit from certain personal development methods (e.g. personal therapy) also supports Irving & Williams' (1995) finding that individual trainees vary significantly in how positively they experience the different methods, and is consistent with Kolb's (1976) theory that individuals have different and preferred personal learning styles. Furthermore, the notion that personal development can be defined on both an individual and universal level also corresponds with the Connor's (1995) integrative model of counsellor training, which proposes that broad aims and objectives for personal development must be set, which should then be broken down and personalised with individual trainees.

The definition of personal development as a *broad and holistic* process, which is affected by a wide diversity of experiences, is consistent with Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) finding that a combination of personal and professional experiences is essential to the process of counsellor development. The importance of taking a "customising" approach to facilitating personal development also corresponds to Dryden *et al*'s (1995) stipulation that a range of methods is necessary to meet the diversity of individual personal development needs and learning styles. The range of experiences and



methods identified as important to personal development in the present study (e.g. personal therapy, personal development groups, reflective journals, client work, supervision, counselling skills workshops, written work, theoretical learning, peer group contact, searching for a personal therapist and for a placement, and personal life experiences outside of the course) also supports Mearns' (1997) and Dryden *et al*'s (1995) argument that it is not possible to equate personal therapy with personal development. Furthermore, the way in which the whole training experience can impact significantly on personal development confirms past observations made by Mearns (1997) and the findings of previous research (Guy, 1987).

The characterisation of personal development as a *life/careerlong* process is also shared by Johns (1996), and the view of personal development as a non-linear/cyclical process is consistent with Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) conceptualisation of phases of 'stagnation' and 'pseudodevelopment' in professional evolution. Furthermore, these researchers characterised the process of counsellor development as 'erratic' rather than smooth (p. 12).

### 5.6.3 A theoretical perspective on the emergent definition of personal development

From a theoretical perspective, the definitions of personal development that emerged from the present study seemed consistent with counselling psychology's integrative/pluralistic philosophy. Although participants' definitions did not clearly reflect any one theoretical orientation, there was perhaps a tendency towards the use of concepts traditionally associated with the person-centred model (e.g. self-acceptance, openness, individually unique, integration and congruence). However, descriptions of the clinical function of personal development (e.g. being able to separate out what belongs to you and belongs to the client) seemed to reflect a psychodynamic frame of reference. Basic features such as self-awareness, self-reflection and recognition of strengths and weaknesses seemed to reflect a much more generic therapeutic language.

5. 6. 4 Personal development & personal growth within the emergent definition

Interestingly, the definitions that emerged from the present study comprised features associated with both ‘personal development’ and ‘personal growth’, as defined by Irving & Williams (1996). As discussed in Chapter 2, these authors have argued that the two concepts are semantically distinct, but commonly confused in counsellor training, which leads to practical and ethical problems about how to facilitate and assess personal development. They describe *personal development* as a purposeful and structured activity, which is about developing specifiable skills, and capacities that explicitly aim to enhance clinical effectiveness, and which is not always a forward moving linear process. On the other hand, they define *personal growth* as a more organic and amorphous process which cannot be planned, and where the emphasis is on becoming a better person, rather than a better clinician, and whose effects tend to be permanent. In Irving & Williams’ (1999) view, it is the facilitation of personal development, not personal growth, that should be the primary aim in training. Table 3 below illustrates the way that definitional features from the present study seem to correspond with Irving & Williams’ conceptualisations of both *personal growth* and *personal development*.

Personal growth	Personal development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• difficult to define</li><li>• broad and holistic</li><li>• individually unique</li><li>• fulfilling potential</li><li>• maturity and maturation</li><li>• wellbeing &amp; stability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• active self-learning</li><li>• clinical function</li><li>• self-reflection</li><li>• self-awareness</li><li>• strengths and weaknesses</li><li>• non-linear/cyclical</li></ul>

Table 3 Emergent definitions of personal development viewed in terms of Irving & Williams’ growth-development distinction

Irving & Williams (1999) might argue that the presence of characteristics of both personal growth and personal development within the definitions generated by the current study suggests that the two concepts are being confused within the present sample. This finding would not be inconsistent with their suggestion that such confusion is commonplace amongst professional counsellor training courses. Furthermore, Irving & Williams might also suggest that the confusion of personal growth and personal development may help to explain the presence of the numerous tensions and dilemmas that were found within the present study.

#### 5. 6. 5 Differences between the definitions of trainers and trainees?

However, the findings of the present study also suggest that a tendency to define personal development either in terms of personal growth or personal development may to some extent be associated with whether the participant was a trainer or trainee. It has already been noted that trainers' definitions tended to explicitly emphasise the clinical function of personal development, and to regard a clearer universal definition as desirable. On the other hand, trainees' definitions were characterised by a greater emphasis on the individually unique growth dimensions of personal development. Hence, compared with trainers, trainees seem to have exhibited a stronger tendency to define personal development in a manner consistent with Irving & Williams' (1999) conceptualisation of personal growth. Furthermore, the emergence of such a difference within the present study supports an observation made in Chapter 2, when comparing trainees' and trainers' perspectives on personal development, as they appear in the previous literature (e.g. Rothery, 2000; Johns, 1996).

Such a difference might be understood as a natural reflection of the more complex and sophisticated viewpoint of an experienced practitioner/trainer, compared with trainees who are at the beginning of their careers. It might also be understood as a reflection of the trainer's broader emphasis on producing effective professionals, compared with trainees, who may be more preoccupied with the minutiae of their own developmental processes and less immediately aware of the interface between their personal and professional functioning. In fact, this proposition would be consistent with the findings of Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) investigation of the counsellor development. These



researchers found that, at the beginning of their training, trainees tend not to perceive a distinction between the personal and professional realms and to operate therapeutically from a 'lay' or common sense-based position. More experienced practitioners however, were found to be more finely aware of the subtle intertwining of the personal and professional selves in their clinical work.

#### **5. 6. 6 Differences between the present definition of personal development and definitions in past literature**

In terms of overall content, it can be concluded that there is a significant degree of common ground between the personal development definitions that emerged from the present study and those articulated in previous literature. However, although the definitions generated in the present study collectively cover similar conceptual ground as the curricula of Johns (1996), Connor (1995) and Mearns (1997), individually the definitions of the present research were not characterised by the same degree of clarity and structure. In addition, the apparent conflation of the concepts of personal development and personal growth within the definitions of the present study also suggests a less advanced level of conceptual sophistication than previous writers have suggested is both possible and necessary (Irving & Williams, 1999). Indeed, the reported tendency to feel that personal development was *difficult to define* may also suggest a lack of conceptual forethought, or a view of personal development that is more akin to personal growth (Irving & Williams, 1999).

#### **5. 6. 7 The importance of personal development for counselling psychologists**

There was a strong consensus within the present sample that personal development is crucial for counselling psychologists. This clearly matches the importance attached to it by the discipline as a whole (BPS, 2001). Furthermore, the broad agreement that personal development is equally relevant for clinicians in all theoretical orientations, due to the basic importance of the therapeutic relationship and therapist's use of self, is also consistent with counselling psychology's integrative/humanistic philosophy.

Participants were also largely in favour of a personal therapy training requirement, which clearly demonstrates conviction in the professional regulations of the discipline, and is consistent with findings from a previous study of counselling psychologists', which found that 88% of participants were in favour of obligatory personal therapy (Williams, 1999). The emergent view that one does not need to have a psychological problem in order to benefit from personal therapy, and that it is possible to make constructive use of 'negative' experiences of personal therapy also seem significant. Indeed, in the above mentioned study it was found that the majority (69%) of counselling psychologists who reported having had a negative experience in personal therapy were still in favour of its requirement (Williams, 1999). This may suggest that some counselling psychologists are able to view negative experiences of personal therapy as necessary or constructive experiences. In addition, the present finding that it is possible for a negative or resentful attitude towards the personal therapy requirement to develop into a more positive view, by going through the experience itself, also corroborates earlier findings by Rothery (1992), as well as the arguments put forward by Legg (1999) and Dryden *et al* (1995) that trainees cannot always know that they will not gain anything from personal therapy.

The reciprocal nature of the relationship between personal and professional development that was commonly described in the present study also corroborates views put forward in previous discussions about their inextricability and the complex nature of their inter-relationship (e.g. Wilkins, 1997). That so many 'professional' experiences were reported as impacting significantly on trainees' personal development, for example clinical work, supervision, theoretical learning, is also consistent with the findings of Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) study of counsellor development. This study also found evidence for a complex reciprocal relationship between personal and professional development that continues over the counsellor's career span. Participants also reported the significance of several 'professional' experiences on their personal development, particularly the impact of clinical work. Skovholt & Ronnestad found that counsellors regarded their clients as their 'primary teachers' (1996; 118). However, the fundamental importance of counselling skills workshops and written work to personal development that emerged in the present study has not been previously highlighted. The present study also highlighted the broader relationship that exists between the personal development of individual practitioners and the professional development of the



discipline as a whole – another interesting suggestion that has not been made explicitly in prior literature.

1. How satisfied are those involved in counselling psychology with the way that personal development is defined, facilitated and assessed in training, and with the way that trainees are selected? *AND*
2. What are their dissatisfactions and how do they think these could be addressed?

Overall, both trainers and trainees in the present study seemed somewhat dissatisfied with the way that personal development is defined, facilitated and assessed in training, and with the way that trainees are selected. Dissatisfactions centred around issues concerning the lack of clarity regarding the definition of personal development and personal therapy, the separateness, lack of discussion and integration of personal development in training, and the inadequacy of current approaches to monitoring or assessing personal development during training, and at selection.

The articulation of a clearer consensual definition of personal development for counselling psychology training was regarded as an important first step towards addressing current inadequacies. Besides being an important professional responsibility, it was believed that clarity at the level of definition would have important benefits for the facilitation of personal development, through the articulation of clearer learning objectives for trainees, and for the assessment of personal development, by providing a firmer basis for evaluation criteria. The introduction of discussion forums and a more rigorous tutorial system were also suggested as possible ways to improve the degree of integration between the personal and professional dimensions of training. Increased integration was also identified as something that would enable closer monitoring of personal development, and ensure that trainees are engaging effectively in the process. Trainees also expressed a desire for more experiential and counselling skills work. The lack of personal development discussion, integration, experiential work and group cohesion was partly attributed to the academic context in which the training takes place.



### 5. 6. 8 Personal development is not clearly defined

The view expressed in the present study that personal development is not clearly defined, either in training ("tacit agreements") or in the literature ("I haven't found it defined in any books") clearly supports the criticisms made by Williams & Irving's (1999) about the area, which were identified as an important impetus for the present research. Furthermore, the reasons that emerged in support of a clearer definition also tally with those that have been identified in the literature; for instance, the professional and ethical requirement to define something that has been made a core training requirement (Irving & Williams' 1999); and the practical benefits of establishing clear learning objectives and assessment criteria for personal development (Wheeler 2002; Proctor, 1991). The importance of consensus and consistency between different counselling psychology training programmes was also identified as an important reason for a clearer definition. Furthermore, the suggestion from the present findings that the function and scope of personal therapy was also poorly defined, and required increased regulation corresponds with Dryden's (1994) previously discussed argument for a more 'client-centred' approach to personal therapy, in which the focus is on personal issues that have a direct relevance to clinical work.

The idea from the present findings that it is appropriate to define personal development in terms of clinical function, rather than in terms of personal growth, and that such a definition would provide a more concrete and defensible basis for assessing personal development, also offers direct support for suggestions previously made by both Wheeler (2002) and Irving & Williams (1999). Moreover, the suggestion that personal development can only be defined at a broad clinical/professional level *up to a point*, and that it is still necessary to leave scope for the personalisation of definitions with individual trainees, also clearly corroborates the rationale put forward by Connor (1994) in her integrative model of counsellor training regarding the assessment of personal development on two levels.

The trainee perspective which emerged in the present study that defining personal development at a broad level is prescriptive and inappropriate to its idiosyncratic nature also echoes a theme found in a previous investigation of the views of counselling and

clinical psychology trainees by Rothery (1992). In this study, one trainee emphasised that the:

*"The nature of the work will obviously vary from person to person and I feel the depth of the work desired can only be decided by the student, and not dictated by either course staff or by therapist/counsellor".*

#### **5. 6. 9 Personal development is not discussed or integrated in training**

The general lack of discussion of the topic of personal development described in the present study could be viewed as paralleling the way in which the topic has not been specifically addressed in the broader professional literature as much as might be expected (Williams & Irving, 1996).

The observation in the present study that personal development seemed to be equated with personal therapy and that the topic of personal development appeared as a background issue is consistent with Dryden *et al*'s (1995) observations of some counselling training programmes, in which personal development/therapy seem to be viewed as an 'add on' to the course. Furthermore, the problem identified in the present study of trainees paying lip service to personal development also chimes with concerns raised previously in the literature. For instance, Dryden *et al* (1995) have suggested that trainees tend not to engage adequately in personal development work when they are "unstimulated and unsupported by a good training context".

In addition, some of the explanations for trainee non-engagement offered in the present study also find some support in previous literature. For example, the suggestion that prior experience of personal therapy can increase openness to self-exploration and engagement in personal development in training has also been made by Dryden *et al* (1995) and McLeod (1994). The suggestion that non-engagement in personal therapy might be attributable to over-attending to process issues is also an issue that Legg (1999) has highlighted as something that trainees must monitor in themselves if they are to fully benefit from the experience.

The question of course responsibility vs. trainee responsibility that emerged in relation to the problem of trainee non-engagement also appears to be an important one within the context of the present study. In attempting to resolve the problem of non-engagement it could be important for courses to consider how much of the problem 'belongs' to the trainee and how much 'belongs' to the course. Proctor (1991; 61-63) has emphasised the importance of clear 'working agreements' between courses and trainees from the start of training. She argues that it is essential that trainers provide answers to questions about what trainees are expected to learn, what resources are available to them and who is responsible for the different ingredients in learning opportunities. However, it seems that this kind of clarity and discussion regarding the issue of personal development in training was felt to be lacking for participants in the present study.

The view from trainees in the present study that they would have appreciated more opportunities to discuss personal development issues, such as personal development, can be compared with findings from Williams' (1999) previously mentioned study of counselling psychologists attitudes towards personal therapy. This research found that, of those participants (22%) who had had a forum on their course to explore the aims of personal therapy, 70% reported finding it useful, while 49% of those participants who had not had a forum on their course reported that they would liked to have had one.

The suggestion in the present findings, that the academic basis of counselling psychology training may be partly responsible for the lack of discussion and integration of the topic, and the lack of experiential work and group cohesion, also seems to support Scalon & Baillie's (1994) theory of the an academic 'down hierarchy'. This theory posits that a subordination of experiential approaches to learning to more traditional didactic approaches is a characteristic of counselling trainings that take place within institutes of higher education.

Furthermore, the fact that, within the present study, trainers as well as trainees were found to express dissatisfaction with the way that personal development was currently addressed seems particularly significant. Indeed, trainers seemed more dissatisfied than trainees concerning the adequacy of current methods for assessing personal development and selecting trainees. In addition, the fact that both trainers and trainees appeared critical of current training methods, supports Scalon & Baillie's (1994)



observation that trainers may be just as dissatisfied as their trainees with current imbalances between experiential and academic aspects of their courses.

#### **5. 6. 10 Personal development is not adequately assessed in training**

The view expressed in the present findings, that because personal development is a core training requirement it must be assessed, supports Irving & Williams' (1999; 523) argument that "If certain personal attributes are deemed fundamental to competent and safe practice, there has to be in place some adequate way of assessing this component of training." Furthermore, the general feeling that assessing something as subjective and qualitative as personal development is a highly complex task clearly mirrors prior discourses in the literature on this issue (e.g. Wheeler, 2002; Berry & Woolfe, 1997; Connor, 1994).

In the present study, the suggestion that a clearer definition of personal development is a pre-requisite for a more systematic and effective approach to assessment corresponds with Wheeler's (2002) and Connor's (1994) view that assessment must be founded on clearly expressed learning objectives and performance criteria. However, it also emerged from the present study that trainers may adopt a negative/reactive approach, where formally assessing personal development only becomes necessary if it becomes clear that a particular trainee is exhibiting significant personal difficulties. This is not an approach to assessing personal development that has been previously reported. It maybe that such an approach reflects a difficulty in knowing how personal development might be assessed in a more proactive way.

The suggested use of written work that requires the trainee to demonstrate a reflective capacity (e.g. case studies and process reports) as a way to evidence and assess personal development provided a significant new insight. Although the use of written work in reflective journals to evidence and assess personal development has been suggested in the past (Wheeler, 2002; Connor, 1994), the idea of conceptualising and using case studies as a way to formally grade personal development (as well as other clinical competencies) has not been previously reported. Interestingly, although journals were mentioned as playing an influential role in the facilitation of personal development,

their use as an assessment tool was not mentioned at all in the present study, despite the fact that the BPS suggests that it can be used for this purpose.

The dilemma identified in the present study concerning how to deal with trainees who experience serious difficulties in personal development, but who are not able to recognise this, is also highlighted in previous literature (e.g. Mearns, 1997). In the present study, the view was put forward that unless clear objective criteria are in place which provide grounds for failing a personally unsuitable or unready trainee, trainers have no choice but to pass them on the basis that they have met all of the formal training criteria. The difficulty of establishing an objective basis for challenging trainees in these kinds of circumstances using concrete evidence is also present in Wheeler's (2002) discussion of personal development assessment issues. In addition, research by Scanlon & Baillie (1994; 420) has previously suggested that current assessment procedures are such that it is possible for "clinically dodgy" trainees to get through the system.

A tension between academic and counselling values was particularly evident in the present study in relation to the issue of assessing personal development. This tension has been well identified in the past literature (e.g. Berry & Woolfe, 1997; Connor, 1994), and the present findings provide some tangible illustrations of how it can manifest. Assessment was described as a 'scary word' that was not regarded as consistent with the person-centred values to which counsellors and counsellor trainers might aspire. The tension observed in the present study between trainers' duty of care to both clients and trainees also supports Purton's (1991) previous comments about the dual responsibilities of trainers.

In terms of possible differences within the present sample, concerns about assessment, and the contravening of basic counselling values, seemed to be particularly strong in trainees and there appeared to be some anxiety about the notion that it might be possible to 'fail' the personal development component of the training. This could be understood in relation to Kowszun's (2002) reference to the 'shadow of assessment', which can arouse powerful fears about being considered 'good enough' by others. In addition, Skovholt & Ronnestad (1996) have highlighted that trainees may sometimes feel hostile towards their trainers, who are perceived as powerful gatekeepers.

Furthermore, trainers generally appeared somewhat less concerned about making judgements about the personal development of trainees and more interested in the idea of developing concrete and objective ways to do so. This may be understood as a reflection of their particular ethical responsibilities as trainers. The ethical and practical advantages of developing more systematic approaches to assessing personal development reported in the present study is also consistent with the previously reported views and concerns of other counsellor trainers when discussing this dilemmatic training issue (e.g. Walker, 2002; Wheeler, 2002; Kowszun, 2002; Irving & Williams, 1999; Berry & Woolfe, 1997; Williams & Irving, 1996; Connor, 1994).

Furthermore, contrasts also emerged between the views that 1) a more formal and concrete approach would be desirable, and 2) it is more important to monitor and support trainees' personal development than it is to assess it in some formal way. This divergence might also be understood in terms of an academic-counselling values tension. The emphasis on ongoing facilitative feedback rather than external evaluation seems consistent with a person-centred perspective which would emphasise a belief in the capacity of the trainee to develop satisfactorily given the right environmental conditions. This is an assumption that Williams & Irving (1996) have suggested is commonplace in counselling training but which may also be unrealistic and unhelpful. Similarly, the view expressed that a course has failed to meet its responsibilities if it has to 'fail' a trainee for personal development reasons seems to reflect the kind of person-centred position expressed by Dryden *et al* (1995), which emphasises the sharing of power and responsibility for the various aspects of the training equally between course and trainee.

The potential role of the personal tutor in monitoring, assessing and facilitating personal development that was described in the present findings corresponds with the benefits that Johns (1996) has previously highlighted. Johns has suggested that the basic function of personal tutors is to help trainees link their personal and professional learning, to reflect on the learning process and to help trainees in critically reviewing their progress and setting new learning goals and objectives. Johns (1996) also observes that the use of tutorials has traditionally been associated with an academic learning environment. It is a mechanism by which a university is able to have a greater degree of personal contact with individual students. It therefore seems consistent with



counselling psychology training's academic context that more effective use of tutorials were regarded in the present study as a key way to improve current approaches to facilitating, monitoring and assessing trainees' personal development.

#### 5. 6. 11 Personal development is not adequately assessed at selection

The view that emerged from the present study, that it is important at selection to assess an applicant's "*capacity for personal development*" (3.56), clearly supports Mearns' (1997) argument that effective trainee selection represents an important first step in achieving the personal development dimension in counsellor training.

The importance of effective selection was argued in the present study in a number of ways, which also corroborate past literature. For instance, emotional stability for training can be compared with Mearns (1997) concept of personal 'readiness' for training. The responsibility that the course was felt to have in the present study for protecting candidates from experiencing serious problems later in the training mirrors Aveline's (1996) argument that courses are ultimately responsible for ensuring that applicant's do not take on training for which they are unready. Furthermore, the expressed view that courses have an ethical responsibility to protect clients corresponds with Guy's (1987) conceptualisation of course selectors as 'gate keepers' for their profession.

The emergent view that, despite its importance, assessing an applicant's personal suitability or readiness for training was very difficult to do and inevitably a subjective task, also reflects views expressed in the previous literature (e.g. Dryden *et al*, 1995; McLeod, 1994; Guy, 1987). Similarly, the expressed importance of introducing elements of objectivity into the selection process, such as involving more than one selector and working to clear consensual selection criteria, also supports previously made recommendations (e.g. Dryden *et al*, 1995; McLeod, 1994; Guy, 1987).

The concern that was expressed in the present study about using selection criteria in a prescriptive, rigid "*shopping list*" (1.51) way, is consistent with a warning that Mearns (1997) has issued to counsellor trainers about the dangers of working too closely to a profile of the ideal counsellor during selection. He has also suggested that the

counselling professions need to be wary of developing admissions procedures that lead to too much homogeneity within counsellor training courses and the profession. Like participants in the present sample, he argues that personal diversity is essential for professional vitality and that homogeneity in terms of a profile of ideal counsellor personal qualities carries with it the danger of seriously limiting the profession's capacity to evolve and adapt to its social context.

The idea that selectors may take a negative/reactive approach to trainee selection, where they focus more on identifying negative or undesirable personal qualities than on positive desirable attributes, appears to be a new insight and not an approach that has been explicitly reported in the literature. A negative/reactive approach may reflect a difficulty for selectors in knowing how to reliably elicit or assess desirable traits more proactively.

The range of selection methods mentioned in the present study also matches those identified in the previous literature as having particular usefulness in assessing the personal suitability of applicants. The view of personal statements as providing a useful reflective exercise clearly corresponds with Dryden *et al*'s (1995) suggestion that, if well designed, the experience of writing such a statement can encourage deep self-reflection in the trainee. The use of interviews as an opportunity for deeper exploration and direct questioning of applicants suggested in the present study also corresponds with Dryden *et al*'s (1995) recommendations for this method. Furthermore, the idea which emerged from the present study that interviewers should encourage interviewees to seriously reflect on their decision to train is consistent with Dryden *et al*'s (1995) argument that the selection procedure should be a two-way process in which applicants, as well as selectors, actively evaluate personal readiness for training. The description of the group interview situation as an opportunity to observe how applicants inter-relate with others and to bring underlying pathology to the fore also echoes the potential functions of this selection method described by Connor (1994) in her integrative model of counsellor training, and by Purton (1991) in her survey of counsellor training courses.

Furthermore, the questions that were raised in the present study about the actual incisiveness of selection methods such as interviews (e.g. "How well do you really know someone at interview") also echo concerns raised in the previous literature about their

limitations when assessing deeper personal qualities (Dryden *et al*, 1995). Furthermore, despite the emphasis placed on interviewing as a key opportunity for assessing personal suitability, the perspective also emerged from the present study that interviews are not used as effectively as they might. However, it was also suggested that, to some extent, the difficulty of getting an accurate personal picture of a candidate may be attributable to applicants' 'pulling the wool' over selectors eyes. In line with their previously discussed recommendations, Dryden *et al* (1995) might suggest that this is the kind of problem that can be attenuated by a well organised two-way selection procedure, which powerfully models the course's belief in the importance of transparency and openness in interactions between trainers and trainees. However, the recognition amongst the present sample, that selection 'errors' do occur and that these are difficult to know how to deal with, also mirrors Dryden *et al*'s (1995) own reported difficulty in spotting certain kinds of unsuitable trainees at the selection stage.

The view expressed in the present study that current approaches to selection could be significantly improved supports suggestions made in the literature about the scope for developing this aspect of training and for further research in this area (e.g. McLeod, 1993). However, the belief was also expressed that the current high quality of applicants may mean that a more rigorous approach to selection is not necessary, especially in view of the increased time and resources that this might require. Again, this is a novel insight, which has not emerged from prior discourses on this topic. Moreover, it may be that such a perspective offers some explanation for the limited amount of attention that has been hitherto dedicated to the issue of trainee selection in the professional literature, as noted by McLeod (1994).

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### 5.7. Overall summary of grounded theory findings

- Themes and categories that related to how trainers and trainees viewed and defined personal development were generated. Overall, definitions reflected a theoretically integrative perspective. Personal development emerged as a multifaceted concept consisting of 12 specific attributes and 6 general characteristics. A diversity of personal and professional experiences was reported as affecting personal development. The components of the emergent definition were used to propose a dynamic model of the process of trainee personal development. Trainers appeared to define personal development in a way that emphasised its clinical function, while trainees appeared to emphasise its individually unique personal growth function.
- Personal development was viewed as being inextricable from professional development, as crucial for counselling psychologists, and as sharing an ongoing reciprocal relationship with professional development. The importance of personal development and personal therapy was widely agreed on, and a number of ways in which personal and professional development affected one other was identified. Trainees appeared to place particular emphasis on the development of professional competence as a personal development goal.
- Personal development was felt to be inadequately addressed in training. Inadequacies were identified in relation to the definition, discussion, integration, monitoring and assessment of personal development, and in relation to the selection of trainees. To some extent, these seemed to be a by-product of the academic model on which counselling psychology training is based. Trainers and trainees both expressed dissatisfactions in relation to these areas. Trainers seemed particularly concerned that more systematic approaches to assessing personal development during training and at selection should be developed. Trainees appeared more concerned about the implications of 'failing' personal development, and the idea of defining personal development at a nomothetic, as opposed to idiographic, level.
- A number of tensions stemming from the interface of personal and professional development in the context of training were identified. These related to four key

areas: the definition, facilitation and assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees. The tensions represented contrasts of opinion, and philosophical and practical dilemmas about how to appropriately and effectively address personal development issues within the training context. These tensions emerged as significant properties of the topic itself.

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### **5.8 Using the grounded theory findings as a basis for further investigation**

The grounded theory analysis generated a number of themes and categories to represent and interpret the views and experiences of participating trainers and trainees regarding key questions on the topic of personal development in counselling psychology training. The analysis also produced some insights into how views in this area may differ, particularly between trainers and trainees.

By taking an in-depth approach to the study of a small group of participants, the present study has provided rich and detailed data relating to the key research questions. Such an in-depth level of analysis has enabled the generation of tentative theoretical framework for conceptualising the key issues of the research.

However, the primary aim of a grounded theory study is to generate an accurate representation of meanings expressed within the immediate participant sample and setting. As such, a grounded theory analysis is not immediately concerned with making assertions about the extent to which the representations generated would be transferable to a wider setting. In this sense, although a grounded theory analysis can provide detailed theoretical insights, by itself it provides a limited basis for drawing broader conclusions about the population to which the investigated sample belongs.

However, drawing broader conclusions was a key aim of the present research. So to enable this, the grounded theory analysis was tested in relation to a larger sample using

## ***STUDY 1, CHAPTER 5: GROUNDED THEORY FINDINGS***

a quantitative analysis. The basic aim of the study that follows was to find out to what extent key themes and categories developed within the context of the present study would remain applicable to a larger sample of counselling psychology trainers and trainees. It also aimed to establish whether the differences in views and perspectives that were tentatively observed in the present study would be replicated and statistically supported.

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## **STUDY 2:**

# **A QUANTITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF TRAINERS' AND TRAINEES' VIEWS & EXPERIENCES OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING**



# CHAPTER 6





# RESEARCH PROCEDURES

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## 6.1 Overview: Design & Aims

The following study employed a specially designed questionnaire to record the views and experiences of counselling psychology trainers and trainees in relation to a selection of themes and categories generated from prior qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews. A cross-sectional survey design (Oppenheim, 1992) was used to access the views and experiences of trainers and trainees at 4 accredited centres for counselling psychology training in the UK.

By using a larger sample of informants, the study aimed to provide a stronger basis for evaluating the findings of the grounded theory analysis and for responding to the key questions of the research. Data were subjected to quantitative analysis. This consisted primarily of descriptive statistical analyses of participants' responses, to facilitate comparison with findings from the qualitative study. A selection of predictions about differences between the responses of trainers and trainees, based on tentative observations from the qualitative analysis, were also tested by inferential statistical analysis.

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## 6.2 Questionnaire development

A questionnaire was developed which produced data based on themes and categories from Study 1, but which could be analysed using quantitative methods. This involved transforming findings from the grounded theory analysis into a quantifiable questionnaire format. The essential aim was to create a survey instrument that would present participants with a selection of themes, categories and ideas from the grounded theory analysis in a format that would enable them to indicate the extent to which they felt that these were valid in relation to their own views and experiences. In this way, the responses of survey participants would provide a basis for testing the wider applicability of the grounded theory analysis.

### 6.2.1 The generation of attitude statements

It was decided that the most effective way to do this would be to translate each selected theme or category into a clearly expressed 'attitude statement' (Proctor, 1995), in relation to which participants could express their 'agreement' or 'disagreement' using a 5-point rating scale (e.g. 1 = 'strongly disagree', 2 = 'disagree', 3 = 'uncertain/don't know', 4 = 'agree', 5 = 'strongly agree')<sup>1</sup>.

Themes and categories from the grounded theory analysis provided the conceptual resource for the production of attitude statements. This approach followed from Hammersley's (1996; 167) recommendation that qualitative interviews may be used to generate questionnaire items that are 'intelligible to the intended audience'. The principle method employed was to convert key features of themes and categories into simple phrases. For example, in the grounded theory analysis, the category 'Difficult to define' (a 'General Characteristic' of Theme 1: 'Multifaceted') represented the difficulty that interviewees had expressed when trying to define personal development. This category

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<sup>1</sup> Given that complexity and uncertainty were regarded as important characteristics of the research topic, a decision was made to provide respondents with a middle 'uncertain/don't know' response option, rather than 'force' agreement or disagreement (Rust & Golombok, 1989). A 5-point rating scale was therefore thought to provide a sufficient number of options for respondents to feel able to express themselves adequately.



was translated into the simple attitude statement: *'I find personal development a difficult thing to define'*.<sup>2</sup>

Initially, a large pool of possible attitude statements was generated. In the context of research supervision, potential items were discussed and phrasings improved so as to be clearer and less ambiguous in meaning (Proctor, 1995). The pool was gradually reduced to a smaller more economical set of items. An attitude statements was typically disregarded when it was considered to be less clear or intelligible than another similar item relating to the same theme/category.

In line with standard questionnaire design recommendations (Oppenheim 1992; Rust & Golombok, 1989), the phrasing of several attitude statements was purposely reversed to counter response bias. For example, in relation to the category 'Not discussed or integrated' (within Theme 3: Not adequately addressed in training'), the view emerged that personal development was *not* integrated into the main body of the course. However, the attitude statement representing this category was phrased in the opposite direction: *"Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of their training"*. This procedure is a recognised technique that produces a more balanced and varied set of questionnaire items, which helps to counteract the tendency for participants to respond in a homogeneous way if presented with a set of either uniformly positively or negatively phrased items. The procedure, therefore, also serves to improve the confirmatory power of the items. For some attitude statements, a decision was also made to attach a supplementary question. This supplementary question asked respondents to provide a brief written explanation, in a small space provided, depending on whether or not they had tended to agree or disagree with the preceding attitude statement.

To give the questionnaire a clear structure, attitude statements were grouped under one of four subject headings: 1) the definition of personal development, 2) the facilitation of personal development, 3) the assessment of personal development and 4) the selection of trainees. These were the same four headings that had provided the guiding

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<sup>2</sup> A number of items were also generated that related to more contextual features of the interview data. These contextual items were based on categories that emerged in the early stages of the qualitative analysis, but which later came to be regarded as peripheral to the central emerging theory. Although they were not included in the grounded theory analysis, it was believed that their incorporation into the survey would provide useful additional data for subsequent research.

framework for the interviews in Study 1. At the beginning of each heading, a brief explanation was provided, along with instructions about how to respond to the items. Within each of the 4 sections, an attempt was made to order items in a sequence that would guide the respondent clearly and logically through the various issues covered. The sequencing of items was developed and refined within the context of supervision. To reflect the balance of importance attributed to each subject area in the interviews, each of the 4 sections was designed to contain a balanced number of items.

### 6. 2. 2 Open-ended questionnaire items

The majority of questionnaire items were based on attitude statements and a rating scale response format. However, a small number of items were devised which used a direct question and an open-ended response format. Most notably, this applied to the first item on the questionnaire: *'What is personal development?* (also asked at the beginning of each interview in Study 1), where survey participants were invited to write their response in an open space provided. An open-ended response format for this question was selected because it was regarded as the most equitable and effective way for survey respondents to generate definitions that could be compared with the definitions produced by interviewees in Study 1 in response to this same question.

### 6. 2. 3 Concluding questions

Following the 4 main sections of the questionnaire, a general concluding section was incorporated, which followed a similar format to the conclusion of each interview. This section included open-ended questions, which invited respondents to comment on any personal development/training issues, which they felt particularly warranted further attention. Because interviewees in Study 1 had previously indicated that the experience of being interviewed had stimulated their own thinking on the topic, survey respondents were asked to comment on the potential impact of completing the questionnaire on their views. They were also asked to provide feedback on the questionnaire/topic more

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generally. Furthermore, because interviewees had commented on the particular need for more research on the topic of personal development, survey respondents were also asked to indicate their view regarding the importance of further research on personal development, via a 5 -point rating scale (from 'unimportant' to 'very important').

#### **6. 2. 4 Personal and professional information**

At the end of the questionnaire, a section containing items relating to respondents' personal and professional background was incorporated. This included questions about participants' gender, age, professional status, training history and preferred theoretical orientation. For each of these questions, respondents were provided with a range of options and tick boxes to complete. Where necessary, items on this section were tailored to suit trainers or trainees.

#### **6. 2. 5 Introductory sheet**

On the front of the questionnaire an introductory page was added. This provided an introduction to the aims of the study; an overview of the questionnaire and its various sections; and general guidance on completing the questionnaire. A reminder was included to answer all questions, and in their presented order.

In order to facilitate honesty and freedom from the effects of any perceived social desirability (Oppenheim, 1992) when answering the questions, the introductory sheet also reminded respondents that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, just their own particular views and experiences. It also included a reminder that responses would be treated in the strictest confidence. The wording of aspects of the introductory sheet was also tailored to suit trainers or trainees.



### 6. 2. 6 Trainer and trainee questionnaires

Given the alterations made to wording in certain sections of the questionnaire (e.g. personal and professional information, the introductory sheet and some questionnaire items) for trainers and trainees, two separate versions of the questionnaire were prepared: one adapted for trainees and one adapted for trainers.

### 6. 2. 7 Piloting the questionnaire

The questionnaire was piloted with 1 trainer (individually) and 6 trainees (in a group) to receive feedback on issues relating to clarity and length. Constructive comments were made by participants about possible improvements to the phrasing of a number of items in order to make them more comprehensible or unambiguous. Participants reported that the attitude statement and rating scale system worked well. Some respondents also expressed a view that the first questionnaire item: *'What is personal development?'* seemed a little 'daunting' as an opening question, though several others felt that answering this question first felt like an essential starting point for responding to the rest of the questionnaire. One participant suggested that this question might be 'softened' by including a brief preamble that encouraged respondents to perceive it as a 'warm up' question and the space provided as an opportunity to explore, brainstorm and jot down ideas rather than to provide a definitive answer. Changes were subsequently made to the questionnaire in accordance with these suggestions.

Constructive comments were also made about the overall appearance and presentation of the questionnaire. It was suggested that a larger and more informal typeface, and the use of coloured rather than white paper would make the questionnaire more pleasant to complete. A suggestion was also made to incorporate running headings at the top of every page of the questionnaire to help respondents keep track of where they were while completing it. These alterations were also subsequently incorporated into the questionnaire.

It was noted that the questionnaire was reasonably time consuming, taking between 30 and 40 minutes to complete. In the context of research supervision, a decision was

made that the length of the questionnaire could be reasonably reduced without sacrificing key items, so that it should take no longer than 30 minutes to complete. Consequently, 11 of the 'contextual items' (see p. 243) were removed from the questionnaire<sup>3</sup>.

The final versions of the trainer and trainee questionnaires are included in Appendix F.

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### 6.3 Recruitment procedure

As the aim of the present study was to sample the views and experiences of a range of counselling psychology trainers and trainees, a decision was made to recruit from four UK institutes currently running complete BPS accredited training programmes in counselling psychology. A stratified sampling frame (Procter, 1995) was used to identify the necessary sample sub-groups for the whole population. These comprised both visiting and full-time training staff, and part-time and full-time trainees engaged at each stage of the training programme, that is in Years 1, 2 or 3 (or their part-time equivalents).

Authorisation to approach trainers and trainees at the 4 relevant institutions was sought either in person or by letter to Course Directors (see Appendix G). Letters were followed up with telephone contact. Each of the 4 institutions agreed to participate in the survey and granted permission to approach their trainers and trainees. Given its recognised benefits in enhancing participation/response rates (Oppenheim, 1992), it was regarded as desirable to meet potential participants personally to introduce the research and distribute questionnaires. Visits were arranged to three of the four participating institutions, during which it was possible to address and distribute questionnaires to whole cohorts of counselling psychology trainees and some trainers. Questionnaires and covering letters (see Appendix H) were also left in the pigeon holes of staff and students who it had not been possible to meet during the visits. For their return, every

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<sup>3</sup> From a reflective standpoint, piloting the questionnaire proved a valuable research procedure, which resulted in a number of significant alterations to the style and content of the questionnaire. Furthermore, through the piloting process I became more aware of the practical challenges involved in translating conceptually rich qualitative themes and categories, about a particularly complex topic, into short and readily comprehensible attitude statements.

questionnaire was accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed A4 envelope. The fourth participating institution requested copies of the questionnaires to be sent by post, which were then distributed to the pigeon holes of every trainer and trainee engaged on their counselling psychology programme.

As a recommended technique for boosting questionnaire response rates (Oppenheim, 1992), reminder/thankyou notices were placed in the trainee and staff common rooms and pigeon holes at the four participating institutions 2 weeks after the questionnaires had been distributed.

A total of 222 questionnaires were distributed to trainers and trainees across the 4 participating institutions. Based on information provided by each institution, it was calculated that a total of 269 trainers and trainees were currently involved in counselling psychology training at the 4 institutions. This meant that 82.5% of the target population had received a questionnaire.

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## **6.4 Sample characteristics**

### **6.4.1 Response rate**

A total of 88 questionnaires were returned. This amounted to an overall response rate of 40%, which was slightly higher than the response rate (34%) achieved in a survey of the membership of the BPS Division of Counselling Psychology (Bor & Achilleoudes, 1999). In keeping with variations in programme size, the numbers of questionnaires returned by each of the 4 participating institutions were not equal.



### 6. 4. 2 Age & gender

The average age of participants was 38.5 years and 81% were female. Table 4 provides a breakdown of the age and gender distributions for the whole sample and for trainers and trainees separately.

Group	Age*		Gender**	
	<i>mean age</i>	<i>age range</i>	<i>male (n)</i>	<i>female (n)</i>
Whole sample	38. 5	22 - 59	17% (15)	81% (71)
Trainers	41. 3	32 - 58	37% (7)	63% (12)
Trainees	37. 8%	22 - 59	11.6% (8)	86% (59)

\* 4 missing cases

\*\* 2 missing cases

**Table 4. Age means and ranges (in years) and gender (male/female) distributions, for whole sample, trainers and trainees**

### 6. 4. 3 Trainer and trainee data

Questionnaires were received from 19 trainers (22% of the sample) and 69 trainees (78% of the sample). The ratio between trainers and trainees within the sample (2 : 8 respectively) was reasonably representative of the ratio between the numbers of questionnaires distributed to these two groups (2 : 10).

Forty two per cent of trainers were full-time/core teaching staff and 58% were part-time/visiting staff. Fifty three per cent described themselves as chartered counselling psychologists, while the remainder were either on route to chartering as counselling psychologists, or accredited psychotherapists and counsellors, including specialists in group analysis and family/couples work. Table 5 below shows a breakdown of these trainer variables.



<b>Trainer status</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
core/full-time staff	8	42
visiting/part-time staff	11	58
<b>Professional status</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
chartered counselling psychologist	10	53
on route to chartering	3	16
psychotherapist or counsellor	3	16
family & couple psychotherapist	1	5
group analyst	1	5
chartered academic psychologist	1	5

**Table 5. Frequency and percentage distributions for selected trainer variables**

Of the 13 trainers who were fully or partially chartered counselling psychologists, 6 had trained via a 'BPS accredited course', 3 via the 'Grandparent Route', 3 via the 'Independent Route', and 1 via a combination of 'accredited course' and 'independent route'. There were slightly more part-time (52%) than full-time (48%) trainees. About half (51%) of the trainees were in their first year (or part-time equivalent) of training, with the remainder divided between 2nd and 3rd years. This spread approximates the ratio of questionnaires distributed between 1st, 2nd and 3rd year trainees. Table 6 shows a breakdown of trainee variables.

<b>Trainee status*</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Full-time	31	45
Part-time	36	52
<b>Stage of training**</b>	<b><i>n</i></b>	<b>%</b>
'beginner' (year 1 or P-T equivalent)	35	51
'intermediate' (year 2 or P-T equivalent)	19	28
'advanced' (year 3 or P-T equivalent)	14	20

\* 2 missing cases

\*\* 1 missing case

**Table 6. Frequency and percentage distributions for selected trainee variables**



#### 6. 4. 4 Theoretical orientation

'Integrative' was most commonly selected as participant's preferred theoretical orientation, followed 'Cognitive-behavioural'. This corresponded with the two most commonly cited orientations in Bor & Achilleoudes' (1999) previously mentioned survey. Furthermore the two surveys also corresponded in terms of the 9 most commonly cited orientations. Table 7 shows the distributions of the top 9 most commonly cited theoretical orientations for the present and past surveys.

Preferred Theoretical Orientation	<i>n</i> <i>present</i> <i>survey</i>	% <i>present</i> <i>survey</i>	% Bor & Achilleoudes (1999)
Integrative	34	39	38
Cognitive-Behavioural	19	22	21
Humanistic	15	17	12
Psychodynamic	14	16	18
Systemic	13	16	8
Person-Centred	11	13	14
Existential	7	8	6
Eclectic	2	2	11
Personal Construct Psychology	2	2	3

**Table 7. Frequency and percentage distributions for preferred theoretical orientation for present study and Bor & Achilleoudes' survey**

Others orientations cited included: 'Object Relations' 'Transpersonal' 'Cognitive' 'Group Analytic' 'Cognitive Analytic' 'Social Constructionist' 'Feminist' 'Gestalt' 'Solution Focused' 'Multicultural'. Three cases were missing.

Fifty six per cent of respondents cited one orientation, while a further 23% cited two, 10% cited three, and 7% cited four or more. That many respondents cited more than one



theoretical orientation is also consistent with Bor & Achilleoudes' (1999) survey findings. Data on participants' preferred orientations therefore reflected the theoretically integrative/pluralistic approach of counselling psychology.

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## 6.5 Questions and hypotheses of the study

As stated previously, the survey aimed to provide a basis for comparison with, and elaboration of, the findings of the qualitative study. As such, the key questions with which it was concerned were:

1. *How will survey participants respond to the themes and categories generated from the grounded theory analysis, as presented in the questionnaire format?*
2. *To what extent will participants' responses corroborate the themes and categories of the qualitative analysis?*
3. *How do the responses of survey participants add to an emerging understanding the themes and categories, and the wider research questions?*

Corroboration between the two studies would be based on direct comparisons between responses to items on the questionnaire (e.g. frequencies of 'agreement' or 'disagreement') and the themes and categories from the grounded theory analysis to which these items relate.

In addition to these questions, the survey also aimed to test a number of specific hypotheses (based on observations highlighted in the grounded theory analysis) about differences between the way trainers and trainees would respond to particular items on the questionnaire. These hypotheses can be stated as follows:

1. *The category 'clinical function' will emerge more frequently within the personal development definitions of trainers than those of trainees.*
2. *Trainees will agree more strongly than trainers that the aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee.*
3. *Trainees will agree more strongly than trainers that developing their professional competence is important to their sense of personal development.*
4. *Trainees will agree more strongly than trainers that it is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of the training.*
5. *Trainers will agree more strongly than trainees that the way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment.*
6. *Trainers will agree more strongly than trainees that more should be done to improve the way that the personal suitability/readiness of prospective trainees is assessed.*

The following Chapter describes and discusses the results of the quantitative analyses of the survey.

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# CHAPTER 7



# SURVEY FINDINGS

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## 7.1 Overview

Findings from the survey will be presented in two sections. Firstly, results from the *descriptive statistical analyses* will be described. This will mainly consist of the percentage distributions of participants' responses to key survey items<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, the results from the *inferential statistical analyses*, which were performed to test the specific hypotheses of the study, will be presented. The findings will then be discussed in relation to the questions and aims of this study and the prior literature.

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## 7.2 Descriptive Statistical Analyses

Results from the descriptive statistical analyses are presented using themes and categories from the Study 1 grounded theory analysis as headings. Under each heading, the analyses of survey items that relate to that particular theme or category will be presented. Results will be described using a combination of text and bar charts that display the percentage response distributions for key survey items in relation to the overall sample, as well as for trainers and trainees separately. Appendix J contains tables that detail the frequency counts for the overall sample, trainers and trainees in relation to each survey item.

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<sup>1</sup> As the survey included a number of contextual items (see Chapter 6, section 6.2.2), the descriptive statistics reported here are limited to those items that relate to the principle questions of the present research. The raw data for these items are available in Appendix I. A print out of raw data for the contextual items is available, on request, from the author.



7. 2. 1 MULTIFACETED, SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTES, GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS  
(Grounded theory theme 1)

ITEM 1: *'What is personal development?'*

The response format for this item was open-ended. Survey participants' responses therefore produced qualitative textual data, which was subjected to further grounded theory analysis (a selection of the raw data from responses to this question is available in Appendix K).

Analysis yielded a total of 25 categories. Nineteen of these were re-emergences of categories from the original grounded theory analysis of Study 1, and 6 were new categories that had not emerged previously. The 25 categories could also be classified in terms of 5 super-ordinate themes or categories from the earlier grounded theory analysis: *Specific attributes, General characteristics, Multifaceted, Reciprocal relationship with professional development, Personal and professional tensions*. Table 8 shows the 25 categories divided under these 4 headings. New categories are indicated with the label '*NEW*'.

WHAT IS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?		
Specific attributes (Theme 1)		General characteristics (Theme 1)
Self-awareness Unresolved Issues Strengths & Weaknesses Self-Reflection Active Learning Clinical Function Self-Acceptance Integration & Congruence Wellbeing & Stability Maturity & Maturation Fulfilling Potential Openness Resourcefulness <i>NEW</i> Empowerment & Liberation <i>NEW</i> Self-Confidence & Esteem <i>NEW</i> Self-Challenge <i>NEW</i> Spontaneity, Intuition & Creativity <i>NEW</i>		Individually Unique Broad & Holistic Cyclical Lifelong/Career long Perceivable in Retrospect <i>NEW</i>
Multifaceted (Theme 1)	Inextricable from professional development (Theme 2)	Personal and professional tensions: definition (Theme 4)
Multifaceted	Reciprocal Relationship with Professional Development	Trainers vs. Trainees

Table 8 What is personal development?: the 25 categories that emerged from survey participants' responses, classified in terms of 5 super-ordinate categories or themes

Definitions of the 19 re-emergent categories can be found in Chapter 5. The 6 new categories were defined as follows<sup>2</sup>.

### ***Resourcefulness***

Personal development was defined as involving the development of an individual's personal resourcefulness. This category was related to the 'Active Learning' category. However, it was distinct in its emphasis on the enhancement of the trainee's problem solving capacities and ability to *"self regulate"* in terms of their own needs and well-being. For one respondent this was described as *"increasing one's capacity to tolerate, manage and cope with difficulties and to respond to challenges"*.

### ***Empowerment & Liberation***

Personal development was described as a process that empowers the individual and liberates them *"from past conditioning and present blocks to change"* so that they can exercise greater freedom *"to change and make choices"*. This category was related to the 'Unresolved Issues' category. However, it was distinct in its emphasis on the outcomes, rather than the process, of resolving one's issues, and on the notion of becoming a more self-determining person through one's own efforts.

### ***Self-confidence & Self-Esteem***

Personal development was defined as *"increasing self-confidence and self-esteem"*. These personal capacities were not explicitly represented within the pre-existing set of definitional categories, though seem related to 'Self-acceptance' and 'Empowerment & Liberation'. For some respondents, increased confidence related to an improved ability to express and assert oneself.

### ***Self-challenge***

Personal development was characterised as a process that requires the individual to challenge themselves to go through difficult experiences and to explore painful issues. This idea had been a feature of the Study 1 category 'Unresolved Issues'. However, it in the survey it emerged in a stronger, more defined way from participants' definitions that

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<sup>2</sup> As an additional check to my analysis, a selection of the 25 categories were discussed with an 'expert' third party in an separate 'respondent validation' procedure (see Chapter 4, section 4. 7. 4). The third party was a trainer who had participated as an interviewee in Study 1, and was therefore already familiar with the research. All categorisations were corroborated by this process and no alterations to the analysis were required.



warranted its own separate category. This was described as *“going beyond your comfort zones”, “a stretching activity - like growing pains”* and *“not always easy”*.

### ***Spontaneity, Intuition & Creativity***

Some respondents described personal development as a process that leads the individual to be *“more spontaneous”* and *“more creative”* in their way of being and living. Others referred to it as a process of becoming more *“self-trusting”* and *“intuitive”*.

### ***Perceivable in retrospect***

It was suggested that *“Personal development is a process that is more perceptible in retrospect”* and that it is always happening as *“a continual unconscious process”*. This view of personal development had not previously been expressed in Study 1. It was classified as a General Characteristic, rather than as a Specific Attribute.

### ***Frequencies***

Given the quantitative focus of the present study, survey participants' responses were also analysed in terms of the frequency with which each grounded theory category emerged. Self-awareness (75%), Self-reflection (31%) and Clinical Function (31%) were the most frequently cited categories, for both trainers and trainees. Table 9 shows the rank order and frequencies for all 25 categories, broken down in terms of the whole sample, trainers and trainees. Twelve participants did not provide a response to this question.

## STUDY 2, CHAPTER 7: SURVEY FINIDNGS

CATEGORY	Overall n (%) <i>n = 76 12 missing</i>	R A N K	Trainers n (%) <i>n = 16 3 missing</i>	R A N K	Trainees n (%) <i>n = 60 9 missing</i>	R A N K
Self-awareness	58 (75%)	1.	14 (82%)	1.	44 (73%)	1.
Self-Reflection	24 (31%)	2.	8 (47%)	2.	16 (26%)	2.
Clinical Function	24 (31%)	-	8 (47%)	-	16 (26%)	-
Reciprocal Relationship with Professional Development	15 (20%)	3.	5 (29%)	3.	10 (16%)	5.
Fulfilling Potential	15 (20%)	-	1 (6%)	7.	14 (23%)	3.
Life & Career long	14 (18%)	4.	4 (24%)	4.	10 (16%)	5.
Strengths & Weaknesses	13 (17%)	5.	0 (0%)	8.	13 (22%)	4.
Resourcefulness <i>NEW</i>	13 (17%)	-	3 (18%)	5.	10 (16%)	5.
Self-Acceptance	11 (14%)	6.	2 (12%)	6.	9 (15%)	6.
Integration & Congruence	11 (14%)	-	1 (6%)	7.	10 (16%)	5.
Openness	11 (14%)	-	4 (24%)	4.	7 (12%)	7.
Empowerment & Liberation <i>NEW</i>	10 (13%)	7.	0 (0%)	8.	10 (16%)	5.
Maturity & Maturation	9 (12%)	8.	2 (12%)	6.	7 (12%)	7.
Broad & Holistic	8 (10%)	9.	3 (18%)	5.	5 (8%)	9.
Self-Confidence & Esteem <i>NEW</i>	7 (9%)	10.	1 (6%)	7.	6 (10%)	8.
Unresolved Issues	6 (8%)	11.	1 (6%)	-	5 (8%)	9.
Active Learning	6 (8%)	-	2 (12%)	6.	4 (7%)	10.
Multi-faceted	5 (7%)	12.	0 (0%)	8.	5 (8%)	9.
Individually Unique	5 (7%)	-	1 (6%)	7.	4 (7%)	10.
Well-being & Stability	5 (7%)	-	1 (6%)	-	4 (7%)	-
Self-challenge <i>NEW</i>	4 (5%)	13.	0 (0%)	8.	4 (7%)	-
Spontaneity, Intuition & Creativity <i>NEW</i>	3 (4%)	14.	1 (6%)	7.	2 (3%)	11.
Perceivable in retrospect <i>NEW</i>	2 (3%)	15.	0 (0%)	8.	2 (3%)	-
Non-linear & Cyclical	1 (1%)	16.	0 (0%)	-	1 (2%)	12.
Trainers vs. Trainees <i>NEW</i>	1 (1%)	-	0 (0%)	-	1 (2%)	-

**Table 9 What is personal development?: rank order and frequencies of the 25 categories that emerged from survey participants' responses, broken down in terms of the whole sample, trainers and trainees.**

***A model of personal development – re-visited***

Given the reflexive nature of the present research, it is appropriate to re-visit the model of personal development proposed in Study 1 in order to incorporate the new categories into the conceptual system. The new model is shown in Figure 6, with the new categories indicated.

As can be seen from Figure 6, 4 of the 6 new categories have been incorporated into the bottom half of the central part of the model. This is because each new category appears to be an outcome of personal development that comes about after some progress in other areas has been achieved. The category ***Self-confidence and esteem*** is incorporated below 'Unresolved Issues' and 'Strengths & Weaknesses' and alongside 'Self-acceptance'. This is because increases in self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as self-acceptance, are likely to be experienced as issues from the past are resolved and weaknesses overcome. The other new categories, ***Empowerment & liberation***, ***Spontaneity, Intuition & Creativity*** and ***Resourcefulness***, follow below as they seem to represent more advanced outer signifiers of development and psychological health. Gaining increased self-acceptance and confidence, may itself create a sense of personal empowerment and liberation from past issues, fears and blocks. Similarly, increases in congruence and self-confidence may enable the individual to act in a more self-trusting, spontaneous, creative and intuitive way.

***Self-challenge*** is added to the central part of the model because it represents a concept that seems fundamental to the achievement of real developmental progress (c.f. Mearns', 1997). Self-challenge may also be related to the category 'unresolved issues' in that both emphasise the importance of working through difficulties in order move development onto new ground.

As a general characteristic rather than a specific attribute of personal development, the final new category ***Perceivable in retrospect*** is incorporated into the model on the right hand side alongside the other general characteristics 'life & career long' and 'Non-linear & Cyclical'. The sense in which personal development may be perceivable in retrospect may represent the idea that the broader changes, cycles or stages in an individual's developmental process may only become apparent to them over longer periods time (c.f. Irving & Williams', 1999).



Besides the new categories, some other features have also been added to the model. Given that it gained a particular emphasis in survey respondents' definitions, the reciprocal relationship between personal and professional development has also been incorporated into the model via 2 new arrows that indicate the connection between the left hand 'professional' component of the model and the central core process component. The effects of individual personal development on the wider professional development of the discipline, an idea that appeared in both Study 1 and Study 2, is now incorporated towards the bottom left of the model. The Trainer-Trainee tension around defining personal development has also been incorporated into the model. Given that trainers tended to emphasise the clinical/professional development function of personal development and trainees tended to emphasise its personal growth function, 'trainers' have been placed on the left side of the model (representing the more professional dimensions of trainee personal development) and 'trainees' have been placed to the right side of the model (representing the more personal dimensions of trainee personal development).

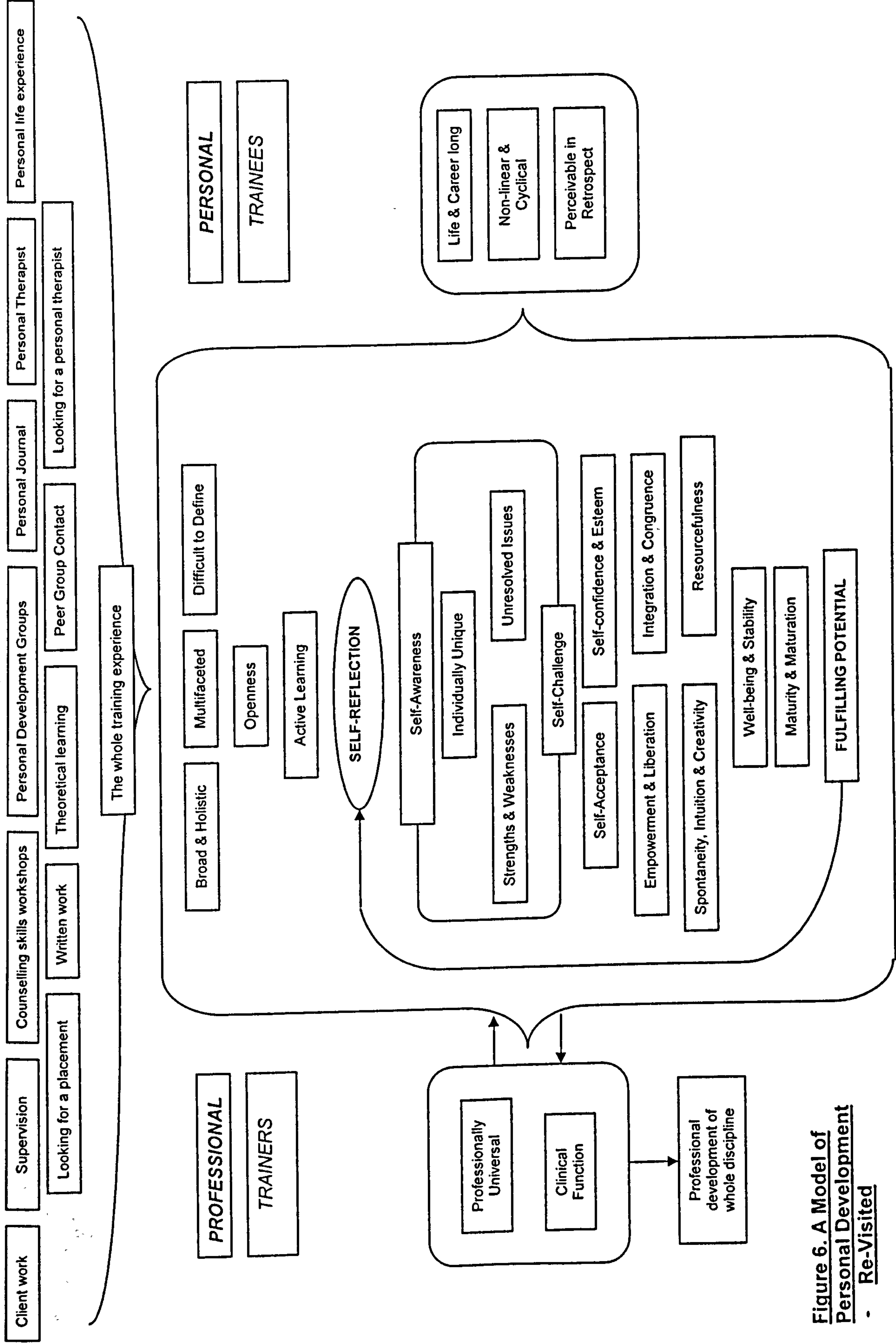


Figure 6. A Model of  
Personal Development  
- Re-Visited





## 7.2.2 CRUCIAL FOR COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGISTS (Theme 2)

## ITEM 2: 'Personal development is important for counselling psychologists'

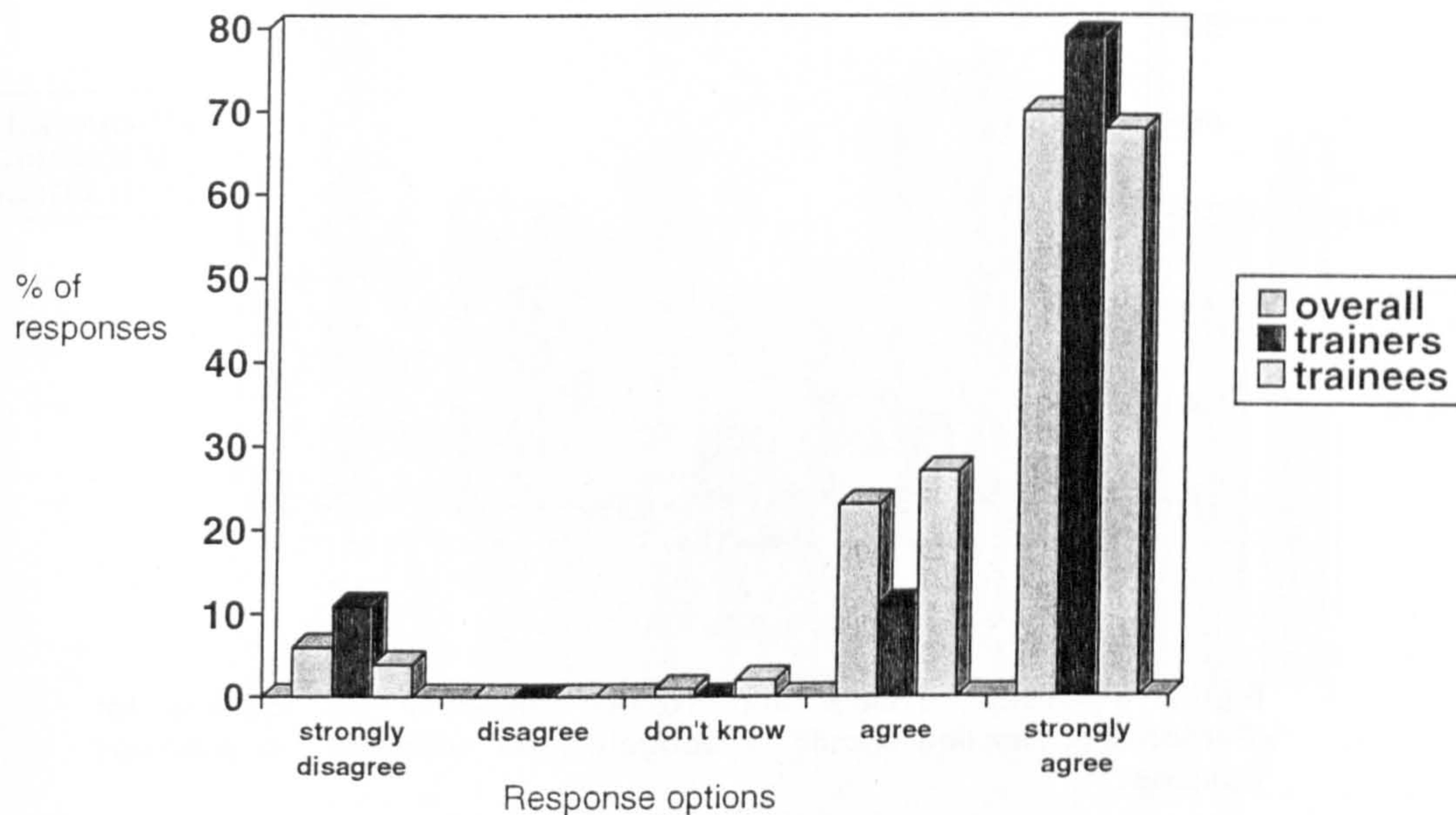


Figure 7 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'Personal development is important for counseling psychologists'

As Figure 7 shows, almost all respondents (93%) tended to agree<sup>3</sup> that personal development is important for counselling psychologists. Overall, 6 percent of respondents strongly disagreed.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this chapter, the phrases "tended to agree" or "tended to disagree" are used to refer to the combined frequencies of 'agree' + 'strongly agree' and 'disagree + strongly disagree' responses.



ITEM 3: *'Personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees'*

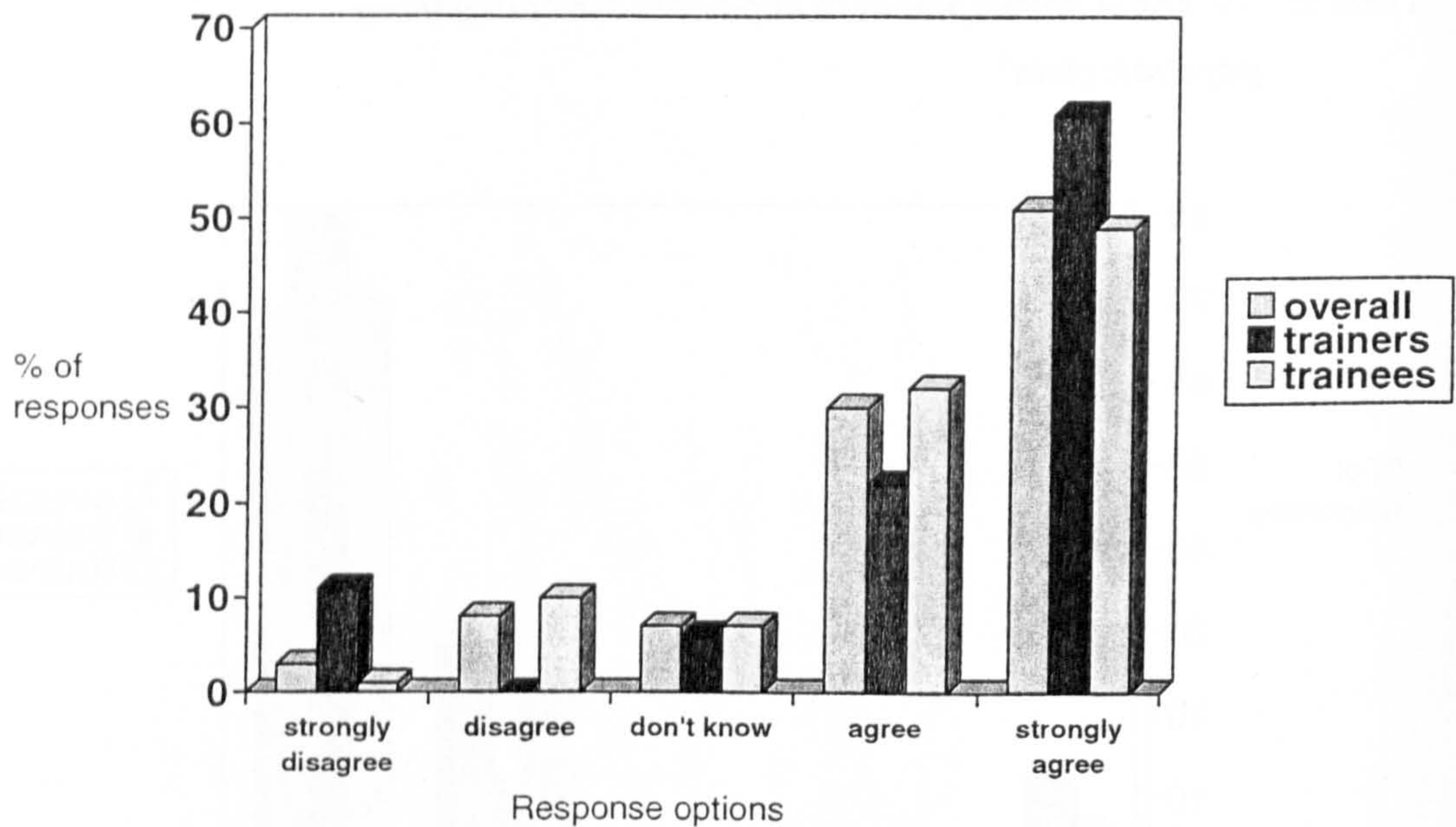


Figure 8 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: *'Personal counseling should be obligatory for counseling psychology trainees'*

As Figure 8 shows, the majority of respondents (81%) tended to agree that personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees. The responses of trainers (83% tending to agree, 11% tending to disagree) and trainees (81% tending to agree, 11 % tending to disagree) were very similar.



## 7.2.3 BROAD &amp; HOLISTIC (THEME 1)

ITEM 4: *'..experiences that may affect trainees' personal development..'*

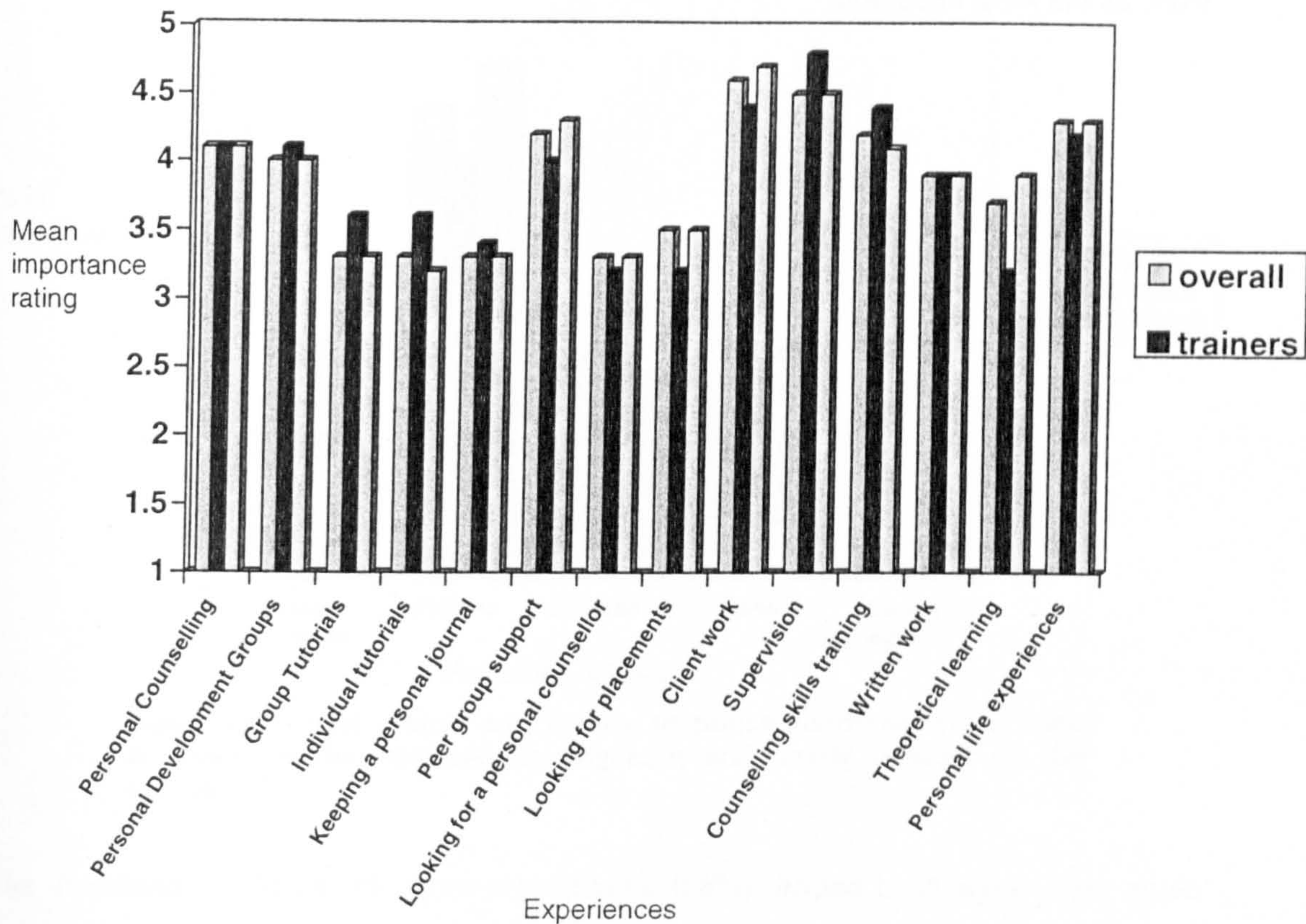


Figure 9 Overall, Trainer and Trainee Mean importance ratings for *'...experiences that may affect trainees' personal development...*

Participants were asked to rate the importance of a range of experiences to trainees' personal development, which had emerged from the grounded theory analysis of Study 1. As Figure 9 illustrates, 7 of the 14 experiences that respondents were asked to rate received an overall mean of at least '4: important'. These were 'personal counselling', 'personal development groups', 'peer group support', 'client work', 'supervision', 'counselling skills training' and 'personal life experiences'. None of the experiences were rated on average as 'unimportant'. The 3 experiences that received the highest mean importance ratings were 'client work'; 'supervision' and 'personal life experiences'.



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'Group' and 'individual tutorials' received the lowest mean ratings. Trainers' and trainees' mean importance ratings for the various experiences were generally in consonance. The widest discrepancy emerged in relation to 'theoretical learning', which trainees gave a mean importance rating of 3.9 ( $SD=0.9$ ) and trainers 3.2 ( $SD=1$ ). Trainers rated 'supervision' as the most important experience, while trainees rated 'client work' as the most important.

## 7.2.4 NOT DEFINED (THEME 3)

ITEM 5: *'Aims and objectives for personal development are clearly defined on the course'*

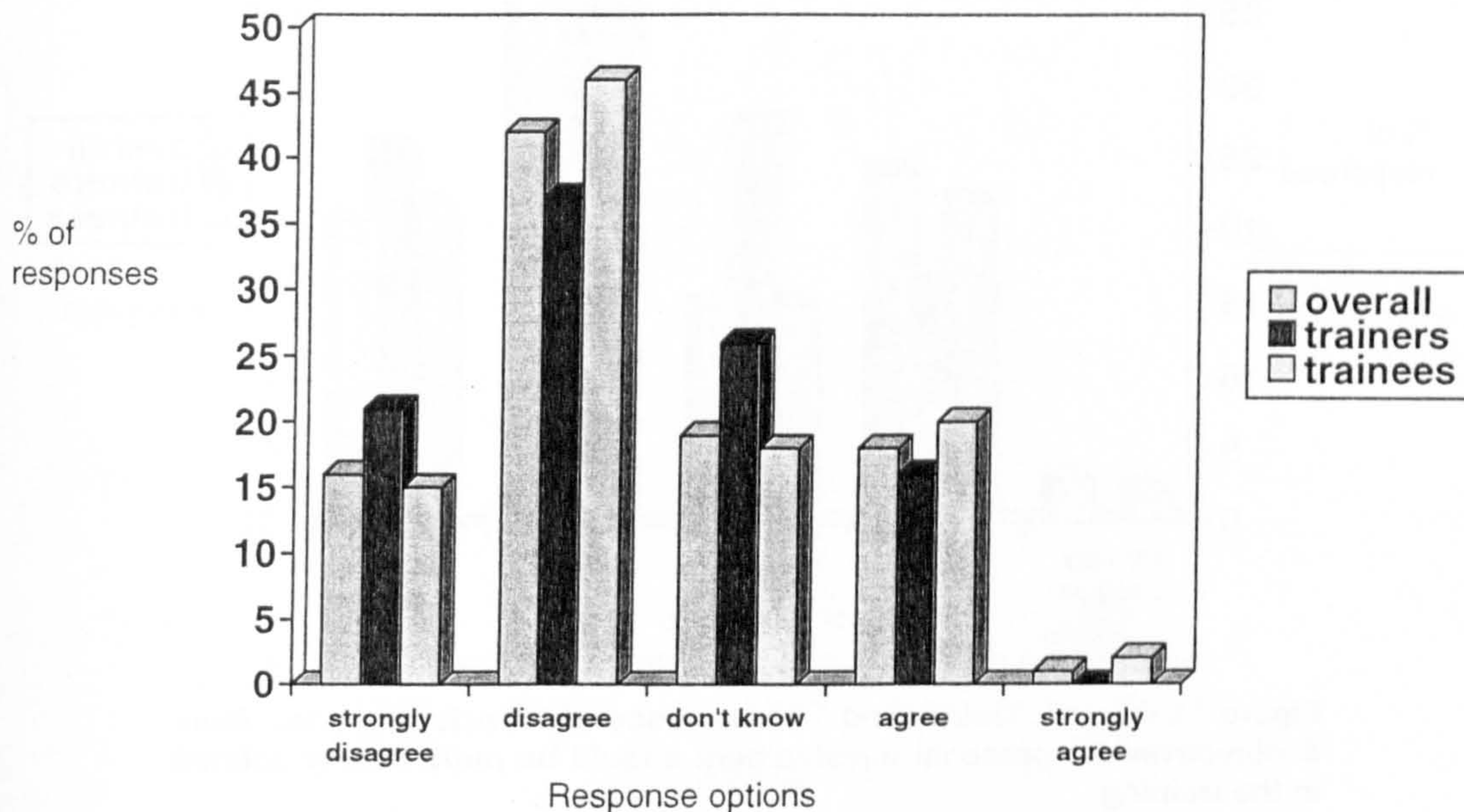


Figure 10 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'Aims & objectives for personal development are clearly defined on the course'

As illustrated by Figure 10, more respondents (58%) tended to disagree than agree (19%) that aims and objectives for personal development were clearly defined in the training. Nineteen percent responded 'uncertain/don't know'. The responses of trainers (58% agreement, 16% disagreement) and trainees (61% agreement, 22% disagreement) were fairly similar.



ITEM 6: 'Aims and objectives for personal development should be more clearly defined in the training'

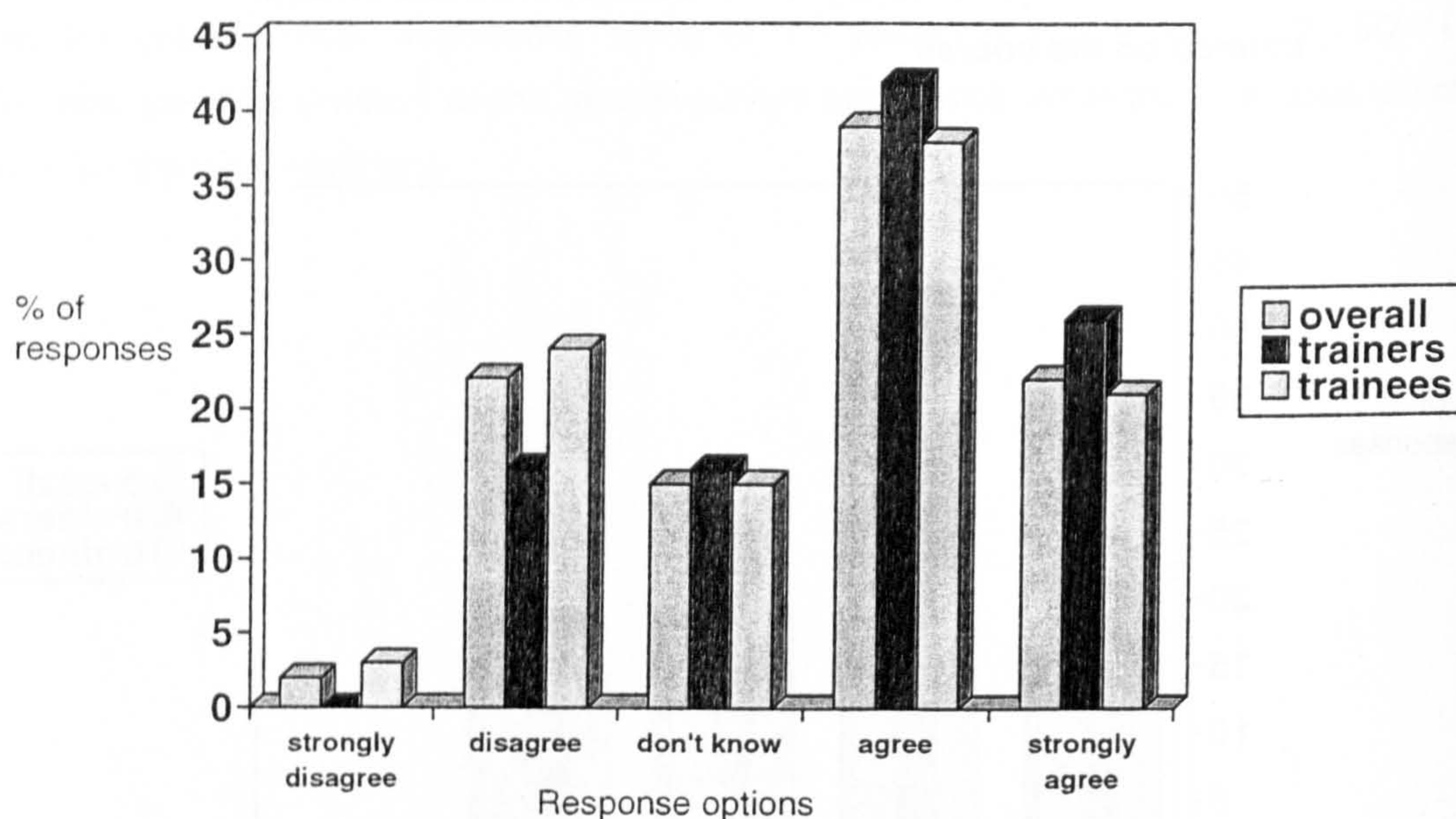


Figure 11 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'Aims & objectives for personal development should be *more* clearly defined in the training

As Figure 11 shows, 61% of respondents tended to agree that aims and objectives for personal development should be *more* clearly defined in the training. Trainers tended to agree more strongly (68%) than trainees (59%), while trainees tended to disagree more strongly (27%) than trainers (16%). The frequencies of 'uncertain/don't know' responses from trainers (15%) and trainees (16%) were similar.



## 7.2.5 NOT DISCUSSED OR INTEGRATED (THEME 3)

ITEM 7: *'The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed in the training'*

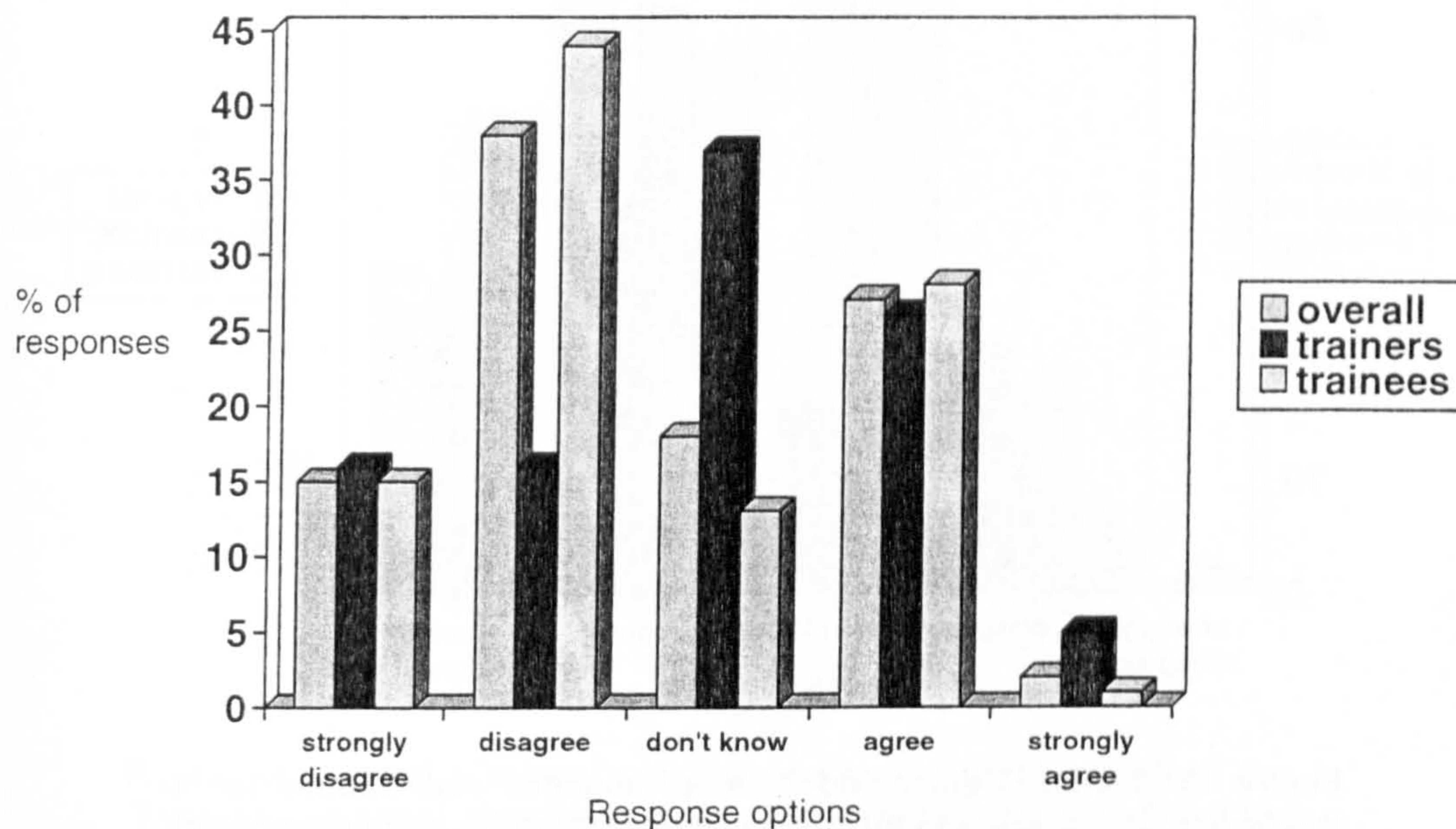


Figure 12 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed in the training'

As Figure 12 shows, overall, about half of respondents (53%) tended to disagree that the subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed in the training, while 29% tended to agree and 18% responded 'uncertain/don't know'. Trainees tended to disagree more strongly (59%) than trainers (32%). A large portion of trainers responded 'uncertain/don't know'.



ITEM 8: *'I would like the subject of personal development to be more openly and fully discussed in the training'*

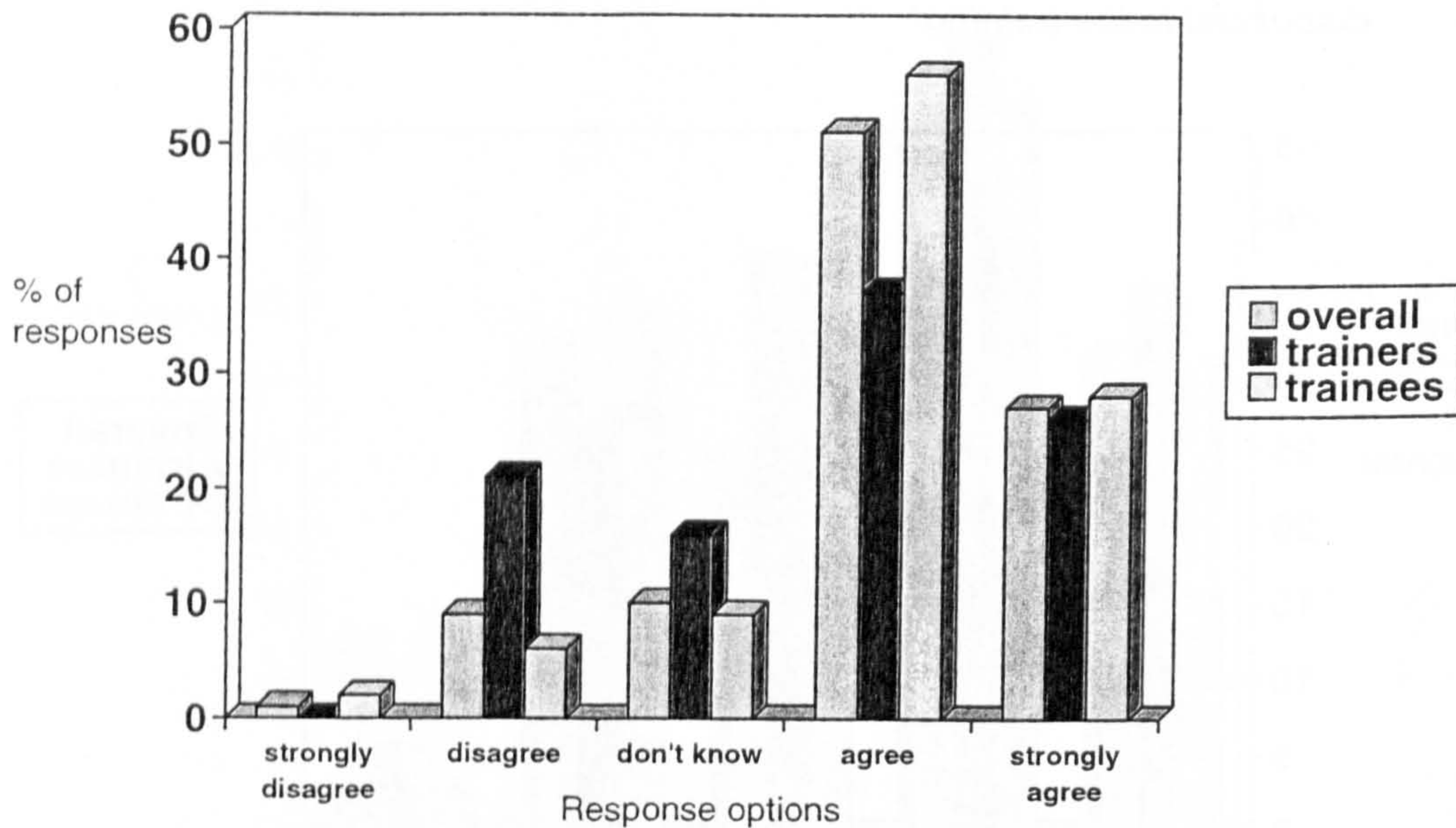
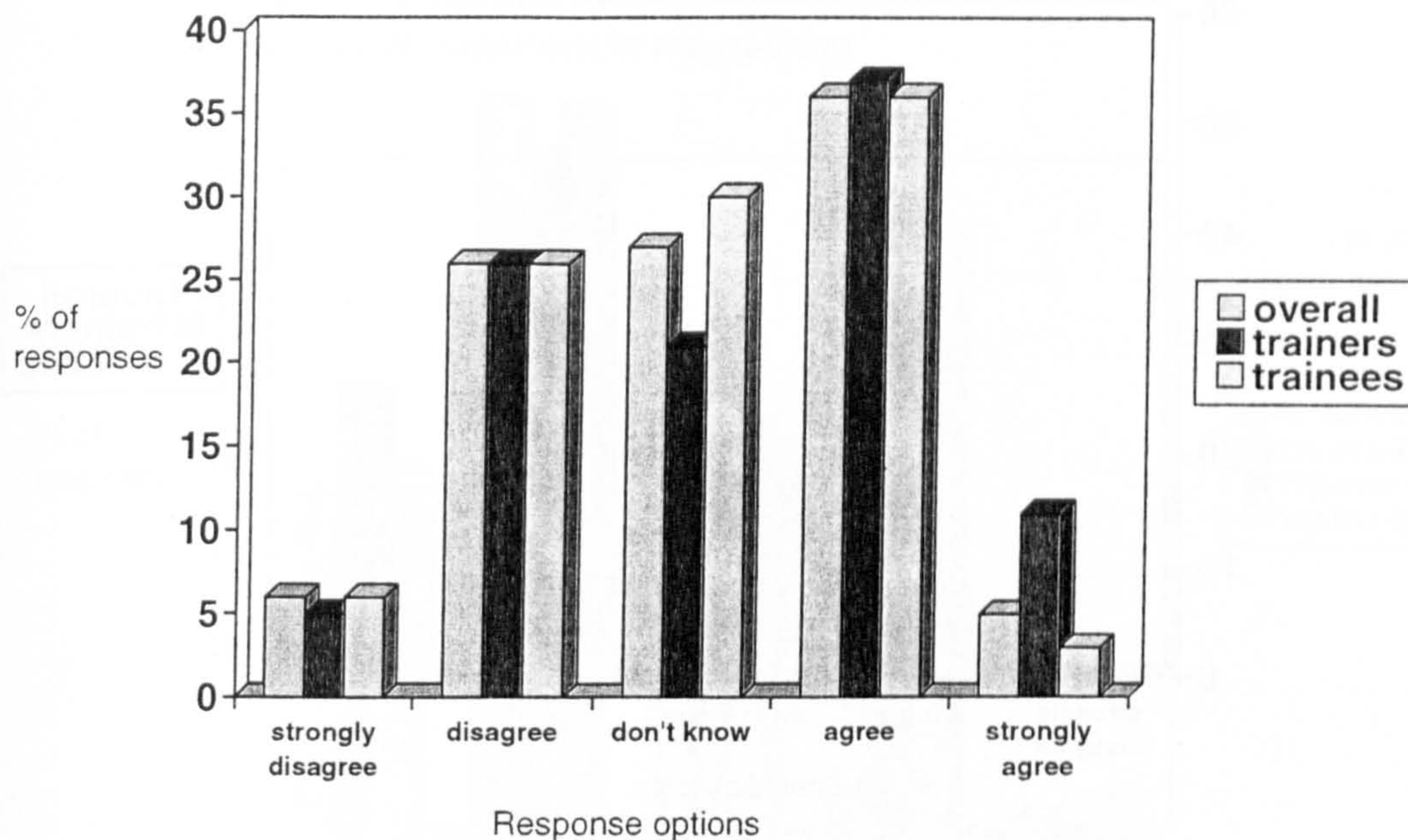


Figure 13 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: *'I would like the subject of personal development to be more openly and fully discussed in the training'*

As Figure 13 shows, the majority of respondents (78%) tended to agree that they would like the subject of personal development to be more openly and fully discussed in the training. Trainees tended to agree particularly strongly (84%) compared with trainers (63%). Twenty one percent of trainers and 8% of trainees disagreed.



**ITEM 9: 'Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of the course'**



**Figure 14 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of the course'**

As demonstrated by Figure 14, respondents were quite evenly balanced in terms of their agreement (41%) and disagreement (32%) that trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of the course. However, trainers tended to agree more strongly (48%) than trainees (39%), and more trainees (30%) responded 'uncertain/don't know' than trainers (21%).



ITEM 10: *'Trainees' personal development should be better integrated into the other aspects of the course'*

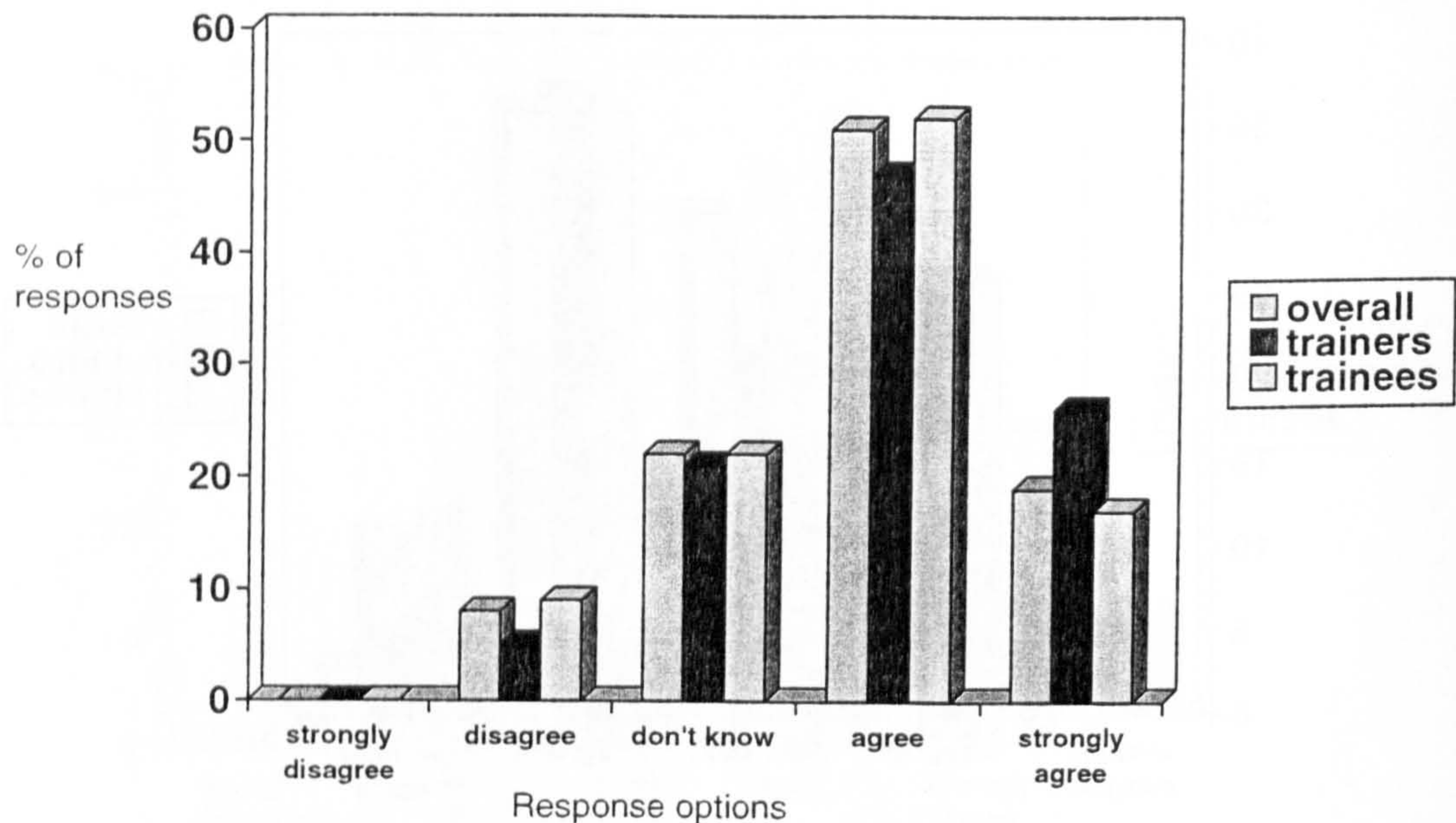


Figure 15 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: *'Trainees' personal development should be better integrated into the other aspects of the course'*

As Figure 15 shows, the majority of respondents (70%) agreed that personal development should be better integrated into the other aspects of the course, and no one strongly disagreed. The responses of trainers and trainees showed a similar pattern across the various response options, and similarly large percentages of trainers (21%) and trainees (22%) responded 'uncertain/don't know'.



## 7.2.6 NOT ADEQUATELY ADDRESSED IN TRAINING (THEME 3)

ITEM 11: *'I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development in the training'*

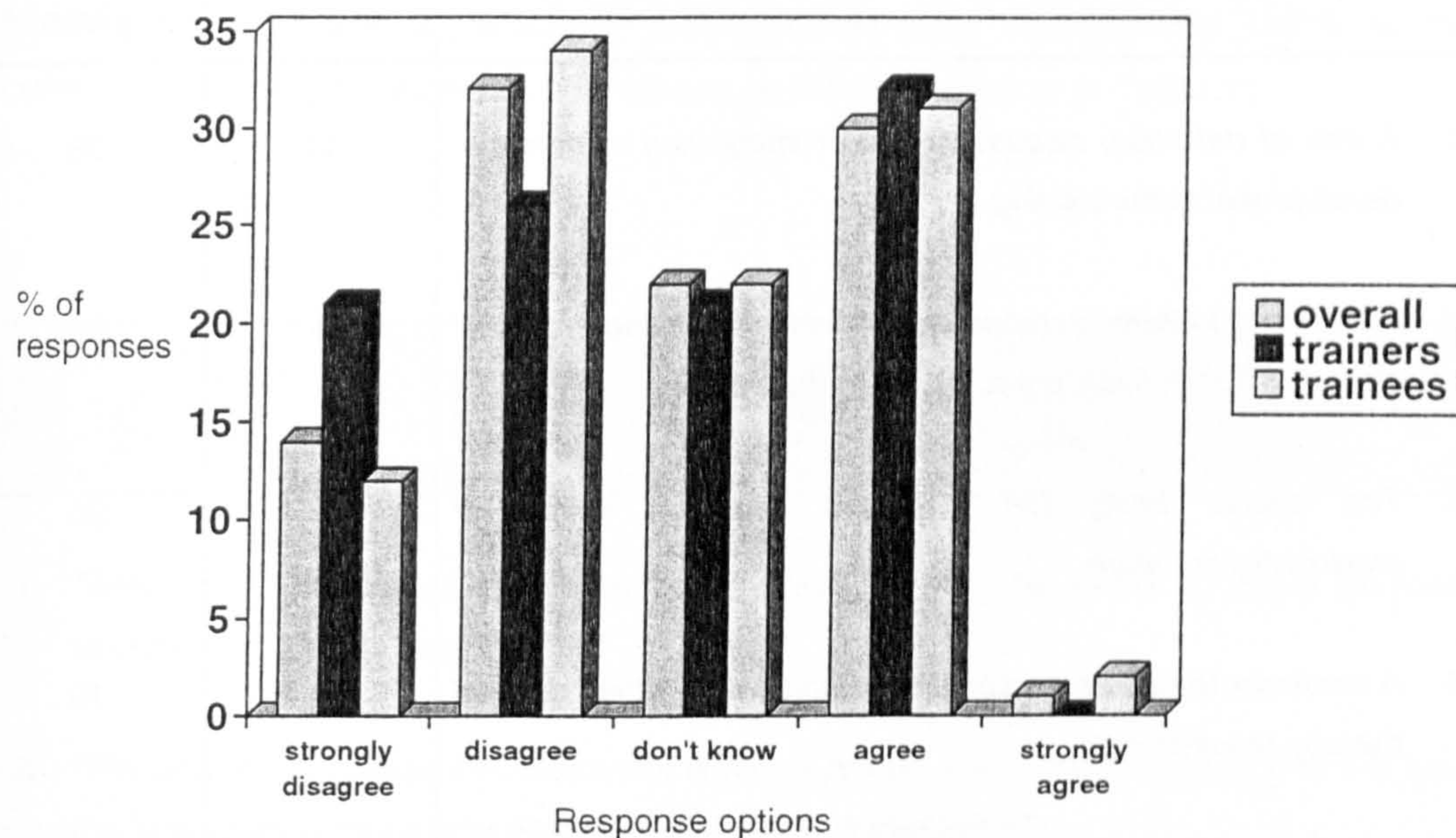


Figure 16 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development in the training'

As Figure 16 shows, although more respondents were dissatisfied (46%) than were satisfied (31%) with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development in the training, participants' responses were fairly divided in their views for this key item. The responses of trainers and trainees were in close consonance across the various response options, and a particularly large proportion of 'uncertain/don't know' responses (22%) was observed.

Participants who had tended to disagree that they were satisfied were also asked to write a brief open-ended explanation for their response. Twenty-nine of the 46 respondents who had tended to disagree provided a response. Typical reasons given are listed below in Table 10, with the frequency of their emergence also indicated (a selection of actual responses to this open-ended item is available in Appendix L).



Reason for dissatisfaction	n	% of reasons given
1. A lack of definition, discussion and/or integration of personal development in the training	11	38
2. A tendency to leave personal development up to the individual rather than to actively pursue it within the training	6	20
3. The course being too academic and not sufficiently experiential in nature	6	20
4. A tendency to equate personal development with the personal therapy requirement	3	10
5. A feeling that courses and/or trainees tend to pay 'lip service' to the importance of personal development and personal therapy during training	3	10
6. The inadequacy of current approaches to assessing personal development	1	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 10** Reasons for dissatisfaction with course provision for personal development



In addition, although they were not requested to, 6 of the 31 respondents who tended to agreed that they were satisfied with the provisions made for trainees' personal development also provided explanations. These were typified by a belief that it is appropriate for personal development not to be discussed or integrated, that it should remain a separate and a private matter for the trainee, and that trainees can and should be solely responsible for ensuring their own personal development. All 6 of the comments, which were all made by trainees, are included below in Table 11.

Reasons for satisfaction
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>"Although I am not satisfied with some points, it may be better to leave personal development as a personal matter"</i></li> <li>2. <i>"The process of personal development is highly private and I would suggest that it is kept that way to allow trainees to engage sufficiently with therapists"</i></li> <li>3. <i>"Well facilitated course - the rest is up to the individual"</i></li> <li>4. <i>"I feel I am developing through therapy and my own efforts"</i></li> <li>5. <i>"The onus is on the trainee to get the help they need, as it can be no other way"</i></li> <li>6. <i>"Personal development is an individual thing and we are all at different stages. So even though it was not integrated well into the rest of the course, I'm not sure it could be done differently - you can't force or dictate personal development"</i></li> </ol>

**Table 11 Reasons for satisfaction with course provision for personal development**



## 7. 2. 7 NOT ADEQUATELY ASSESSED DURING TRAINING (Theme 3)

ITEM 12: *'it is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees'*

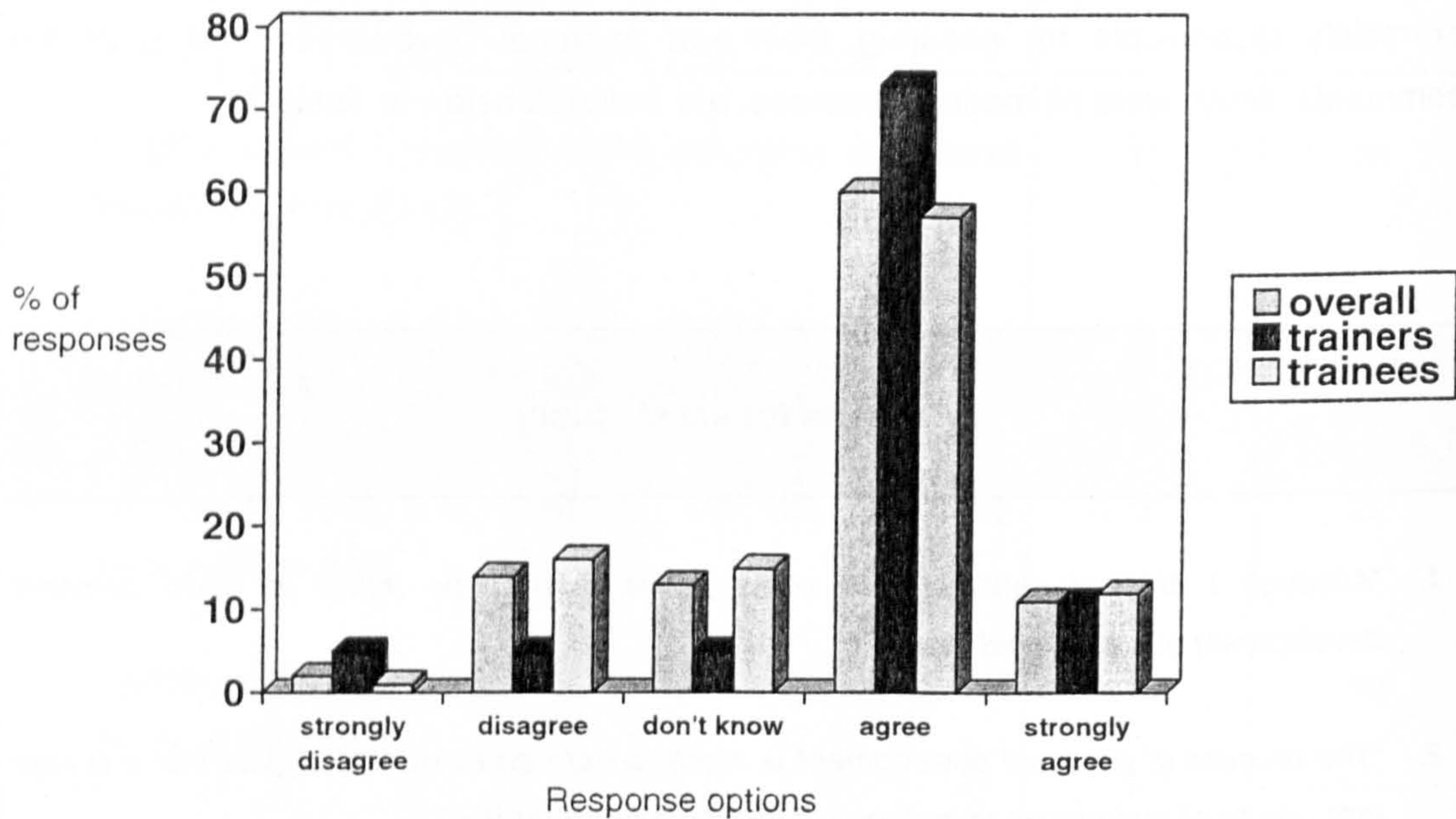


Figure 17 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'It is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees'

As illustrated by Figure 17, the majority of respondents (71%) agreed that it is important to assess the personal development of trainees. Trainers tended to agree more strongly (84%) than trainees (69%), and trainees also gave a greater proportion of 'uncertain/don't know' responses (15%) compared with trainers (5%).



ITEM 13: *'I am not exactly sure how one should assess the personal development of trainees'*

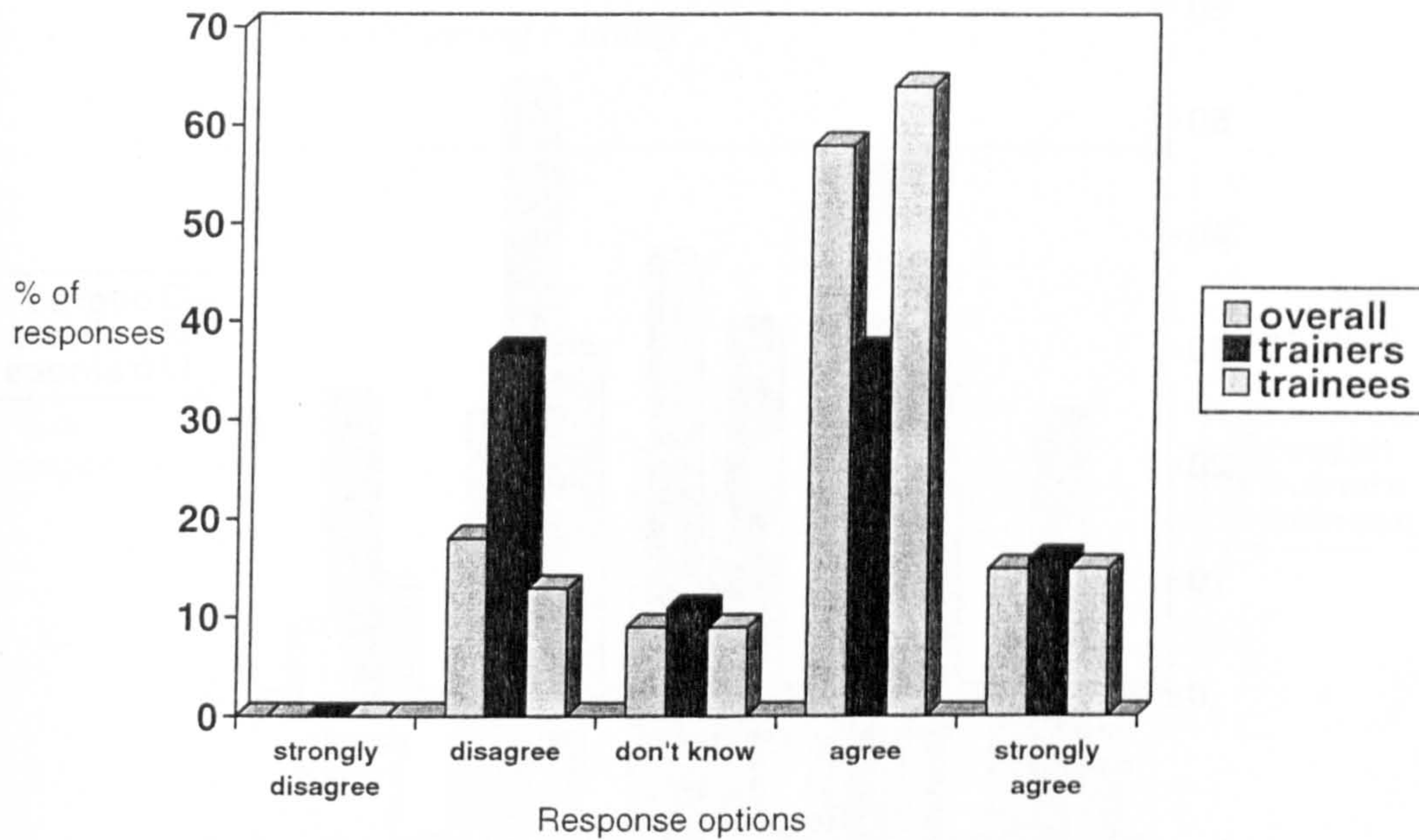
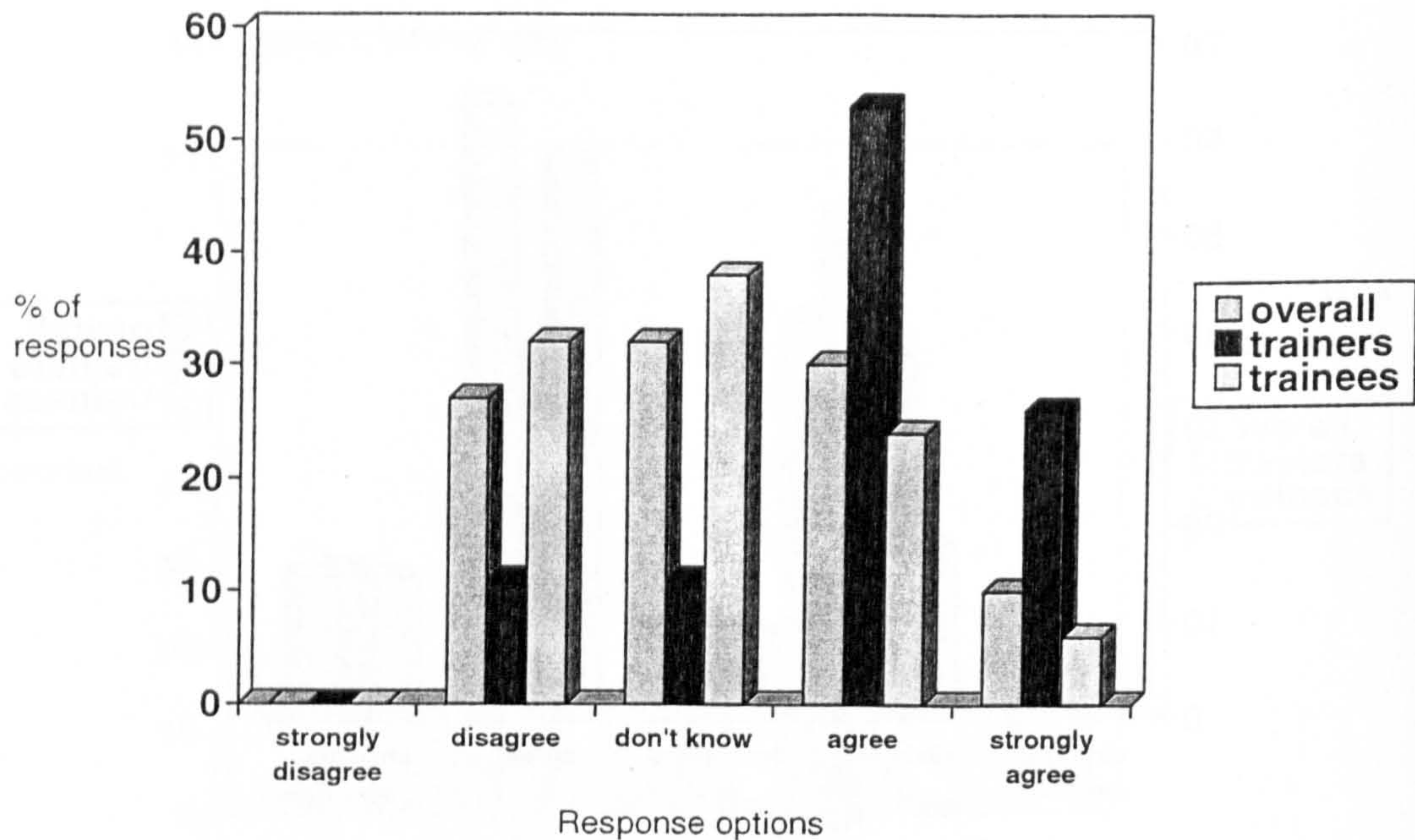


Figure 18 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'I am not exactly sure how to assess the personal development of trainees'

As Figure 18 shows, the majority of respondents (73%) tended to agree that they were not exactly sure how one should assess the personal development of trainees, and no one strongly disagreed. Trainees tended to agree considerably more strongly (79%) than trainers (56%) and trainers tended to disagree considerably more strongly (37%) than trainees (13%).



**ITEM 14: 'I have serious doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of some trainees'**



**Figure 19 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'I have serious doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of some trainees'**

As demonstrated by Figure 19, more respondents tended to agree (40%) than disagree (27%) that they have serious doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of trainees, and no one strongly disagreed. Trainers tended to agree considerably more strongly (79%) than trainees (30%), who also accounted for a large portion (38%) of the 'uncertain/don't know' responses.



## 7.2.8 NOT ADEQUATELY ASSESSED AT SELECTION (Theme 3)

ITEM 15: *'Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training'*

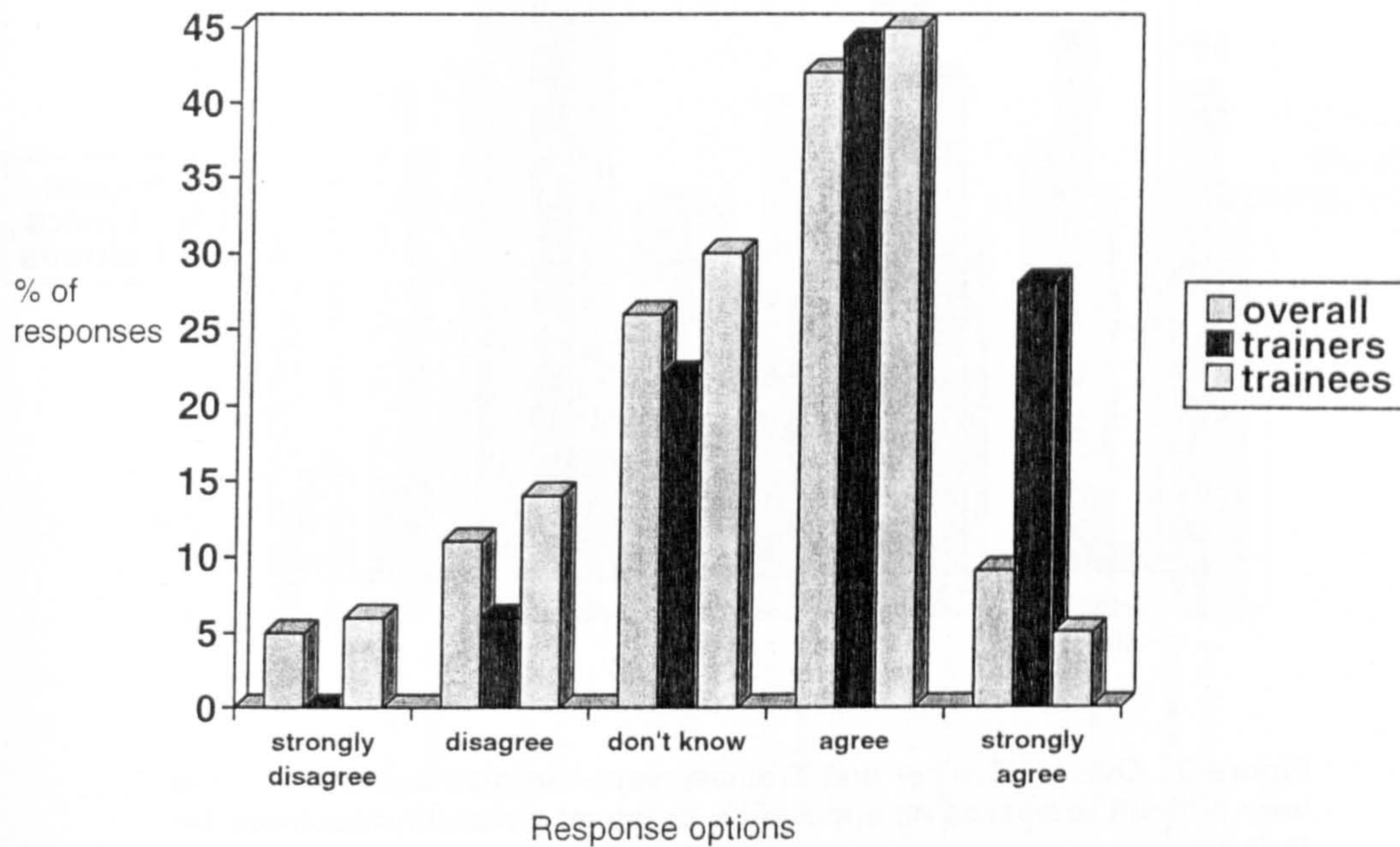


Figure 20 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: *'Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training'*

As Figure 20 shows, most respondents (51%) tended to agree that trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training and 16% tended to disagree. However, considerably more trainers strongly agreed (28%) than did trainees (5%), and no trainers strongly disagreed. Both trainers (22%) and trainees (30%) gave large portions of 'uncertain/don't know' responses.



ITEM 16: *'It is very difficult to assess an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training'*

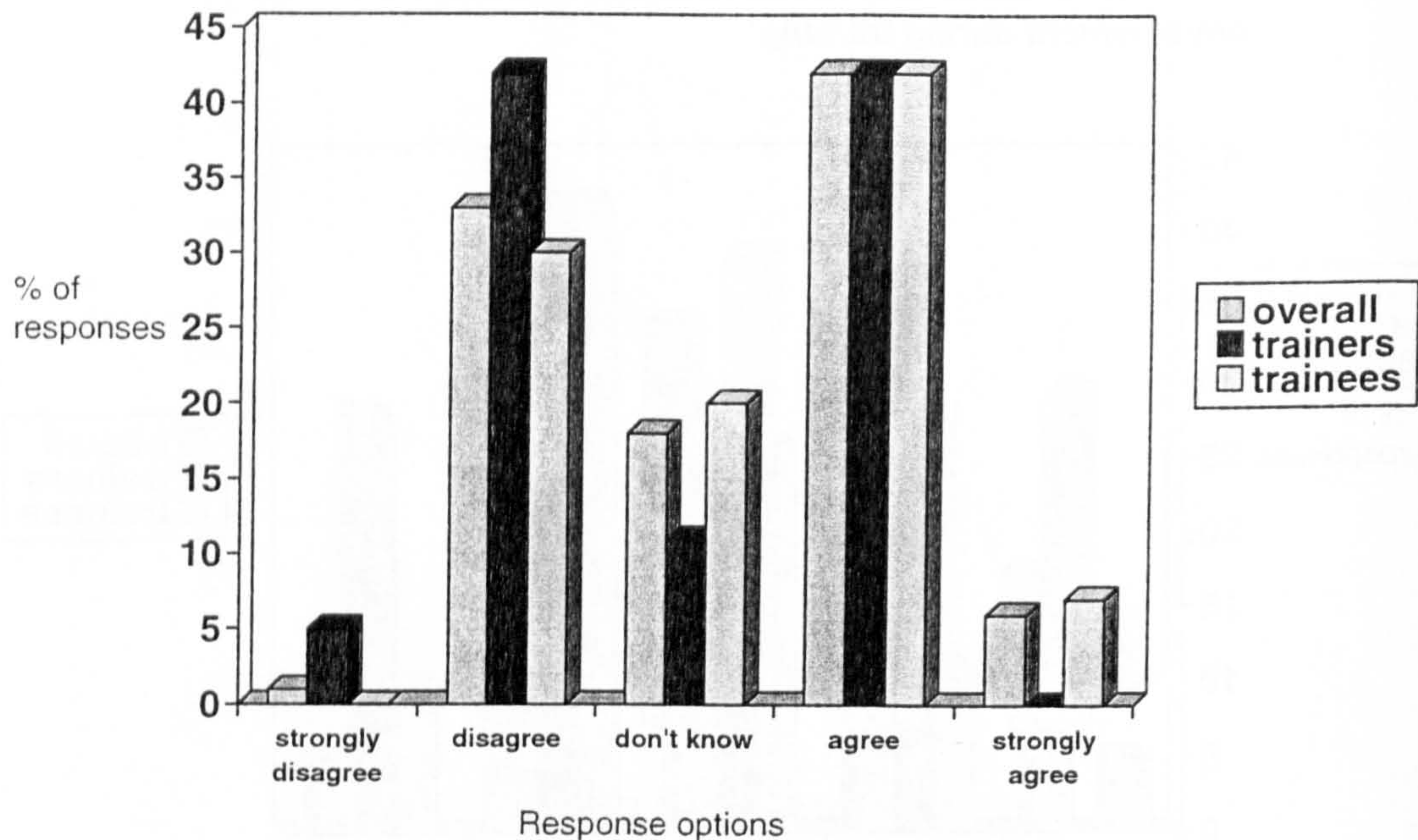


Figure 21 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'It is very difficult to assess an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training'

As is evident from Figure 21, respondents were fairly divided in their tendencies to agree (48%) or disagree (34%) that it is very difficult to assess an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training. This remained true within both trainer and trainee groups. However, whereas trainees tended to agree more than disagree (49% vs. 30%), trainers tended to disagreed more than agree (47% vs. 42%).



ITEM 17: ‘..selection methods for assessing personal suitability/readiness..’

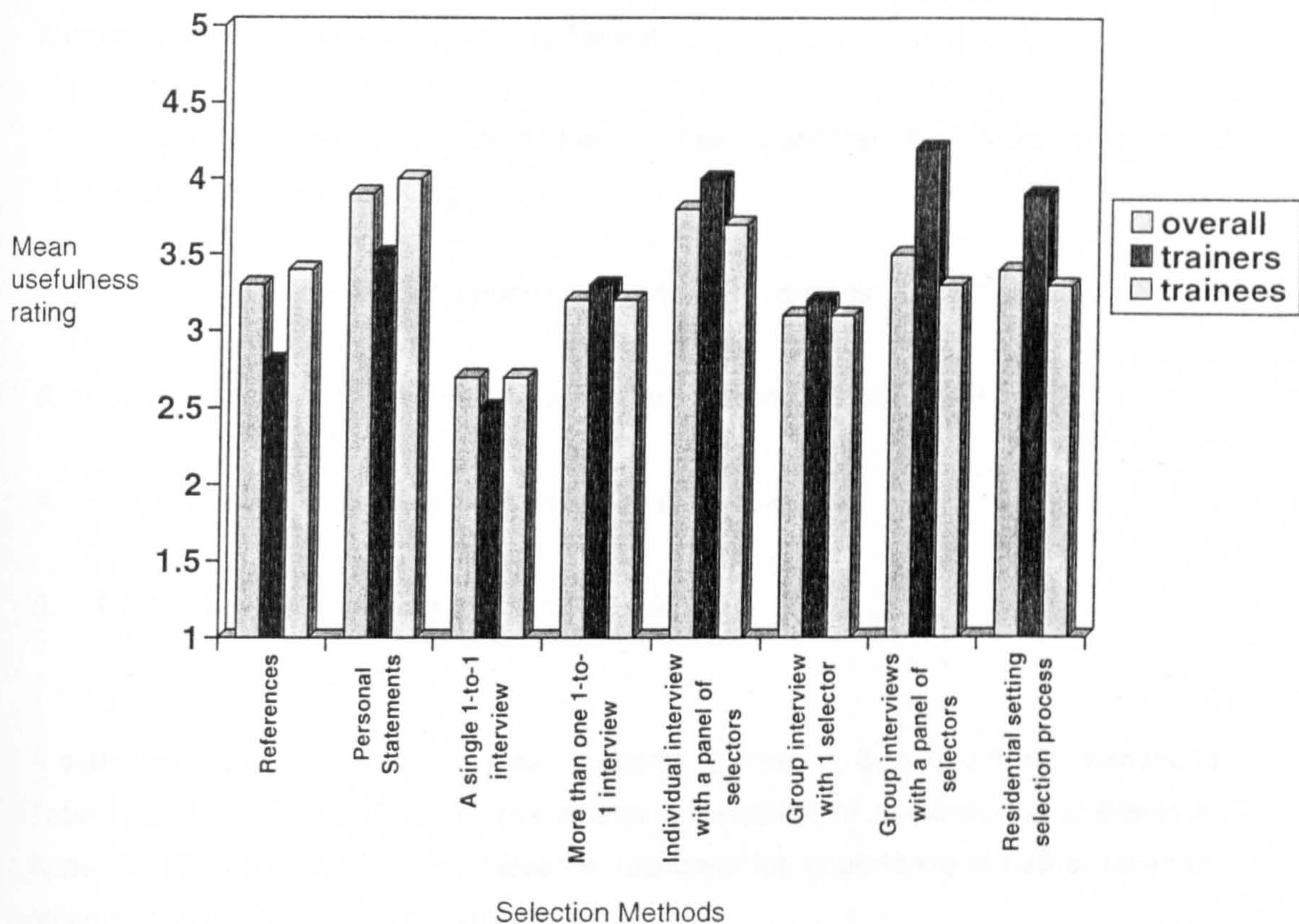


Figure 22 Overall, Trainer and Trainee mean usefulness ratings for a variety of selection methods in the assessing personal suitability/readiness of applicants

Participants were asked to rate the usefulness of a range of selection methods for assessing applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training. As Figure 22 shows, overall, 'personal statements' and 'interviews' (group and individual) with a panel of selectors were rated as most useful, while 'interviews' (group and individual) with one selector were rated as least useful. For trainers, 'group interviews with a panel of selectors' were rated most highly. Additional selection methods cited by respondents in an 'Other' category provided, included 'previous clinical experience/track record', 'a combination of methods', 'psychometric tests', 'case vignette exercises'. One respondent also commented on the potential relevance and usefulness of wider



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occupational research in developing more effective selection methods for counselling psychology training: *"There has been quite a lot of research on assessment in the general field of employment. Counselling psychology is probably no different."*

### 7.2.9 CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were invited to offer comments and suggestions in relation to the following 5 areas:

1. *Possible changes they would like to see regarding the issue of personal development during training.*
2. *Areas in which they would particularly like to see further discussion or research.*
3. *Rating the importance of further research on personal development.*
4. *Effects of completing the questionnaire on their views.*
5. *General feedback on the questionnaire or topic.*

A selection of participants' responses in relation to areas 1, 2, 4, and 5 are provided in Tables 12, 13, 15 and 16 below (an additional selection of responses is available in Appendix M). Data relating to participants' ratings of the importance of further research on personal development is presented in Table 14.



<p><b>Area 1:</b></p> <p><b>Suggested changes to personal development in counselling psychology training</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Personal development to take a more central and active role throughout training. More feedback to students re. their personal development progress, etc - collaborative approach to development"</i></li> <li>• <i>"More skills practice with peers"</i></li> <li>• <i>"Assessed personal development"</i></li> <li>• <i>"More closely monitored during training"</i></li> <li>• <i>"Personal development should be emphasised and applied within each approach and topic"</i></li> <li>• <i>"Personal tutors to be clear with students re. the importance and objectives of personal therapy - before it starts - to give the student more clarity about its purpose and to get the maximum out of the experience"</i></li> <li>• <i>"More workshops geared to exploring core assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, interactive skills, reflectiveness, dilemmas, working with resistant clients, personal development groups, role plays"</i></li> <li>• <i>"The training should be less academic, theory bound and more skills, reflection, group work, role play based"</i></li> </ul>

**Table 12 Examples of changes to personal development in counselling psychology training suggested by survey participants**



## Area 2:

## Suggested areas for further discussion and research

- *"Alternative (to therapy/counselling) techniques for personal development. Also, what are the mechanisms underlying personal development and can strategies be matched to individual's personal development needs?"*
- *"What exactly is personal development?"*
- *"How to assess"*
- *"What to do with trainees who do not develop during the training and lack awareness of their limitations - the whole question of 'unsuitability'"*
- *"The holding/containing function of the training institute as a whole, as the model of a secure base from which the trainee moves forward into their professional practice"*

**Table 13 Examples of areas for further discussion and research suggested by survey participants**



**Area 3: The importance of further research on personal development**

As Table 14 shows, 68% of respondents rated further research on personal development as 'important' or 'very important', 24% rated it as 'quite important', 6% rated it as 'not that important' 0% of rated it is as unimportant. There were 2 missing cases.

	<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Quite important</b>	<b>Not that important</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>
Percentage of Responses	32%	36%	24%	26%	0%

**Table 14 Distribution of ratings relating to the importance of further research on personal development**



**Area 4: Reported effects of completing the questionnaire on respondents**

Forty three percent of respondents ( $n = 38$ ) reported that completing the questionnaire had affected their views on the topic. Eighty seven percent of these were trainers and 13% were trainees. Some examples of effects reported by trainers and trainees are provided in Table 15 below.

Group	Reported Effect
<b>Trainers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"It drew my attention to some issues that I am not sure about"</i></li> <li>• <i>"It's made me think about 1) how we can effectively assess personal development without crossing boundaries of confidentiality, 2) how little our staff team has discussed personal development!"</i></li> <li>• <i>"Has made it more at the forefront of my mind and given me some ideas how we might change things on this course"</i></li> </ul>
<b>Trainees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>"Made me more keen to see change. Annoyed me again about how badly this is provided for in the course here. I've tried to forget about it and just find the development elsewhere"</i></li> <li>• <i>"Highlighted how nebulous the whole idea of 'personal development' is for me"</i></li> <li>• <i>"I had seen personal development as quite separate to the rest of the course in a way. Now I wonder if it should be more integrated."</i></li> </ul>

**Table 15 Some reported effects of completing the questionnaire on survey participants**



Area 5:

Feedback comments on the questionnaire and topic

- *"I hope that in the future trainees will begin to appreciate more the importance of personal development and not consider personal therapy and experiential groups as 'necessary evils'"*
- *"How refreshing to see the issue of personal development as a central issue within the training!"*
- *"The questions asked are by nature dilemmatic and therefore the quantitative nature of the answers just doesn't allow for or reflect the sheer range of ethical dilemmas involved"*
- *"The questionnaire was too long"*
- *"It was interesting straightforward to understand and a pleasure to complete"*
- *"Really useful to reconsider the concept of personal development. Very thorough questionnaire"*

**Table 16 A sample of feedback comments on the questionnaire and topic from survey participants**



### **7.3 Inferential Statistical Analyses**

This section presents findings relating to each of the 6 hypotheses generated from the grounded theory analysis of Study 1. Each hypothesis is considered in turn, under a heading which indicates the Grounded theory theme or category to which it relates (tables detailing the frequency and percentage distributions of responses for the overall sample, trainers and trainees in relation to each of these 6 items are provided in Appendix I).

#### **7.3.1 MULTIFACETED (Theme 1)**

**Hypothesis 1: The category 'clinical function' will emerge more frequently within the personal development definitions of trainers than those of trainees**

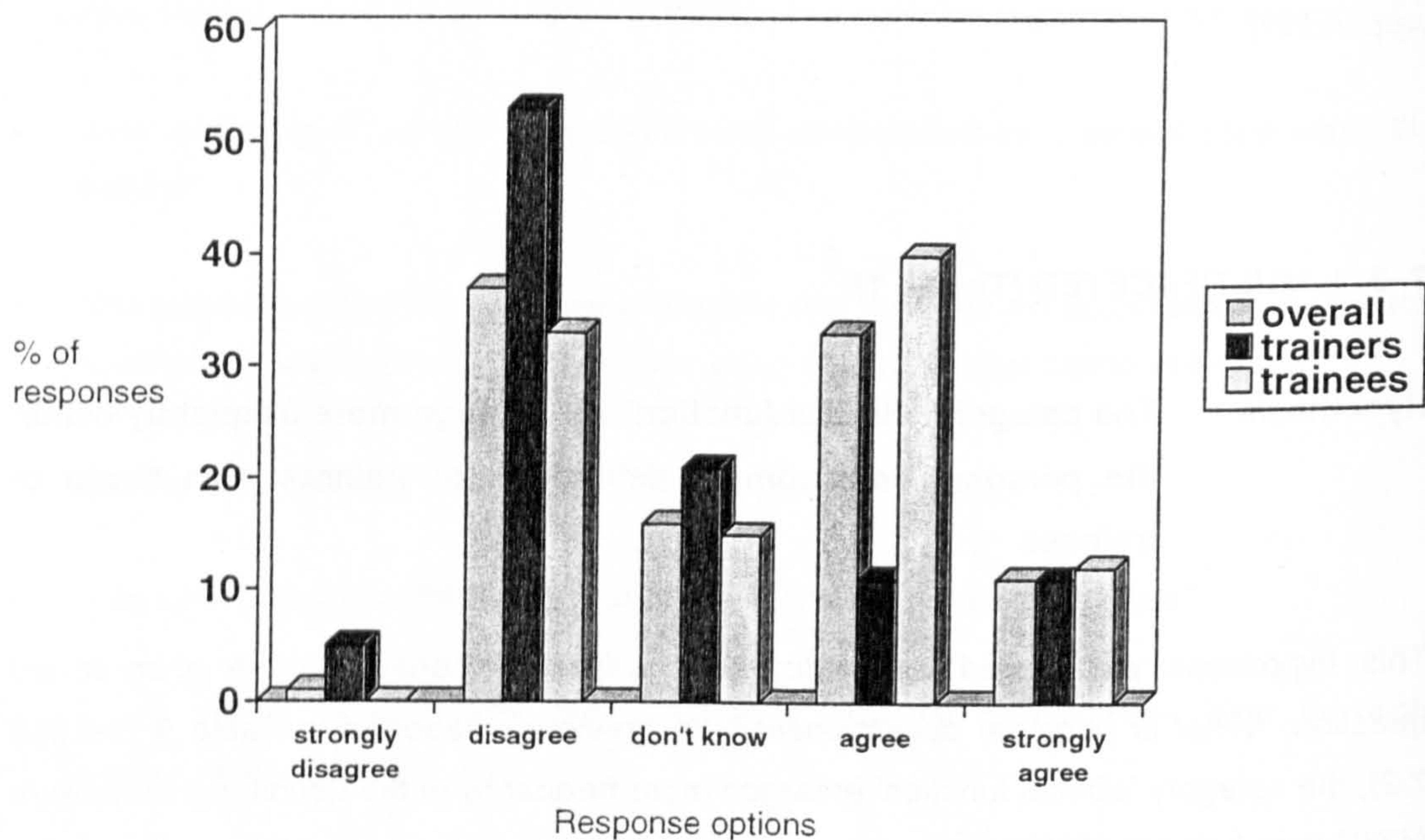
This hypothesis was tested via participants' written responses to the open-ended question: *'What is personal development?'* As previously reported in Table 9 (section 7.2), the category 'clinical function' emerged more frequently in the definitions of trainers (47%) than trainees (26%).

To test the statistical significance of this difference, a one-tailed Pearson Chi Square analysis was conducted. This test indicated that the difference between trainers and trainees was greater than would be expected by chance, and was therefore statistically significant (Chi Sq = 3.2;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 1 was supported.



**Hypothesis 2:** Trainees will agree more strongly than trainers that the aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee

This hypothesis was tested via participants' responses to the survey item: *The aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee.*



**Figure 23 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'The aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee'**

As Figure 23 illustrates, overall, respondents were fairly divided in their tendencies to agree (44%) and disagree (38%) that the aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee (16% responded 'uncertain/don't know'). Within the two subgroups however, Trainers tended to disagree (58%) more than agree (21%) (21% responded 'uncertain/don't know'), while trainees tended to agree (52%) more than disagree (33%) (15% responded 'uncertain/don't know').



## **STUDY 2, CHAPTER 7: SURVEY FINDINGS**

In terms of the 5 point rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain/don't know, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), the mean agreement rating to this item was higher for trainees ( $M = 3.3$ ;  $SD = 1.1$ ) than it was for trainers ( $M = 2.7$ ;  $SD = 1.1$ ).

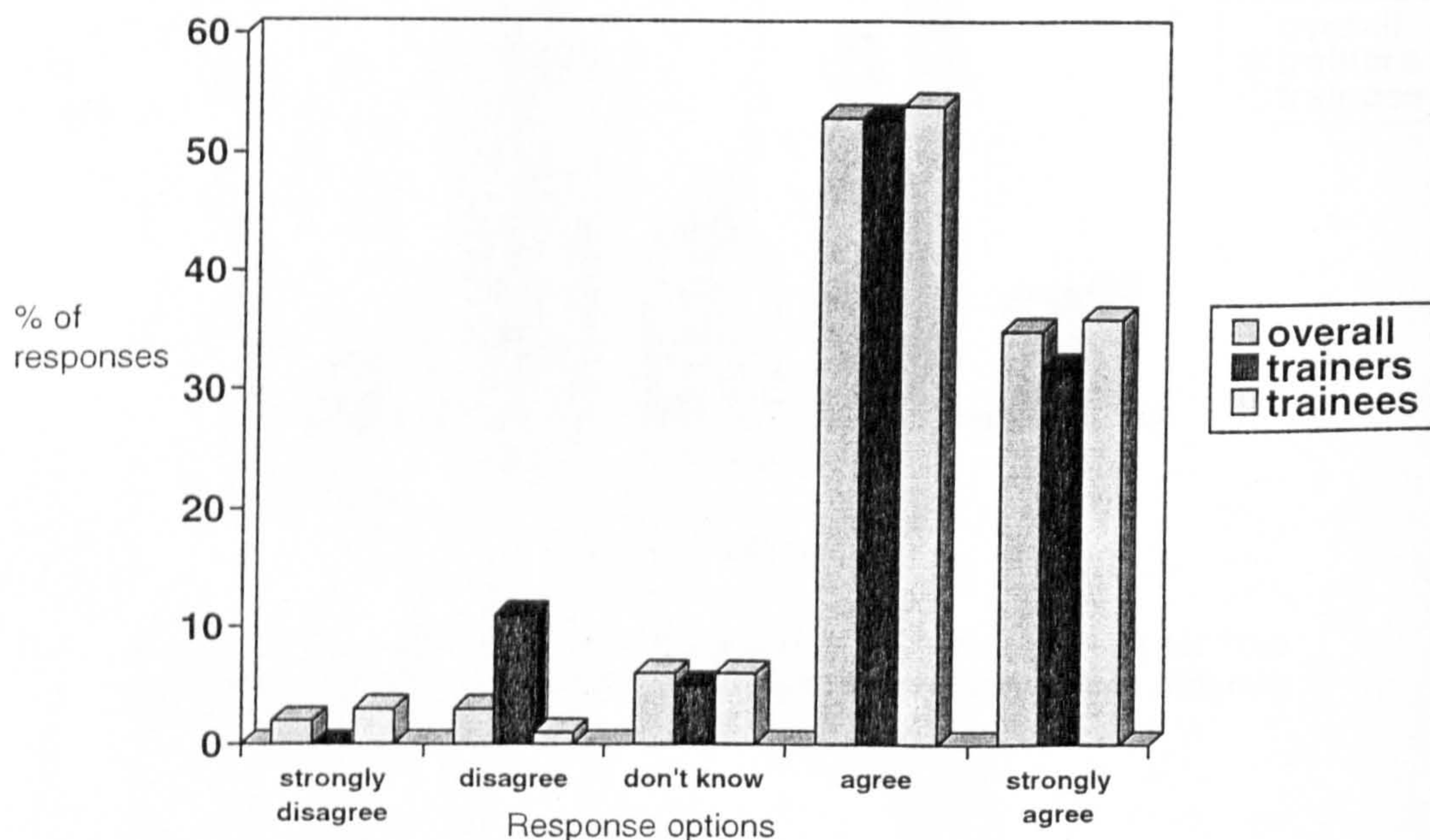
A one-tailed, independent groups T-Test was carried out to test the statistical significance of this difference. This test showed that the observed difference in trainer and trainee means was statistically significant ( $t = -2.6$ ,  $df = 84$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

## 7.3.2 RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

(Theme 2)

**Hypothesis 3:** Trainees will agree more strongly than trainers that developing their sense of professional competence is important to their sense of personal development

This hypothesis was tested via participants' responses to the survey item: *Developing my professional competence is important to my sense of personal development.*



**Figure 24** Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'Developing my professional competence is very important to my sense of personal development'

As can be seen from Figure 24, overall, a large majority respondents (88%) tended to agree that developing their professional competence was important to their sense of professional development. The response distributions of trainers (87% agreement and 11% disagreement) and trainees (90% agreement and 4% disagreement) were similar.



## **STUDY 2, CHAPTER 7: SURVEY FINDINGS**

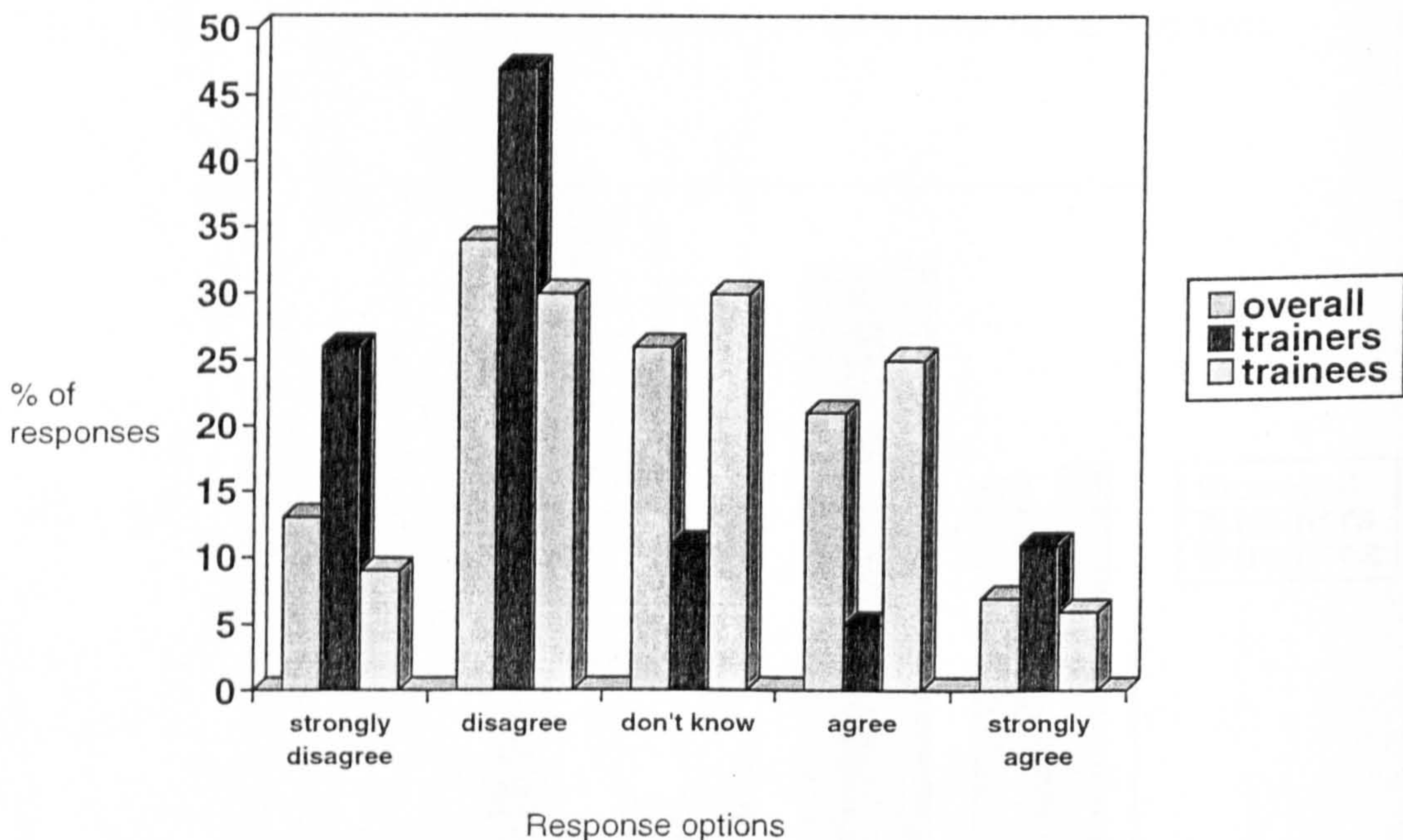
In terms of the 5 point rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain/don't know, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), the mean agreement rating to this item for trainees ( $M = 4.2$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ) was only marginally higher than it was for trainers ( $M = 4.1$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ).

A one-tailed, independent groups T-Test was carried out to test the statistical significance of this difference. This test showed that the observed difference in trainer and trainee means was not statistically significant ( $t = -.6$ ,  $df = 86$ ,  $p = .55$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

## 7.3.3 NOT ADEQUATELY ASSESSED IN TRAINING (Theme 3)

**Hypothesis 4:** Trainees will agree more strongly than trainers that it is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of the training

This hypothesis was tested via participants' responses to the survey item: *It is impossible for a trainee to fail the personal development component of their training.*



**Figure 25 Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'It is impossible for a trainee to fail the personal development component of their training'**

As can be seen from Figure 25, overall responses were fairly divided between the response options, with the largest proportion of respondents (47%) tending to disagree that it is impossible for a trainee to fail the personal development of their training, 28% tending to agree, and 26% responding 'uncertain/don't know'. However, a larger majority of trainers tended to disagree (73%) compared with trainees (39%). Conversely, a larger



## **STUDY 2, CHAPTER 7: SURVEY FINDINGS**

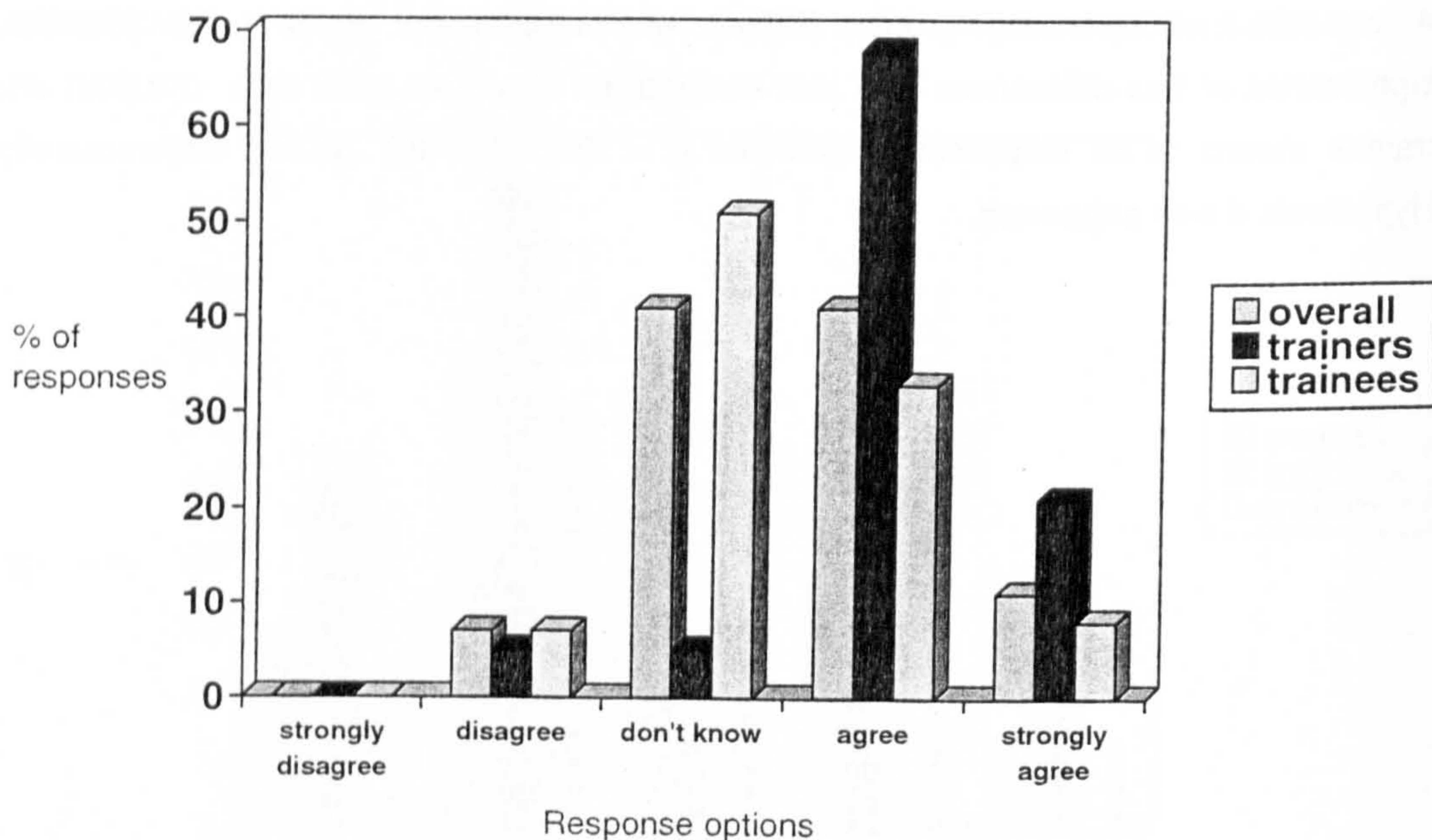
proportion of trainees tended to agree (30%) than did trainers (16%). Trainees also reported more 'uncertain/don't know' responses (30%) compared with trainers (11%).

In terms of the 5 point rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain/don't know, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), the mean agreement rating to this item was higher for trainees ( $M = 2.9$ ;  $SD = 1.1$ ) than for trainers ( $M = 2.3$ ;  $SD = 1.2$ ).

A one-tailed, independent groups T-Test was carried out to test the statistical significance of this difference. This test showed the observed difference in trainer and trainee means to be statistically significant ( $t = -2.2$ ,  $df = 86$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

**Hypothesis 5:** Trainers will agree more strongly than trainees that the way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment

This hypothesis was tested via participants' responses to the survey item: *The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment.*



**Figure 26** Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment'

As shown in Figure 26, overall, just over half of respondents (52%) tended to agree that the way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment, and no one strongly disagreed. However, 89% of trainers tended to agree compared with only 41% of trainees. Roughly half of trainees (51%) gave an 'uncertain/don't know' response.

In terms of the 5 point rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain/don't know, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), the mean agreement rating to this item for trainers was higher ( $M = 4.1$ ;  $SD = 0.7$ ) than it was for trainees ( $M = 3.4$ ;  $SD = 0.8$ ).



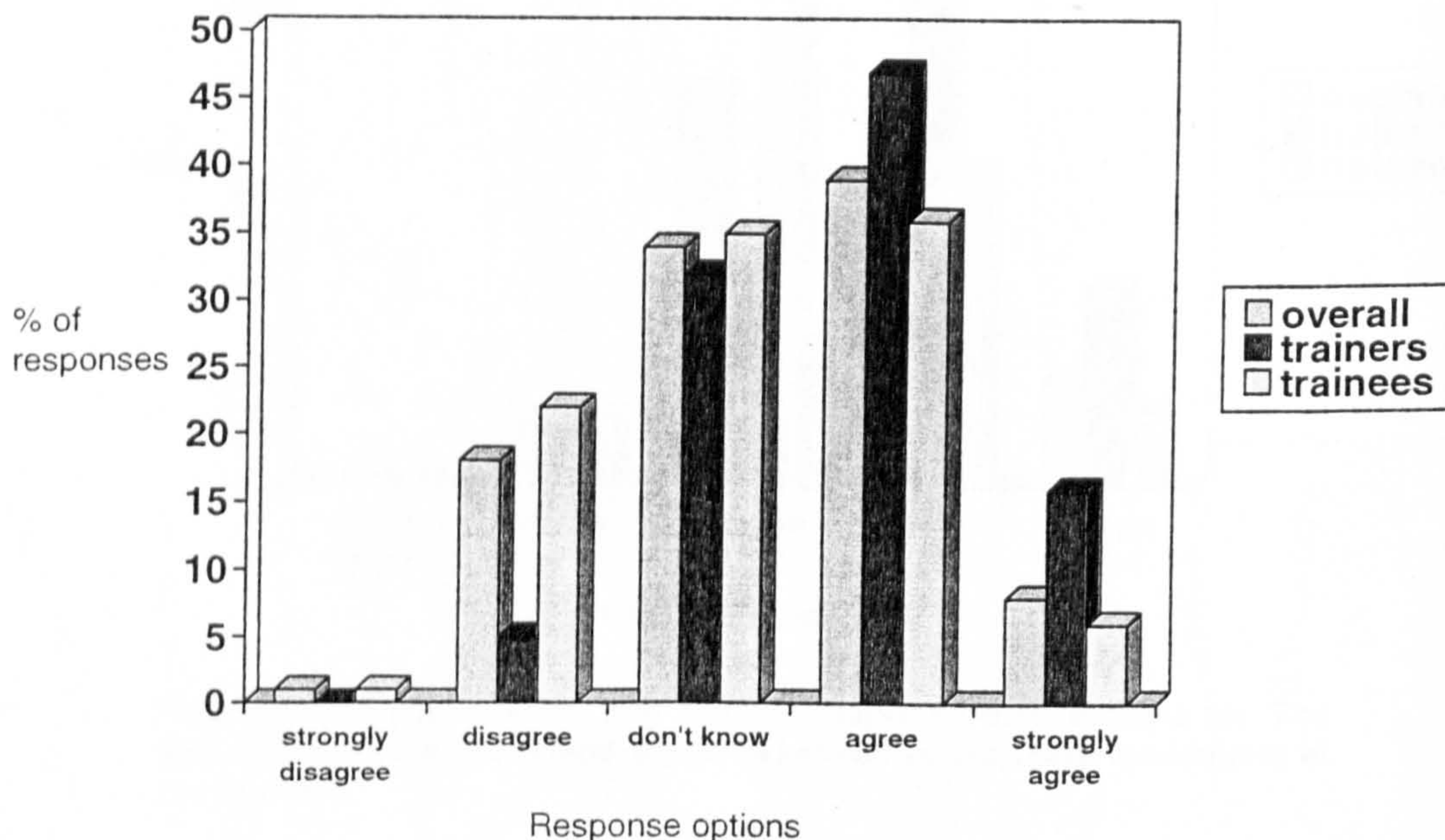
## **STUDY 2, CHAPTER 7: SURVEY FINIDNGS**

A one-tailed, independent groups T-Test was carried out to test the statistical significance of this difference. This test showed the observed difference in trainer and trainee means to be statistically significant ( $t = 3.2$ ,  $df = 86$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

## 7.3.4 NOT ADEQUATELY ASSESSED AT SELECTION (Theme 3)

**Hypothesis 6:** Trainers will agree more strongly than trainees that more should be done to improve the way that the personal suitability/readiness of prospective trainees is assessed.

This hypothesis was tested via participants' responses to the survey item: *I think that more should be done to improve the way that the personal suitability/readiness of prospective trainees is assessed.*



**Figure 27** Overall, Trainer and Trainee response distributions to: 'I think more should be done to improve the assessment of applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training'

As Figure 27 shows, a larger proportion of respondents tended to agree (47%) than disagree (19%) that more should be done to improve the assessment of applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training. Trainers tended to agree more strongly (63%) than trainees (42%).



## **STUDY 2, CHAPTER 7: SURVEY FINDINGS**

In terms of the 5 point rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain/don't know, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), the mean agreement rating to this item for trainers was higher ( $M = 3.7$ ;  $SD = 0.8$ ) than it was for trainees ( $M = 3.2$ ;  $SD = 0.9$ ).

A one-tailed, independent groups T-Test was carried out to test the statistical significance of this difference. This test showed the observed difference in trainer and trainee means to be statistically significant ( $t = 2.2$ ,  $df = 86$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Consequently, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

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## **7. 4     Discussing the survey findings in relation to the research questions and prior literature**

Having described in detail the findings of the quantitative analyses of the questionnaire survey, the following section will summarise and discuss these findings in relation to the prior literature and the questions of the study. These were:

1. How will survey participants respond to the themes and categories generated from the grounded theory analysis, as presented in the questionnaire format?
2. To what extent will survey participants' responses corroborate/validate the themes and categories of the qualitative analysis?
3. How do the responses of survey participants add to an emerging understanding of the themes and categories, and the wider research questions?

Each of these questions will be considered in relation to a series of broader issues addressed by the research.

### **7. 4. 1   Definitions of personal development**

Twenty-five definitional categories were generated by survey respondents. Nineteen of these were re-emergences of earlier grounded theory themes or categories relating to the definition of personal development. Six were new categories. 'Self-awareness' and 'Self-reflection' were the most frequently cited attributes of personal development. This is consistent with the emphasis that these concepts received in Study 1 and in the prior literature (e.g. BPS 2002; Mearns, 1997; Wilkins, 1997; Williams & Irving, 1997; Johns, 1996; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996; Jenkins, 1995; Bayne *et al*, 1994; Connor, 1994). The model of personal development proposed in Study 1 was revisited and modified in line with the new survey data.



Statistically significant differences were observed in the ways that trainers and trainees defined personal development. As predicted in Study 1, trainers demonstrated a greater tendency to define personal development in terms of its 'clinical function', while trainees were more prone to view the aims and objectives of personal development as completely different for every trainee. These differences might suggest that there is a tendency for trainees to conceptualise personal development more in terms of a broad, organic, process that is about becoming a more fully functioning person - what Irving & Williams (1999) have referred to as *personal growth*, while the trainers' conceptualisations tend more to describe a specific, purposeful process that is about becoming a more effective clinician – what Irving & Williams (1999) have referred to as *personal development proper*.

Contrary to expectations, trainers were just as likely as trainees to regard the development of their professional competence as important to their sense of personal development (see Hypothesis 3). However, in retrospect, it is possible to see how the absence of a significant difference between the responses of trainers and trainees here might have been attributable to the use of an insufficiently discerning questionnaire item. For example, this finding indicates that professional competence remains a salient personal issue well beyond the initial stages of training, which also bears out previous findings (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996). However, something that had seemed distinct about trainees in Study 1, compared with trainers, was their expressed need to demonstrate a level of *basic* clinical competence, as opposed to a general desire to build upon competence over the career span. It was this distinction that Hypothesis 3 was designed to test. However, it may be that the attitude statement '*Developing my professional competence is important to my sense of personal development*' used to test this hypothesis was not sufficiently discriminating to elicit such a distinction. Alternatively, an attitude statement such as '*Developing a basic sense of professional competence is important to my sense of personal development*' may have had greater success in differentiating in the predicted way between trainers and trainees.

#### **7. 4. 2 The importance of personal development**

A large consensus was observed between survey respondents regarding the importance attached to personal development for counselling psychologists. A lesser but still high consensus was also observed in participants' support for the personal therapy training requirement. These results were consistent with views expressed in Study 1, in past surveys of counselling psychologists (e.g. Williams, *et al*, 1999; Rothery, 1992), and in the counselling psychology literature (e.g. BPS, 2001).

#### **7. 4. 3 Experiences that affect personal development**

A range of personal and professional experiences were rated by survey participants as important to trainees' personal development. The range of experiences observed was consistent with the findings of Study 1, as well as Skovholt & Ronnestad's (1996) previous research on counsellor development. Although emphasised in counselling psychology training, 'personal therapy' was only rated as the sixth most important experience, after 'client work', 'supervision', 'personal life experiences', 'counselling skills training' and 'peer group contact'. These findings therefore corroborate the view of personal development as a broad and holistic concept/process that is inextricably intertwined with professional/training/personal life experiences and not something that can be simply equated with personal development 'methods', such as personal therapy. Furthermore, overall, the ratings of trainers and trainees were closely matched on this issue, suggesting that trainers' perceptions of the importance of particular experiences for trainees were largely accurate. The fact that personal and group 'tutorials' were amongst the experiences rated as least important to trainees' personal development would also be consistent with the criticisms that emerged from Study 1, that the current tutorial system could be used more effectively in relation to personal development.



#### **7. 4. 4 The definition of personal development in training**

There was a general tendency for respondents to believe that the aims and objectives of personal development were not clearly defined in training and that they should be more clearly defined. This provided moderate support for the findings of Study 1 and for observations and comments made by Irving & Williams (1999; Williams & Irving, 1997). However, the fact that a considerable minority of respondents felt that personal development was clearly defined in training, and that it did not need to be more clearly defined, suggests that the grounded theory category 'Not clearly defined' generated in Study 1 does not have complete validity within the wider counselling psychology training community.

#### **7. 4. 5 The discussion and integration of personal development in training**

Although views were quite divided, there was a general tendency to believe that personal development was not sufficiently discussed or integrated in training. This tendency appeared to be stronger amongst trainees. The divergence in views observed here therefore serves to indicate that the 'Not discussed or integrated' category from Study 1 has limited wider applicability. However, respondents were considerably less divided in their views regarding the issue of whether personal development should be *more* discussed and integrated in training, with the majority of both trainers and trainees believing that it should. This was consistent with views expressed in Study 1 and concerns expressed by previous authors (e.g. Dryden *et al*, 1995). However, a significant minority of respondents did express uncertainty or disagreement about the issue of discussion and integration. This alternative perspective might be explained in terms of the Study 1 theme 'Separated vs. Integrated', which introduced the idea that some trainers and trainees may have reservations about the idea of defining, discussing or integrating personal development more into training, based on the view that it may be more appropriate for the issue to remain private, separate from training, and the sole responsibility of individual trainees.

#### 7. 4. 6 Satisfaction with course provision

Respondents tended to feel more dissatisfied than satisfied with the provisions made for personal development during training. However the considerable variability in responses indicated that many respondents were satisfied. This finding therefore moderates the general level of discontent suggested by the findings of Study 1. That fact that trainers and trainees expressed similar levels of dissatisfaction with course provision was consistent with the findings of Study 1, as well as earlier suggestions made by Scanlon & Baillie (1994). A considerable number of respondents were also unsure as to whether or not they were satisfied with course provisions for personal development. It may be that this reflects a degree of uncertainty about what should be expected of courses with regards to their provisions for personal development.

Dissatisfied respondents provided a number of reasons for their dissatisfaction. These centred around the view that courses pay 'lip service' to personal development, that it is not sufficiently defined, discussed, integrated or assessed in the training, and that courses are too academic and not sufficiently experiential. These reasons therefore corroborate the earlier findings of Study 1 (e.g. the theme 'Separated vs. Integrated'), and echo previous concerns raised about counselling training generally (Dryden *et al*, 1995), and academically based courses specifically (Scanlon & Baillie, 1994). Satisfied respondents also provided a number of reasons for their satisfaction. These centred around the view that it was appropriate *not* to define, discuss or integrate personal development within the course, as personal development is a private matter for which only the individual trainee can be responsible. The emergence of this alternative perspective was also consistent with the findings of Study 1. Furthermore, taken together, the contrasting reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with course provisions for personal development serve to confirm and heighten the tension in views that first became apparent in Study 1, expressed in terms of the category 'Separated vs. Integrated'.



#### **7.4.7 The assessment of personal development**

The majority of respondents, especially trainers, believed that it was important to assess personal development during training. This was consistent with findings from Study 1 and views expressed in prior literature (e.g. Walker, 2002; Wheeler, 2002; Irving & Williams, 1999; Williams & Irving, 1997). The particular emphasis that trainers placed upon assessing personal development would seem to be consistent with their dual professional role: as assessors as well as facilitators of trainees' learning.

However, despite its widely regarded importance, the majority of respondents also reported being uncertain as to how exactly to assess personal development. This difficulty corroborates views expressed in Study 1 as well as in the previous literature (e.g. Wheeler, 2002; Berry & Woolfe, 1997; Connor, 1994). The fact that trainers reported a lesser degree of uncertainty about how to assess personal development is also consistent with findings from Study 1, where some trainers appeared confident about the issue of assessment.

As predicted in Study 1, trainers and trainees differed significantly in their views about whether or not it was possible to fail the personal development component of training, with trainers believing more strongly that it was possible. This is an interesting finding, which might be explained as a reflection of trainers' professional responsibility to protect clients from personally unsuitable or unready trainees (conceptualised in Study 1 in terms of the tension 'Responsibility to trainees vs. Responsibility to clients'). It might also be understood as a function of the tendency observed in Study 1 for trainees to feel that the very notion of assessing personal development is fundamentally at odds with the non-judgemental values of counselling. This idea was articulated in Study 1 through the tension 'Academia vs. Counselling' (see also Berry & Woolfe, 1997).

Furthermore, it also seems possible that this difference between trainers and trainees in their views regarding the assessment of personal development might be rooted in their significantly different ways of conceptualising personal development. For example, if one regards personal development as an organic process of growth that is about becoming a better person (as trainees tended to), it would seem quite natural and correct to assert that to judge or 'fail' a trainee for the kind of *person* they have, or have not, become

would contradict basic counselling values. However, if one regards personal development as a structured process of development that is about becoming a more effective clinician (as was more typical of trainers), the notion of judging and failing a trainee may not seem as philosophically problematic. This suggestion is consistent with an argument previously put forward by Irving & Williams (1999).

A large majority of trainers reported having serious doubts about the personal suitability of some trainees, while trainees tended to report being uncertain about this. The strong response here from trainers might be interpreted as reflecting their enhanced awareness of trainee suitability issues and their ethical responsibilities to protect potential clients from unsafe practitioners (Dryden *et al*, 1995; Guy, 1987). Therefore, this finding may also be viewed as consistent with the Study 1 tension 'Responsibility to trainees vs. Responsibility to clients'. Trainees' reported uncertainty about this issue could be interpreted as a reluctance to make personal 'judgements' about their fellow trainees, which they may have perceived as contradictory to the non-judgemental values of counselling.

As predicted in Study 1, trainers were more likely than trainees to regard the way that personal development was currently assessed as inadequate. Again, this interesting finding might be explained in terms of trainers' heightened ethical awareness and gate-keeping responsibilities (Guy, 1987). It would also follow on logically from trainers' stronger tendency to report having serious doubts about the personal suitability of some trainees. Many trainees reported being uncertain about whether or not current approaches to assessing personal development were adequate. This uncertainty might reflect a genuine lack of awareness amongst trainees regarding the assessment methods used on their courses, which, in turn, might indicate a problem of clarity or 'transparency' in the training (Wheeler, 2002).

#### **7. 4. 8 Trainee selection**

The majority of participants felt that trainee selection was important to the success of personal development during training. This view corroborated comments made in Study 1 and in previous literature (e.g. Mearns, 1997; Aveline, 1996; Dryden *et al*, 1995; Guy,



1987). The fact that trainers particularly emphasised this could be viewed as consistent with their professional experience and responsibility to ensure that trainees do not take on training for which they are personally unready (Aveline, 1996). However, a significant level of disagreement and uncertainty were also expressed regarding the importance of trainee selection to personal development, particularly by trainees.

These contrasting findings might be comprehended in terms of the Study 1 tension 'Important to assess vs. Not important to assess'. This introduced the idea that some respondents may be resistant to the idea of a highly rigorous trainee selection process, because they feel that this might lead to a narrow or prescriptive approach, which does not give sufficient consideration to individual diversity or to how dramatically trainees can change through the training process itself. These concerns mirror earlier comments made by Mearns (1997), which were discussed in Study 1 (see Chapter 5, section 5. 6. 2).

Participants were somewhat divided regarding whether or not they felt it was difficult to assess the personal suitability of prospective trainees. This variability within the wider counselling psychology training community indicates that the emphasis given in Study 1 and the prior literature (e.g. Dryden *et al*, 1995; Guy, 1987) to the *difficulty* of assessing personal suitability at selection should be moderated somewhat. Overall, trainers showed a slight tendency to believe that assessing personal suitability/readiness was *not* difficult, whilst trainees tended to believe that it was. Such a difference would seem consistent with the greater experience that trainers are likely to have in selection matters compared with trainees.

Overall, 'Personal statements' and 'interviews' using more than one selector were felt to be the most useful tools for assessing the personal suitability of course applicants. This finding is consistent with the emphasis that these two methods received in Study 1, as well as in the prior literature (Dryden *et al*, 1995; Guy, 1987). The higher ratings given to interviews (group and individual) that use a panel of selectors suggest that respondents felt it was important to involve more than one selector in the assessment of personal suitability. This would also be consistent with views expressed in Study 1 and in the prior literature (see Connor, 1994). Using a combination of selection methods to assess personal suitability was also cited as an important approach. Furthermore, this

suggestion seems to parallel the importance also given to a multi-method approach in the areas of facilitation and assessment, as an appropriate response to the complex, idiosyncratic and subjective nature of personal development.

As predicted by Study 1, trainers were significantly more likely than trainees to regard current approaches to selection as inadequate. This difference was viewed as reflecting trainers' ethical concerns for the well-being of both trainees and their potential clients. It is also logically consistent with the greater doubts that trainers reported having about the personal suitability of some trainees. However, a considerable level of disagreement and uncertainty was also expressed about whether or not current selection methods were adequate. This finding might be understood as resistance to developing a more rigorous approach to trainee selection or a lack of understanding or belief in its links with subsequent personal development.

#### **7. 4. 9 Concluding questions**

Respondents suggested a number of changes that they would like to see to the way that personal development is addressed in counselling psychology training. These included weaving personal development more actively into the training programme; using tutorials to discuss personal development issues; monitoring personal development more closely, assessing it more systematically; giving ongoing feedback to trainees; and providing more opportunities for experiential, as opposed to academic, learning. These suggestions clearly corroborated survey respondents' previously reported dissatisfactions. They also provided further validation for themes that emerged previously in Study 1, such as 'Not defined', 'Not discussed or integrated', 'Not adequately assessed' and 'Academic education vs. experiential training', and echo concerns voiced in prior literature (e.g. Wheeler, 2002; Irving & Williams, 1999; Williams & Irving, 1996; Dryden *et al*, 1995; Connor, 1994; Scanlon & Baillie, 1994).

Participants also highlighted areas in which they would like to see further research and discussion. These included developing a more in-depth understanding of the concept and process of personal development; investigating a range of facilitation methods; matching learning strategies to individual needs; exploring the role of the training



institute as the provider of a 'secure base'; investigating how to assess personal development ethically and adequately, and how to deal with trainees who do not develop satisfactorily. Many of these suggestions again provide support for suggestions and concerns that have been put forward in recent literature (e.g. Wheeler, 2002; Irving & Williams, 1999, 1995; Mearns, 1997; Johns, 1996).

The majority of participants regarded further research on personal development as an important objective. Some respondents also reported that participating in the study had stimulated fresh thought or uncertainty about personal development issues. This was consistent with the subjective effects reported by participants of Study 1. Respondents also provided some feedback on the questionnaire itself. Some reported feeling that it was long and tiring to complete or that the quantitative response format was limiting. However, others reported finding the questionnaire a useful and enjoyable reflective experience and viewed the research itself as an encouraging sign of progress.

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## **7.5 Conclusion**

Overall, it seems possible to conclude that a significant degree of corroboration was achieved between the findings of the quantitative survey and the qualitative interviews. Results from the questionnaires of Study 2 provided considerable supportive evidence for the validity of the themes and categories generated by the grounded theory analysis of Study 1. Furthermore, 5 of the 6 hypotheses put forward on the basis of the qualitative analysis were upheld in the quantitative phase. In addition, the survey data served to highlight where themes or categories from the grounded theory had limited wider applicability, and where alternative perspectives were therefore necessary to provide a fuller more balanced account of participants' views and experiences regarding the key research questions. In this way, the quantitative data helped to expand and refine, as well as validate, an emerging conceptual/theoretical framework for understanding trainers' and trainees' views and experiences of personal development. More broadly, through the present study, a significant amount of additional substantiation for a variety of critical observations and findings from previous literature on personal development

was also acquired. Examining some of the practical implications of these findings for counselling psychology training will constitute an important objective of the following final chapter.

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# CHAPTER 8

## **CHAPTER 8: IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSIONS**



# IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

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## 8.1 Overview

The results of the investigations carried out for the present research have been presented and discussed in detail. This final chapter aims to reflect on the significance of these findings more broadly and to identify some implications for counselling psychology training. The work will also be evaluated from a methodological perspective, and suggestions will be made for further research in the area, before offering some closing thoughts.

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## 8.2 Re-visiting the claim that personal development is an 'ill-defined' area of training

Throughout the present research, the claim that personal development has remained a poorly articulated area of counselling training, despite its increasingly acknowledged importance, has provided an important focal concern (Irving & Williams, 1999; Williams & Irving, 1996). At the conclusion of the earlier critical review (see Chapter 2), it was suggested that there was a small but significant body of literature that either implicitly or explicitly supported this observation, although some important exceptions were also identified. Moreover, it was considered essential to systematically evaluate this assertion further using an evidence-based, rather than anecdotal, approach that focused on counselling psychology training. Having now carried out a systematic investigation of the area, it is therefore timely to reconsider this claim in the light of the findings produced.

Overall, the evidence generated through the present research effort appears to support rather than refute the allegation that personal development is an inadequately defined domain of counselling psychology training, and to corroborate a variety of related concerns and arguments voiced in the existing literature. For example, evidence emerged from participants' definitions which supported Irving & Williams' (1999) contention that the concepts of *personal development* and *personal growth* might be confused in the training context. However, the data also indicated that this confusion might be more typical of trainees than trainers, which is a significant new insight. Also, although the definitions generated in the present research contained many of the same elements as the personal development curricula proposed by previous authors (Mearns, 1997; Johns, 1996; Connor, 1994), they tended not to exhibit a comparable level of comprehensiveness, structure or specificity as this existing work. Consequently, although the multifaceted nature of the definitions produced was consistent with the theoretically pluralistic ethos of counselling psychology, the comparative lack of formulation underpinning these appeared to suggest an eclectic mixture, rather than a purposeful integration, of concepts.

Some support was also found for Williams & Irving's (1996) suggestion that personal development may be inadequately supported and 'left to chance' in training. Within the present research, this seemed to be associated more with the pragmatic separation of personal development from the main body of the counselling psychology training and its academic context, than with a Rogerian conviction that personal development will occur naturally during the training. Evidence for this separated approach was also consistent with observations made by previous writers about the way in which personal development may sometimes appear tagged onto the training experience through a personal therapy requirement (Mearns, 1997; Dryden *et al*, 1995). Furthermore, the observation made by participants in the present research that counselling psychology training tends to de-emphasise experiential forms of learning in favour of more traditional academic methods clearly corroborated data from an earlier study of counsellor training in institutes of higher education, by Scanlon & Baillie (1994).

However, as well as evidence which supported the view of personal development as an ill-defined area of training, the present research also produced data containing



constructive insights, which may be used to further develop theory, practice and research in this area. These insights are incorporated into the following discussions.

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### **8.3 Implications for counselling psychology training**

The following sections aim to identify some of the possible implications of the findings from the present research for counselling psychology training. This will be done in relation to the four key areas: the definition of personal development, the facilitation of personal development, the assessment of personal development and the selection of trainees.

#### **8.3.1 Implications for the definition of personal development**

The possible implications for training of the conceptual confusion of personal development and personal growth observed in the present research have already been identified by Irving & Williams (1999) and discussed in Chapter 2. However, findings from the present research also suggested that this confusion may be associated with differences in the way that trainers and trainees conceptualise personal development. The fact that trainees seem to define it more in terms of an organic, non-specifiable, individually unique process that is about becoming a more fully functioning person, while trainers view it more as a proactive, structured, and professionally universal process that is about becoming a more effective clinician may itself have important implications for training.

For example, it seems important to consider the question of whether such a difference between trainers and trainees should be viewed as potentially problematic and something that courses should seek to address. On the one hand, it seems natural to expect trainees to bring conceptual perspectives that reflect their earlier stage of cognitive-professional development (see Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996). However, on the

other hand, it also seems essential that students recognise that the primary purpose of their personal development work in training is a professional one (see Irving & Williams, 1999; Johns, 1996). Furthermore, findings from previous research suggest that having an awareness of the 'developmental metagoals' that underpin training practices, such as personal development work, is essential to the facilitation of optimal counsellor development in the long run (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1996; 131).

These points seem to suggest that, while it is important to recognise that conceptual differences will naturally arise between practitioners at different developmental stages, it is also important to address any significant discrepancies that exist between the way that trainers and trainees are conceptualising personal development, in order to ensure that trainees are on the right track in terms of their personal-professional 'metagoals'. One way to increase trainees' awareness and appreciation of the basic professional aims of 'personal development' might be to ensure that some explicit discussion of the subject is incorporated into programmes, perhaps near the beginning of training. Such discussion might facilitate trainees' progression to a more advanced way of conceptualising personal development and its relationship to clinical functioning.

Of course, such suggestions presume that trainers have already gained clarity and consensus themselves regarding a conceptualisation of personal development. Findings from the present research suggest that this is not necessarily the case, as a significant minority of trainers appeared to view personal development, like trainees, more as a process of personal growth than clinical development. Given this level of divergence in conceptualisations of personal development, and its possible implications for training and professional coherence, it would seem important for those involved in counselling psychology training to clarify whether they are talking about the same basic phenomenon when they refer to 'personal development'. Moreover, this need for clarification might also be viewed as part of a broader need in counselling psychology training to develop a more theoretically explicit underpinning for personal development work.



### 8.3.2 Implications for the facilitation of personal development

The relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with course provisions for personal development observed in the present research, and the reasons given for this dissatisfaction, give rise to an important question regarding whether counselling psychology training should seek to develop a more integrated approach to personal development.

As reported in Chapter 2, the available literature is quite clear on this issue and argues that there are significant limitations to not integrating personal development and separating it out from the training, primarily because such an approach makes it difficult for courses to ensure that trainees are engaging sufficiently in the process and actively addressing the necessary personal issues (Mearns, 1997; Dryden *et al*, 1995). Indeed, trainees paying lip service to personal development was clearly identified as a current problem by participants in the present research. Moreover, it seems significant that *courses*, as well as the trainees, were described in the present research as paying lip service to personal development. If courses hope to reduce the problem of trainee non-engagement, it may therefore be necessary for them to first demonstrate more explicitly to trainees their own commitment to the personal development dimension of training.

Available literature and present data also clearly suggest that it is limiting and inappropriate to equate personal development with the experience of personal therapy. Furthermore, it seems particularly significant that the importance ratings given by trainers to the various personal experiences presented in Study 2 were strikingly similar to those reported by trainees, including their relatively low ratings of personal therapy. This finding suggests that trainers are well aware of the range and relative importance to personal development of trainees' experiences, including the fact that personal therapy is not as significant as other experiences, such as client work and supervision.

It is therefore interesting to consider why a tendency to equate personal development with the experience of personal therapy in counselling psychology training still seems to persist, despite this awareness amongst trainers. Extrapolating from Scanlon & Baillie's (1994) previously discussed argument, it may be that, although counselling psychology trainers are aware of the significance of experiences besides personal therapy, it has

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been difficult for them to introduce a more holistic, experiential and integrated approach to personal development because this is not supported by a traditional university learning environment. Consequently, it may be that the only way that counselling psychology programmes have felt able to build 'personal development' into their courses, without moving outside of mainstream academia, has been to 'equate' it with a personal therapy requirement that resides beyond the confines of the core training environment.

However, Scanlon & Baillie (1994) have also argued that trainers and trainees on counsellor training courses within institutes of higher education should not settle for a dissatisfactory status quo, but should actively seek to develop approaches to training that they feel are more appropriate to the needs of 'reflective practitioners'. Consequently, they call for concerted action by the relevant parties to bring about change. Whether or not counselling psychology training should seek to answer this call may be a matter for further debate within the discipline.

The prospect of developing a more integrated approach to personal development in counselling psychology training would raise important questions about *how* this could be done, given the limitations that appear to have been imposed by its academic moorings. On the basis of the present research findings, there appear to be a number of simple ways in which change might be initiated, some of which were identified by the participants themselves (see Chapter 7, section 7. 2. 9).

For instance, time allocated within the training programme to openly discussing personal development issues would seem to be a relatively straightforward, but effective, way to integrate the topic into training and provide a forum for addressing any questions or concerns that trainees may have. Such discussions might also help to educate trainees about the professional relevance of personal development and foster a long-term commitment to it. Incorporating more experiential and practical modules into course syllabi would also seem to be another way in which personal development could find a more central place within training.

Given the clear importance to trainees' personal development of a diversity of personal and professional experiences, it also seems important to ensure that courses are able to



recognise and harness the personal learning that takes place within these experiences. Currently in counselling psychology training, the personal journal is a key mechanism by which trainees are encouraged to reflect on and bring together the various strands of their personal and professional learning. However, the relatively low importance ratings given to the journal as a means of facilitating personal development in the present research suggests that it is not currently regarded by trainers or trainees as a particularly important developmental tool. Given the desire expressed by some participants within the present research for a more defined approach to personal development facilitation, it may be that trainees would benefit from a more systematic approach to the use of the personal journal. Cross & Papadapolous (2001) have devised a method for guiding trainees' personal and professional reflection in a structured and comprehensive way. It may be that this work would provide a useful framework for developing the use of the personal journal, or other reflective learning exercises, within a counselling psychology training context.

Beyond modifications to syllabus style and structure, greater integration of personal development into counselling psychology training might also be facilitated by changes to the physical environment of the course. One obvious way in which the traditional academic teaching ethos is manifested is in the lay out of university lecture theatres and teaching facilities. Based on a fixed seating arrangement in which the teacher delivers a lecture from the front of the class to a seated group of students, this lay out encourages a didactic dynamic between teachers and learners, which may not always be appropriate to the experiential and practice-based kinds of learning required in counselling psychology training. Consequently, adapting physical learning environments so that they are better equipped to meet the needs of counselling psychology trainees (e.g. flexible or circular seating arrangements, warmer coloured interiors, gentle lighting and soft furnishings), might also help to create a psychological climate that is more conducive to self-exploration and experiential learning.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of integrating 'personal development' more effectively into the educational experience of students may also have some wider relevance for the contemporary university setting, not just for counselling courses. For example, Owen (2002) has critically researched the efficacy of the current personal tutor system, and suggested that its pastoral aims and function tend to be poorly realised.

### 8. 3. 3 Implications for the assessment of personal development

Although the majority of participants in this research, particularly trainers, believed that it was important to assess personal development during training, most also reported being uncertain about how to do this. Perhaps unsurprisingly the majority of respondents, and especially trainers, also felt that current approaches to assessing personal development were inadequate. Furthermore, Wheeler (2002) has emphasised the basic importance of transparency regarding the methods and criteria used for assessing personal development, and suggests that a lack of clarity and transparency tends to breed a climate of insecurity amongst trainees. However, the fact that trainees within the present research tended to express high levels of uncertainty about how personal development might be assessed, and whether or not current methods were adequate, seems to suggest that, if concrete methods for assessing personal development were in place on their courses, trainees were not aware of them.

The significance of these findings is self-evident and clearly implies that there is considerable scope within counselling psychology training for developing a more definite, transparent and adequate methodology for the assessment of trainees' personal development. However, it is also important to note that a large number of trainers in Study 2 did *not* feel uncertain about how to assess trainees' personal development. This finding implies that trainers varied considerably in terms of their confidence in addressing this issue, and that some may have clearer and more systematic approaches to assessing personal development than others. It would certainly be useful to know more about the techniques of counselling psychology trainers who report feeling confident about how to assess personal development.

The assessment of personal development in counselling psychology training is perhaps the most complex and dilemmatic of the issues addressed by the present research. In large part, this seems due to the particular way that the issue highlights the simmering tension between the traditional, non-judgemental, humanistic values of counselling and the rigorous, 'judgemental' academic/professional values that are implied by the very concept of assessment.



Although much scope clearly remains for further work to ascertain and develop concrete strategies for assessing trainees' personal development in a rigorous yet congruent way, it is perhaps possible to discern from the present findings the importance of the basic principle of integration when broaching this issue in training.

Integrating personal development at a fundamental level into the training curriculum would seem to have profound 'knock-on' benefits for the assessment of trainees. For example, the more that personal development is integrated into the training process, the easier it is for trainers to monitor, support and feedback to trainees regarding their progress. The more closely that development is monitored within the training, the easier it is for trainers to ensure that trainees are engaging effectively in the process, and not avoiding or paying 'lip service' to it. In turn, better engagement in the process, will naturally lead to more optimal development and objective clinical gains for trainees, and this should ultimately reduce the incidence of assessment dilemmas for trainers and need to fail individual trainees because they have not developed satisfactorily. In other words, a close integration of personal development into training should enable the processes of assessment and facilitation to become merged into one ongoing, reciprocal and seamless journey that enables trainers and trainees to attenuate or circumvent many of the traditionally perceived tensions.

### 8.3.4 Implications for the selection of trainees

Most participants believed that trainee selection was important to the success of personal development during the training. The majority of trainers in Study 2 also felt that more should be done to assess applicants' personal suitability for training. The large number of trainers who reported having serious doubts about some trainees was also quite striking. As with the assessment of personal development during training, these results imply that there is a need to develop more effective and rigorous methods for selecting trainees.

Evidence from the present research suggests that personal statements and group or individual interviews using a panel of selectors may currently be the most useful methods. Further key principles also include involving more than one selector in the

assessment process to balance the effects of subjective bias and ensuring that selectors have clear shared criteria regarding the personal qualities and capacities that they are looking for. During interviews it also seems crucial to ensure that trainees are aware of the personal and emotional demands of the training and that they have given serious consideration to their decision to enter training.

Furthermore, in light of the significant degree of dissatisfaction expressed by trainees in the present research regarding the provisions made for personal development, it also seems important to make sure that candidates enter training with realistic expectations. If a significant number of trainees are expressing dissatisfaction, this might be understood as an indication that their expectations of course provision have not been met, which may, in turn, suggest that they were not given a sufficiently clear understanding of the way that personal development was, or was not, going to be addressed on the course. Furthermore, if counselling psychology courses expect trainees to be completely responsible for overseeing and integrating their own personal development, it also might be useful for courses to make this clear to prospective trainees and to give greater weight in their selection criteria to the capacities of 'autonomy' and 'active learning'.

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#### **8.4 Critically evaluating the research**

Having highlighted and discussed some possible implications of the findings from the present research for counselling psychology training, the following sections aim to critically evaluate the research from a methodological perspective. This will provide a clearer basis for assessing the significance of the findings. The discussion will proceed by identifying particular strengths and limitations of the research.



#### 8.4.1 Strengths

The two studies carried out enabled the generation of significant insights in response to the 4 key research questions: 1) how those involved in counselling psychology training define and view personal development; 2) the extent to which they differ in their views and experiences; 3) how satisfied they are with the way that personal development is defined, facilitated and assessed, both during training and at selection; and 4) what their dissatisfactions are and how they feel these could be addressed. Investigating the perspectives of both counselling psychology trainers and trainees also proved fruitful and led to the illumination of some interesting points of consonance and dissonance between these two groups.

The mixed qualitative-quantitative methodology employed proved instrumental in gaining these insights. As had been hoped, the qualitative study provided a detailed source of data on participants' views and experiences, and enabled the generation of a grounded theoretical framework for conceptualising these in a coherent manner. Particularly important in this respect was theme of 'tensions', which offered a consistently useful and parsimonious way of accounting for the many complexities and diversities observed within the data. The grounded theory themes and categories also provided a rich foundation for the generation of attitude statements used to test their validity within a quantitative framework. In their questionnaire format, these themes and categories emerged as pivotal 'units of comparison' around which the views and experiences of survey participants demonstrated both significant convergences and divergences. Furthermore, convergences and divergences within the survey data often mapped onto those observed previously within the qualitative study, thereby serving a cross-validating function. However, an important additional contribution of the quantitative study was that it provided a firmer basis for extrapolating about the wider prevalence of convergences and divergences in personal development views and experiences within the counselling psychology training community, thereby ensuring a more comprehensive and balanced account.

#### 8.4.2 Limitations

As implied by the foregoing points, an important part of the rationale for employing both qualitative and quantitative methods within the present research was to harness the strengths and compensate for the limitations intrinsic to each (Hammersley, 1996). For instance, an advantage of the qualitative approach is that it offers explanatory depth but sacrifices breadth, while the quantitative approach offers explanatory breadth, but sacrifices depth. Furthermore, while qualitative methods seek to engage with data complexity, quantitative methods tend towards the simplification or reduction of data complexity. Given these differences and the natural complexity of the research topic, methodological limitations seem most apparent in relation to the quantitative dimensions of the present work.

For example, one limitation of Study 2, which was actually identified by two survey respondents, was that the quantitative response format of questionnaire items limited participants' ability to address the complexity of the issues as they saw them. In other words, the use of pre-defined statements and rating scales to elicit and represent participants' views was experienced as overly simplistic and not ideally suited to the subject matter. However, this criticism may be simultaneously viewed as confirming the appropriateness of the decision to incorporate a qualitative method within the current project.

Furthermore, the attitude statements used in the questionnaire also represented an attempt to simplify complex concepts in a way that could be criticised for being reductionistic. This simplification provided a pragmatic means by which themes and categories from Study 1 could be presented to a larger sample of participants. However, it is important to recognise the limitations and dangers of condensing complex ideas into single statements. For instance, a single statement representation of a theme or category may be limited in its capacity to clearly convey its meaning. This could result in the reduced construct validity of an item (Rust & Golombok, 1989), which may in turn compromise the corroborative validity of the questionnaire. By the same token, a simplified approach may also increase the probability that respondents will interpret the meaning of an item in different ways. While this may be less of a concern within the context of an interview, where individual meanings can be checked out, it may be more



problematic within the context of an anonymous questionnaire that uses a closed response format. Indeed, there is evidence from Study 2 (see sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2) to suggest that survey participants did not always interpret the meaning of certain items as intended. One possible way of improving the probability that participants will interpret the meaning of attitude statements about personal development in a uniform way would be to carry out an extensive piloting process in which respondents are asked to verbalise their understandings of individual questionnaire items to check that these match the researcher's intentions.

Another point that can be raised which, though not necessarily a limitation, might still be important to consider when evaluating the findings of the present research concerns the way in which the nature of the questions asked in the two studies may have stimulated respondents to question, challenge or be dissatisfied with the way that personal development was addressed on their course. Given the critically reflective aims of the project, many of the issues raised in the two studies required participants to engage not only in self-reflection, but also in evaluation of their own courses. Consequently, it is possible that respondents may have become more critical of their training programmes through participation in the research and this may have been reflected in the way they responded to items on the questionnaire. Indeed, as reported in Chapter 7, one survey participant commented that, after completing the questionnaire, they had started to wonder whether personal development should be more integrated into training.

Although it was an explicit aim of the research to prompt critical reflection on personal development in counselling psychology training, from a 'positivist' perspective, the impact of the research upon respondents in this way might be regarded as having a priming or biasing effect, which the researcher should aim to eliminate or control for. For example, it could be argued that participants might have responded differently to the survey question about how satisfied they were with the provisions made for personal development if it had been asked in isolation from other provocative contextual items. Indeed, this might make for an interesting further investigation. However, from a qualitative perspective, the potential impact of the research upon participants may be viewed not only as inevitable but also as a central and potentially constructive aspect of the reflexive relationship that exists between the researcher and the researched (Smith, 1996).

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Given that a key aim of the quantitative study was to provide a basis for establishing the wider validity of the findings, it is also important to draw attention to some considerations in evaluating this aspect of the research.

One factor that is fundamental to gauging the transferability of research findings is the size and representativeness of the sample used in relation to the broader population of interest (Oppenheim, 1992). The broader population of interest for the present research comprised all trainers and trainees engaged in counselling psychology training at four institutions accredited for both Parts 1 and 2 of the BPS Diploma in Counselling Psychology. As reported previously (Chapter 6, section 6. 3), it was estimated that this population consisted of 269 individuals. Of these, 222 received a copy of the questionnaire, and of these, 88 completed and returned a questionnaire. This 40% response rate would normally be regarded as moderate. However, it could be argued that the fact that such a large proportion of the whole population of interest received (83%) and returned (33%) a questionnaire boosts the significance of this response rate and strengthens the transferability of the findings.

Greater confidence in the transferability of the findings would, of course, be possible with an even larger sample of the target population. Furthermore, a larger number of participants would also increase the robustness of any observed statistical effects, as well as enable the use of more powerful inferential statistical tests, such as factor and regression analyses. These are quantitative techniques that can be used to highlight associations and explore causal relationships between a large numbers of research variables (Kinnear & Gray, 1996). Clearly, such approaches might have some value in further elucidating and testing speculations about how particular views and experiences expressed within the present research might inter-relate, and might therefore be useful in further research.

It is also important to recognise potential sources of bias within the sample used. Given the voluntary self-selecting basis for participation in the present research, one possibility is that the sample obtained may have differed in important ways from the wider counselling psychology training population. For example, it could be argued that those who elected to participate were likely to be those trainers and trainees who had a particular interest in, or views about, personal development.



It is also important to note that the present research did not seek to include trainers and trainees from institutions that were accredited to only Part 1 of BPS Diploma in Counselling Psychology. This was principally due to a desire to avoid recruiting a sample that was severely biased towards trainers and trainees engaged in only a part of the whole counselling psychology training process. It is therefore possible that the findings of the present research may not be as transferable to trainers and trainees at institutions that were not included in the present sample for this reason.

In addition, the present research did not include those counselling psychology trainees who were engaged in the BPS Diploma in Counselling Psychology via the 'independent route'. These candidates do not attend an accredited training course, but instead devise and follow their own BPS approved programme of training. Consequently, there may be limitations regarding the transferability of the present findings to this particular group of counselling psychology trainees. However, given their distinctive training path, the views and experiences of trainees on the independent route regarding personal development may therefore be worthy of investigation in their own right.

More broadly, it is also important to highlight that the participants of the present research were all drawn from a UK sample of counselling psychology trainers and trainees. Thus, the applicability of the data derived from the foregoing studies to counselling psychology trainings in other countries, such as the US and Australia, cannot be assumed. Indeed, research on approaches to personal development in these other trainings might itself provide an interesting comparative basis for the findings of the present research.

Finally, as explained in Chapter 6 (section 6. 4), the number of participants from the four training institutions who participated in the survey was not equal. This inequality was a natural reflection of differences in the sizes of the different training programmes. However, this inequality means that caution should be exercised in drawing inferences from the survey data about individual participating institutions.

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## 8. 5 Suggestions for further research

The majority of respondents in the survey (68%) believed that it was important or very important for further research to be carried out on personal development. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, due to the undeveloped nature of the literature on this topic, an important aim of the current project was to create a new agenda for further research on personal development. Consequently, although a number of questions have been addressed in a fruitful way by the present investigations, many more still remain that require further investigation. The following sections will consider some of these questions and how further research might attempt to address them. Suggestions will be made in relation to four key areas: the definition of personal development, the facilitation of personal development, the assessment of personal development, and the selection of trainees.<sup>2</sup>

### 8. 5. 1 Further research on the definition of personal development

Given that a significant divergence was observed in the present research between the ways in which trainers and trainees defined personal development, an interesting aim for further research might be to explore how conceptualisations of personal development evolve over the professional life course. For instance, the more sophisticated 'personal development' view of trainers compared with the more naïve 'personal growth' view of trainees seems likely to be a function of increased clinical experience. Further research might help to elucidate these evolving meanings and the process of personal development over the career span, as well as the methods and experiences that become relevant at different developmental stages.

Such work might also serve to deepen an understanding of the mechanisms that underlie personal development. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, *how* counsellor personal development happens is an area that has received even less attention in the literature than the question of *what* counsellor personal development is. Together, Irving & Williams' (1999) work differentiating the concepts of personal development and personal

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<sup>2</sup> As described previously, participants in the present research contributed their own ideas and suggestions for further research. These have been incorporated into the following discussions.



growth, Mearns' (1997) postulation of three key stages in personal development (i.e. self-awareness, self-understanding and self-experimentation), and the tentative model of personal development proposed in the present research may provide the beginnings of a framework for conceptualising the process of counsellor personal development during training, which could guide further empirical explorations of this process.

#### 8. 5. 2 Further research on the facilitation of personal development

Questions about the mechanisms underlying the process of personal development for clinicians are inextricably related to questions about the different methods and experiences that may be used to facilitate this process. Given that a diversity of methods and experiences appear to be significant to personal development during training, it seems important to develop a better understanding of *how* exactly these different experiences impact on personal development.

To date, research has studied the effects of common facilitation methods, such as personal therapy and personal development groups. However, findings from the present research emphasised the greater importance to trainees' personal development of other experiences such as client work, supervision, counselling skills workshops, peer group support and personal life. Consequently, future studies might focus on investigating the mechanisms by which these experiences impact on personal development, and what their specific effects might be. For instance, further research might investigate whether particular kinds of personal learning or development are brought about by the experiences of client work or counselling skills workshops compared with, say, personal therapy and personal development groups.

Further research might also investigate possible differences in the way that personal development methods and experiences affect individual trainees. Previous research by Williams & Irving (1996) found significant differences in the experienced benefits of personal development group work for individual trainees, which they explained in terms of the preferred personal learning styles of trainees. It may be that similar differences exist in relation to other personal development methods, and it seems plausible to suggest that a better understanding of the different ways that individual trainees may

experience different personal development methods could be harnessed in a constructive way by trainers and trainees.

The concept of personal learning styles might also be useful in understanding the problem of trainee non-engagement. For instance, it may be that a trainees' non-engagement with a particular personal development method, such as personal therapy, could reflect a significant mismatch between the method and their preferred learning style. It also seems possible that personal learning styles might account for differences in levels of trainee satisfaction with course provision. For instance, trainees who are *dissatisfied* and would like personal development to be more defined, discussed or integrated into training may be the kinds of learners who prefer learning goals and activities to be clearly defined and highly structured (see Williams & Irving, 1996). On the other hand, trainees who are *satisfied* with course provisions and happy to get on with personal development under their own steam, without outside assistance, may be naturally more autonomous students who enjoy active, self-directed learning. Further investigation of the possible mediating effects of personal learning styles in the facilitation of trainee personal development would enable these hypotheses to be further explored.

### 8. 5. 3 Further research on the assessment of personal development

The findings of the present research clearly demonstrate that respondents felt there was considerable scope for improving approaches to the assessment of personal development during training. However, despite being generally recognised as a complex and dilemmatic task, a considerable number of trainees expressed confidence in their ability to assess trainees' personal development. Further research might therefore attempt to explore in greater detail the assessment approaches of such trainers, and to generate further knowledge about concrete 'techniques' that may be fruitfully employed. Moreover, given the contrast of views expressed within the present investigations regarding the question of how, or even if, to assess personal development, it seems important for counselling psychologists to establish a more explicitly articulated position on this key training issue.



Another avenue that might repay more detailed exploration would be to investigate trainers' experiences of dilemmas regarding the assessment of trainee personal development. For instance, the difficulty of knowing how to deal with trainees who fail to develop satisfactorily, but who are unable to recognise this, was highlighted as an important issue for further research by a trainer within the survey sample. Research on this issue might help to provide insights into the prevalence of such dilemmas within counselling psychology training and a medium for sharing experiences and methods that might be useful in responding effectively and ethically to these particularly difficult scenarios.

#### **8. 5. 4 Further research on the selection of trainees**

As with the issue of assessing personal development, the results of the present research clearly indicate that participants felt there was considerable scope within counselling psychology for improving trainee selection methods. Although assessing personal suitability for training is generally recognised in the literature as a difficult task, many trainers within the present research seemed confident in their abilities to do this effectively. Further research might therefore specifically investigate the selection criteria and methods advocated by such trainers. Future studies could also seek to evaluate the predictive power of a variety of selection methods, by carrying out longitudinal studies that incorporate regression analyses. Such analyses would enable causal relationships between the criteria/methods used and the subsequent developmental progress of trainees to be objectively tested. As suggested by a participant in the present research, further research might also explore the usefulness to counselling psychology training of selection techniques and approaches used within specialist occupational disciplines.

#### **8. 5. 5 Collaboration within the discipline**

Implicit within many of the foregoing suggestions for further research on personal development is the belief that there is something useful to be gained from pooling the views, experiences and methods of counselling psychologists regarding complex

training issues. Carrying out and disseminating research may provide a useful tool to this end. However, it also seems important for counselling psychologists to make use of other available means for learning about and benefiting from one another's experience. For example, the opportunities for collaborative communication within the discipline that are afforded by BPS committee and conference meetings, may provide an invaluable adjunct to research and an important forum in which practitioners can share their wisdom and skills, and bring about collective change where necessary.

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## 8.6 Closing thoughts

Given the still embryonic nature of the personal development literature, the present research has aimed as much to clarify important questions and issues that require consideration, as it has to provide its own answers. As such, the findings of the present research should be considered as providing a starting point and a springboard for further detailed work. Furthermore, given that the questions posed by this thesis inevitably reflect the biases of the researcher, it is essential that others contribute their own distinct voices to an ongoing discourse of research in this area.

However, it is hoped that this and further research will provide forums for initiating and maintaining critical and constructive debate on the subject of personal development. As suggested in Study 1, self-reflection and self-awareness are capacities that seem essential to the continuing development and health of the profession as a whole, as well as to that of individual practitioners. It is therefore also hoped that the present research may enable the discipline to gain a better sense of itself in relation to this core aspect of its identity, and provide insights that help to further the development of the profession, as well as the individuals within it.

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# EPILOGUE

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Having travelled my own developmental path throughout the completion of this project, it is interesting for me to reflect upon changes that have taken place within my own perspective and orientation to the topic. As pointed out in the 'Prologue', the research process 'should not leave the researcher unchanged', and I have certainly found this to be true of my own experience.

Looking back, I would summarise the evolution of my own orientation to the topic in terms of a shift from a *naïve-idealist* to a more *sophisticated-realist* perspective, which mirrors a difference observed between some of the trainees and trainers who participated in this research. As might be expected, through this research, I have gained an appreciation for the immense complexity of the subject of personal development in counselling psychology training. Indeed, I have attempted to incorporate and convey something of my experience of this complexity within the research itself, for example, through the emerging concept of 'personal and professional tensions'. Interestingly, prior to carrying out the work, I would probably have placed myself towards one or other of the poles of many of the tensions identified. Yet I would now be much more likely to take a more moderate view or 'middle way' between them.

So for example, although I still believe strongly that the person of the counsellor is more fundamental to professional practice than any kind of 'theory' they may use, I have become more aware of the inextricability of the personal and professional realms, and realise that the person of the counsellor will inevitably be reflected in their choice of theory. Also, although I remain convinced of the fundamental importance of the personal qualities and integrity of the counsellor, I can appreciate that these qualities are not necessarily innate or preset, and that counsellors may change and grow in dramatic ways, sometimes through the process of training itself. Consequently, I now regard the

basic personal capacities of self-reflection and openness as more important than amorphous, and probably impossible, questions about 'how much' personal development is enough for a counsellor, a trainee, or a course applicant. Furthermore, although I might previously have tended towards a straightforward view of the importance of assessing personal development, I now feel that a distinction between the processes of facilitating and assessing personal development may become less clear and important the more closely personal development is integrated into training.

As well as relating to the topic of personal development, my shift from a naïve-idealist to a more sophisticated-realist position also extends to my views about the purpose and possibilities of the research enterprise itself. Before commencing this project, I would have viewed the power of research in terms of its ability to provide answers and firm conclusions. However, through embracing the qualitative paradigm and engaging more directly with the complexity of individual participants and the topic of my investigation, I have been inducted into a more subtle and mysterious realm of exploration, which claims to only offer partial glimpses of 'truth'. Consequently, I now appreciate the value of research as much for its capacity to awaken new questions and uncertainty as for its capacity to provide answers and assurance.

Ultimately however, much like the role of self-reflection and self-awareness in personal development, the value of a piece of research resides not within its own achievement, but in its ability to promote understanding and progress. It is therefore hoped that, by sharing in my process of personal inquiry, the reader has participated in a stimulating intellectual experience that carries with it a potential for change.

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# APPENDICES

# **TEXT BOUND INTO THE SPINE**



## APPENDIX A University ethics release form and supplementary information sheet

### ETHICS RELEASE FORM FOR PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH PROJECTS

All students planning to undertake research in the Department of Psychology for degree or other purposes are required to complete this Ethics Release Form and to submit it to their supervisor prior to commencing the investigation. Please note the following:

- An understanding of ethical considerations is central to planning and conducting research.
- The published Code of Ethics of the British Psychological Society (1997) Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines. BPS. Leicester and American Psychological Society (1992) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. American Psychologist, 47, no 12, 1597-1611 should be referred to when planning your research.
- Approval to carry out research does not exempt you from Ethics Committee approval from institutions within which you may be planning to conduct the research, eg: Hospitals, NHS Trusts, HM Prisons Service, etc.

Please answer all of the following questions:

- |    |   |     |  |    |  |
|----|---|-----|--|----|--|
| 1. | Has a research proposal been completed and submitted to the supervisor?   | Yes | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/>                   |
| 2. | Will the research involve either or both of the following:  | Yes | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> | No | <input type="checkbox"/>                   |
| ✓  | <u>2.1</u> A survey of human subjects/participants  |     |  |    |  |
| ✗  | <u>2.2</u> An intervention with a cohort of human subjects/ participants, and/or an evaluation of outcome of an intervention?   | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | No | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to participants (in either a control or experimental group)?  | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | No | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | Will all participants receive an information sheet describing the aims, procedure and possible risks involved, in easily understood language? (Attach a copy of the participants information sheet) | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | No | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | Will any person's treatment or care be in any way prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the study?  | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | No | <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> |

6. Will all participants be required to sign a consent form, stating that they understand the purpose of the study and possible risks ie will informed consent be given? Yes ☐ No ☒
7. Can participants freely withdraw from the study at any stage without risk of harm or prejudice? Yes ☒ No ☐
8. Will the study involve working with or studying minors (ie <16 years)? Yes ☐ No ☒
- If yes, will signed parental consent be obtained? *N/A* Yes ☐ No ☐
9. Are any questions or procedures likely to be considered in any way offensive or indecent? Yes ☐ No ☒
10. Will all necessary steps be taken to protect the privacy of participants and the need for anonymity? Yes ☒ No ☐
- Is there provision for the safe-keeping of video/audio recordings of participants? Yes ☒ No ☐
11. If applicable, is there provision for de-briefing participants after the intervention or study? *see attached 'Note' for details* Yes ☒ No ☐
12. If any psychometric instruments are to be employed, will their use be controlled and supervised by a qualified psychologist? *N/A* Yes ☐ No ☐

If you have placed an X in any of the double boxes ☐ X ☐, please provide further information below:

*see attached 'supplementary information sheet'*



APPENDIX A: ETHICS FORM & INFORMATION

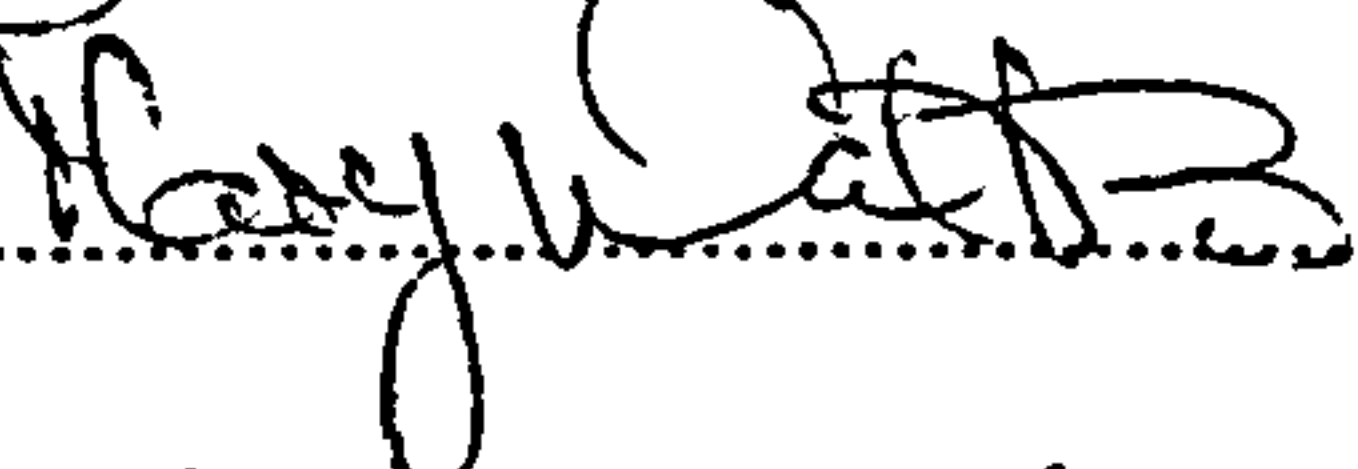
Student's Name: MARK DONATI


Degree Course: Doctor of Philosophy

Title Of Research Project: Personal Development in Counselling  
Psychology Training

Supervisor:  
Professor Mary H. Watts

Signature of Student: 

Signature of Supervisor: 

Signature of a 2nd Psychology Department member: 

Date: 18/07/00

Any further comments:

Please attach a copy of the participant's information sheet and return this form to:

Room W310  
Department of Psychology  
City University  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB

## ETHICS RELEASE FORM FOR PSYCHOLOGY RESEARCH PROJECTS

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION SHEET

- 2.1 The research will involve a survey of people involved in counselling psychology training in the UK as trainers or trainees. The survey will use a quantitative questionnaire designed by the researcher to ask participants about their views and experiences regarding a number of important but difficult issues concerning the 'personal development' component of counselling psychology training. The questionnaire will be based on data obtained from earlier qualitative interviews with trainers and trainees.
4. Information on the aims and procedure of the research will be provided to all participants. This information will be provided *verbally* for potential interview participants, with whom the researcher will meet personally, and via a *written* information sheet for potential questionnaire respondents, whom the researcher will not meet personally, (see Attached Information: 1).
6. Participants in the interview study will be required to sign a consent form prior to the interview (see Attached Information: 2). However, as participation in the questionnaire survey is anonymous and the researcher will not personally meet the survey participants, the completion of a participant consent form in this part of the research will be neither possible nor required. Alternatively however, the consent of the Course Directors at all participating training institutions to approach their trainers and trainees to seek their voluntary participation will be sought and required (see Attached Information: 3).
11. **Note:** Interview participants will be de-briefed in person at the end of their interview.

For the anonymous participants in the questionnaire survey, de-briefing will be enabled by the inclusion into the questionnaire of a series of 'Concluding Questions'. These will invite participants to reflect on their experience of completing the questionnaire, and to comment on any aspect of the questionnaire or research topic. In addition, all questionnaire participants will have access to the researcher's contact information should they wish to contact the researcher personally.



## APPENDIX B Interview guide

### THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- What is personal development? How would you define it?
- Is personal development important for counselling psychologists? Why?
- Do you think personal development is clearly defined? Do you think it should be more clearly defined?
- Do you think that personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees? Why?

### THE FACILITATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- How does one facilitate personal development in training?
- Is there a best way?
- What has been your experience?
- How/where does personal therapy fit in to this?
- How is the subject of personal development addressed on the course?
- Is it clearly addressed and integrated?

### THE ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Should personal development be assessed?
- How should/can personal development be assessed?
- Can/should it be formally, objectively or quantitatively assessed?
- Are there implications for trainees who fail to develop? How should these situations be addressed?

## **THE SELECTION OF TRAINEES**

- What do you think motivates people to want to become counselling psychologists?
- How does one assess the personal suitability/readiness of prospective trainees?
- Do selectors make mistakes? How/why do you think this happens?
- How effective are selection procedures?
- Could/should they be improved? How?

## **CONCLUDING QUESTIONS**

- Are there any issues you would like to mention that we haven't yet discussed that you think are important to this topic?
- Are there any changes you would particularly like to see to the way that personal development is addressed in counselling psychology training?
- Do you think it is important to research personal development?
- Are there any issues/areas you think particularly require further research?
- What has your experience of the interview been?

## **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DETAILS**

- What is your gender, age, theoretical orientation, professional status/background?



## APPENDIX C Copy of participant consent form

### Consent form for Study 1 participants

**Title of research study:**

*Personal development in Counselling Psychology Training.*

**Investigator:** Mr. Mark Donati

**I (name):** .....

**of (place of study):** .....

hereby consent to take part in the above study as an interviewee, the nature and purpose of which has been explained to me. Any questions I have had concerning the nature of this study, or its aims and method have been answered to my satisfaction.

In addition, the following specific items have been explained to me:

1. That my anonymity will be preserved and that any information which I divulge during the course of this interview which could lead to my identification will be withheld from subsequent stages of the research.
2. That I will be invited at a later date to comment on the Investigator's interpretation of our discussions and the themes and categories which he saw as emerging during the interview
3. I also understand that I am under no obligation to continue with the interview and that if I wish to withdraw at any stage, I may do so without necessarily providing a reason.
4. The interview will be audio taped for subsequent data analysis
5. I understand that once Mark Donati has completed his data analysis, he will destroy any audiotapes used to record the interview.

**Signed:** ..... **Date:** .....





## APPENDIX D Raw data: Interview excerpts

KEY: I = Interviewer; R = respondent

### 1. Excerpt from an interview with a trainer

I. So the first area that I'd like to talk about is the definition and importance of personal development. So firstly, how would you define personal development?

R. I'm not sure I can define it. It's quite tricky, isn't it. I suppose it's, er, it consists of several things: one is a recognition of one's own learning needs and taking responsibility for, er, discovering what they are - and as much as possible finding ways in which to progress along them, erm in the right direction; which, which also implies that there is a pathway to follow; um, which also means that the learning needs have to be predicated in the sense of appraising the options that are available to one. But it's, it's about, er, progress of one's career, it's about progress of one's, um, capacity to work with people - that's especially important, of course, in a counselling context. Um, the, the acquire, the acquiring of various other capacities which sustain that direction on a continuous basis - so one is obviously the issue if being able to reflect critically and to make use of it. So there might be many other dimensions as well: there's an emotional dimension, which I think is, um, perhaps often a, a powerful starting point for people. And, er, that needs to be sustained and not, um, not neglected or, um, or subdued, er, in the light of other kinds of learning. I think the emotional quality, um, of being involved in working with people as a counsellor, a counselling psychologist, should, should be quite high on the agenda. And one of the important issues in personal development is learning how to make use of that and to, er use it to best possible advantage - both for yourself and for you clients. It's, er, emotional might even be too soft a word; it might almost be a spiritual dimension rather than an emotional dimension. But it's, it's, part of the problem, I think, is even finding a sentient language to describe it. But it's more than just cognitive capacities, is what I'm saying; it's much more to do with the values that you, that you have as a practitioner and they way in which you work with people.

I. So you've talked about, um, the ability to be reflective, um, a cognitive capacity, a sort of spiritual and emotional dimension. Um, so you think that, although personal development is difficult to pin down and define in any one way, that they are aspects of it which are very important.

R. Yeah, for me they are. I suspect there are many other as well, and they'll just probably pop out a we talk more about this. Bu I think, certainly for me, my own starting point in this was more the spiritual one. It wasn't a cognitive issue, at all.

I. So you say, 'for me'. Um, are you implying that personal development, well it does have the word 'personal' //in it..

R. Yeah.

I. D'you think that definition are personalised: that it means something different for everyone?

R. Probably, yeah, yeah. I, I think we, we should be tolerant of that as well; that we, we should allow that. Or, or perhaps tolerant is even too soft a word: we should encourage

#### APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

that. Though obviously there has to be a meeting ground, as well, where you can just be able to have an intelligent conversation; you have to have certain //things in common.

I. Aha.

R. But I suspect people can have different origins to their personal development, different attributes which come along to sustain the development, during the course of it, and perhaps even different end points: when finally they can move out of the system.

I. Aha.

R. And actually personal development goes on beyond the professional issue. It's tied in with professional development but it is more than it. So, one issue would be how your choice of career, um, helps you perhaps to self-actualise, or some phrase like that; helps you to become a better person. Um, and the various ways in which that career choice is manifested. I mean, within any career you always have an option of taking the major normative role or various minor, sub normative roles. For example, if I was a clinical doctor and let's say I had to give a diagnosis to a patient who was perhaps terminally ill, I've always got a choice: I can either deal with it in a very clinical detached way: 'Well Mr. Bloggs I'm afraid you've only got six months to live. Come back if you've got another problem or I can, which is perhaps.. or I can take an entirely different role, which is to deal with it in a more sensitive way. Um, I think personal development, er, is very important, for, um, it's influence, it's guidance perhaps, actually, how one makes those choices within the professional context. But no matter how, perhaps, sophisticated one becomes in professional issues, it still relies on that backdrop of human qualities. And personal development is much more being in touch with those features. It certainly can't be taught as a set of rules or ..

I. You seem to have taken quite a wide view of personal development. The way that you're talking, I mean, I didn't necessarily encourage you talk about it in terms of counselling psychology: //personal development.

R. Aha.

I. Um, but you've talked about personal development, um, for all, almost.

R. Mm.

I. Um, d'you think it's particularly important for counselling psychologists?

R. Um, sorry, well I was really focusing on that because I just assumed that was your remit, given what you said your starting point was.

I. Aha.

R. I was really, all my answers to you were predicated on that assumption.

I. Aha.

R. In a broader sense, I could talk even more broadly about it.

I. Sure.

R. But yeah, I think, I think it's crucial for counsellors psychologists. It's crucial for; I think it's crucial anyway. People should be involved in personal development. It's part of my own personal philosophy, if you like.



- I. Aha.
- R. Um, but for professionals who work with other people, in particular, I think there's a special onus on them to become, um, sensitive to their own personal and professional development needs, and to try and harmonise those things, and to constantly review where they're coming from and where they're going. I like the old word 'service'. I think people who work with others have a service role to play. I think one has to take that very seriously.
- I. Sure. OK. D'you think that personal development is more important for counselling and psychotherapy in certain orientations, theoretical orientations, more than others?
- R. No. I think, I think it's, it's common across all. Um, I suspect.. Hmm. I think there's two, two levels of information, which is why I'm being diffident. It's said, it is, it is said in the literature sometimes that a number of orientations, which are more technical, CBT's the one that's usually mentioned, um, haven't really given centre stage to issues of sensitivity, the therapeutic alliance, and, by extension, the personal development of the therapist. Um, that they've over-focused, if you will, on the kind of method aspects of what they do. And maybe the contrast of this that some orientations have really gone overboard in it, to the neglect of those technical features. So perhaps it's an issue of balance. I suspect, though, even if the technical literature for CBT, as a for instance, hasn't given much emphasis to those issue of personal development, that the reality is quite different. That actually the therapists themselves have. They've just given it a different label or they've found some other way to, to manifest it. But I'd like to see it, in any case, become more of the official agenda. Um, partly because it's only by being public and criticisable that we can then make, um, improvements for the future, especially where training's involved. So yeah, I think it's crucial. It's the same issues that is true for any orientation. 'Cos I think those with a technical bent are realising more and more that, that, er, CBT is predicated on issues of having a warm accepting, etc, environment.
- I. Aha. D'you think that having a clearer definition of what personal development is would be helpful?
- R. Yeah. It, it's always helpful. I, I'm not sure I'd want it frozen though.
- I. Right.
- R. I think there's a difference there. I, I'd like to see a constant attempt to define it, with the hope that they never do!
- I. Right! So an on-going, kind of, reflective..
- R. Yeah. So very similitude's a good word. Constantly trying to get there , but never quite, um, making it.
- I. Sure.
- R. I, I wouldn't like it frozen. I think that'd be a problem.
- I. Why d'you think it would be a problem?
- R. Because, by definition, development implies changes. And it may be that personal development changes in, well, has to change in the context of social changes anyway; that as our society changes, evolves, develops, even goes backwards, whatever it does, so facets of personal development have to change to meet it. And that it's not something that can exist in a, in social isolation, it's always against a context

I. So even, so even beyond the, um, individual differences, in terms of personal development, on a more social level

R. Mm.

I. the general basic concept of personal development is a dynamic thing as well.

R. Oh, absolutely. Yeah, I mean, an obvious illustration of this, is looking at some of the 'isms': you know, 'sexism', 'racism', and what have you, and that, if one can imagine being in a society where, for example, it was, um, mono, entirely monocultural, you know, that it wasn't multi ethnic at all, it, it was singular ethnic, then, in a sense, it may be that that concern wouldn't be apparent. I mean, it just wouldn't be there. If you don't have contact with other people from other cultures then it's not an issue. Um, but obviously that's not the case, so we need to become more and more, um, tuned in to those features, ditto sexism, ageism, and any other 'ism' that, that is around, that they're part of it. Sure.

I. Aha. Sure. So personal development, in that sense, almost is serving an adaptive // purpose.

R. Yeah. Oh, yeah. I think there's both an inner and an outer, er, force. There's, um, assimilation, accommodation, and as always the key's probably in the word 'balance', or some similar kind of word.

## 2. Excerpt from an interview with a trainee

I. Since you've been on the course, what's had the biggest impact on your own personal development?

R. Um, that's difficult. I don't know if it's one thing. Um, I've spent a lot of time thinking about what I'm getting out of it and what I'm going to be doing in it. So I'm, in a sense, thinking about the future a lot of the time. There's no one thing. I mean one thing I would have found more helpful is more practical work. But that's not to do with my personal development, it's more my professional development. No I can't say one thing. It's a combination of all of them.

I. OK. What effect has being on the course had on your life outside of the course?

R. Well there hasn't been much life outside of the course! Because it's been very demanding.

I. Right.

R. And I think, when I talk to people about it, I see it as an immersion experience, cos it's only two terms on the course. But this is the main part of my life while I'm doing it.

I. So you wouldn't say there's been any major impact on your personal life, or your relationships and stuff, since you've been on the course?



R. Um, yes, the course has impacted on my personal life. Because my pattern of life's changed since I've been on it. I mean very important for me is that fact that I live in West Sussex, and I've had to spend nearly the whole period up in London. Staying with various friends and so on, because it's beyond a commutable distance. So it's had a severe effect on my home life, and my patterns in general. A vast effect. I've been, sort of, living out of a suitcase for most of the time. It's interesting and enjoyable in some ways. But, yeah, unsettling.

I. OK. I'd like to talk about how the issue of personal development has been addressed on the course. Has it been addressed on the course?

R. It's been referred to. It's been referred to a lot in lectures, in Mary's course, Malcolm's course in the first term. It's obliquely referred to a great deal when people talk about integration. But this whole issue of integration which is part of personal development, finding one's own path, is not addressed; we're not helped or guided. It's something we're encouraged to think about. But the way in which we work through the issues that arise isn't addressed.

I. So would you have liked to have more said about personal development?

R. Well I'd have liked to have more said about the integrative approach, and how this impacts on personal development.

I. Right do you feel that there was sufficient attention paid to informing students as to the role of personal development for them, and the importance of it, and what it's aims are.

R. No. I think quite a lot of attention early on was paid to it. And the question of the journal, the log, the personal log, which we were given. I know one or two people are keeping it. I'm not keeping it in the format in which we were given it, a piece of paper with blanks. But I have been keeping a weekly, it's not a personal diary, but I have kept a record of where I've been at. So I can refer to that. So that's been part of my personal development. Because it's been interesting for me to do it, and important to look back and see how I've changed and the concerns have changed over a period.

I. One of the things which has come up in past interviews is that personal development's been a bit marginalised, or not really integrated or addressed explicitly on the course.

R. It hasn't been. I agree that it hasn't been addressed explicitly. It's one of these background things like integration. That's why I'm comparing it to integration. You know, yes we are all becoming this or doing this. But how we're all doing this, and what we should say about it, and who to is not looked at.

I. Do you think it should be?

R. Yes. Cos I think these are the key simmering underlying issues. So we can say what's really going on. Apart from learning about CBT this week and the week after something else and workshops. This is what's really going in terms of one's own development. That's the key thing. So in some senses, yes the key issues aren't being addressed. But a lot of learning is like that, isn't it!?

I. It goes on in the background?

R. Yes. It's not talked about. It's in some ways assumed to be not talkable about. You can't talk about it.

I. Do you think it's best left to kind of evolve on it's own in that way. Or do you think that it should..

R. I'm all for talking about things if at all possible, and airing them, and I know that people I have spoken to are all concerned with these things too, and we talk about it. And we do talk about the fact that course is not addressing it. And we're all tossing around various ideas about what being a counselling psychologist is! So people are talking about whether you go to people who do massage, or treat the whole person, or go for spiritual development, or by physical methods. We are talking about these things, but never is it addressed on the course directly....

I. OK Should personal counselling be obligatory for trainees?

R. Ah. I accept Stephen Palmer's and others' argument that there are a lot of professional fields where people work with their own selves, like a lot of people in the health field, but not only in the health field. Where there is not, it seems, a need for ongoing personal development. And I can accept that once people are trained, provided they have supervision, that the personal development side of it..

But coming back to, sorry I'm wandering away, I don't think there's an open and shut case for having personal therapy, for any number of hours, let alone forty hours. No. I think there are very powerful arguments against it, as well as for it. For the following reasons. One is one I referred to earlier: there's no knowing what goes on within these forty hours. There's no knowing what impact they have on a person. And I think if it's out of control to that extent, tat it's not a good thing educationally. It may be not beneficial for someone. Some of the people that I'm talking to are feeling that it's not beneficial for them. So I accept that it may not be beneficial and I suppose in some instances it could be harmful. I don't have any experience of that. But I can see how that could happen.

So there's no control over it. There's no evidence, either from people I've come across of from the literature, that it's benefits people in their work, and that's a key thing too, because I believe in research evidence. And I think if there's no evidence for it being beneficial. There's no empirical evidence that I've met yet about whether so many hours is better or worse than so many more hours, and of what type. And I think: pass until we know more about it empirically, and until we feel that for professional developmental reasons. I mean we don't know we've never compared people who've not had this, who've been through this to people who have.

So because the whole thing's out of control, the theoretical approaches are so different, and because it's difficult to make a decision about a certain amount of personal therapy, I think the whole thing's open, and I think for that reason, because it's open that ought not to impose it.

But for professionals I do take the argument that, in America and in other professions, and I think it's a good argument, that once you're trained and your competent, provided there's professional safeguards, like supervision. And I



know supervision's another hot potato and I think ongoing permanent supervision's also equally debatable, until we know the evidence for and against; and what's been done and how it works. Some of these are empirical issues; some of them are professional issues. But I don't think professionally or empirically that the case is set out yet.

I. Do you think that personal counselling is more important for training in certain therapeutic orientations?

R. Yeah, because it's intrinsic to those orientations, that you are undergoing personal therapy, and that you're able to work with yourself in that way. I'm thinking particularly of where issues of transference, counter-transference are built into the model. So because it's built into the model it has to be built into the training. And because it's built into the training it has to be part of the professional development.

I. But having said that personal development is something that you distinguish from personal counselling.

R. Yes personal development's wider than personal counselling.

I. Have you known any trainees to have reported negative effects from their personal counselling?

R. Yes, in the sense that they thought that, somebody said to me the other day: Well I've had 10 or 12 hours with this person and they were a Rogerian, they said, and I could have done it better. They were burning to talk about certain things that never got raised. My personal response in that situation would be to be confrontational and do something about it! Theirs was to think: Well I'm not getting much out of this personal therapy. And a number of other people have said: Well it's very useful for ironing out issues on the course. I mean, two of my tutorial groups, spent hours talking about their tutorial experiences with personal therapists.

I. So it sounds like there's a lot of scope freedom for people to use their own counselling in whatever way they see fit.

R. It seems like it.

I. Do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing?

R. I think it's a mixed blessing, because I think it depends what comes up. I mean, that first experience appalled me I found that shocking, and if I'd been that person in that situation I'd have walked out and said I'll find something else.

I. Do you think there should be more control, I hesitate to use the word control. Do you think there should be an agenda which is set out for trainees, that they should all try and cover in their personal counselling Rather than leaving it up to trainees how they use it?

R. Well, one thing I haven't mentioned, and this is always underlying it and very important, is that fact that since there are only a handful of trained counselling psychologists to go around, both the supervisors, personal counsellors and whatever, they're a bit thin on the ground. So a lot of the people that we're talking about and referring to, without spelling it out, are people who've got BAC accreditation, UKCP accreditation, and they could be any kind of animal, and

that's part of the problem really.

If we were talking about counselling psychologists that narrows it down, it's a different set of issues. But I don't know, no one's ever said to me on the course: in an ideal world you'd have a counselling psychologist.

I. Do you think that in an ideal world you should have a counselling psychologist?

R. Ooh yes! Because it's a professional requirement. Yeah.

I. Yes, in the BPS guidelines it does actually say that personal counselling should be provided by a counselling psychologist.

R. Yeah. If you can find one!

I. So in your experience is it quite common for students to be counselled by people who aren't counselling psychologists.

R. Yes. I haven't seen a single counselling psychologist amongst my auditions.

But the other difficulty of course is that if you've got a counselling psychologist doing your personal counselling, it's a very small world. And if you're gonna be working together professionally you've got issues of conflicts of interest and confidentiality, which again you may need to address, cos I actually avoided somebody I was gonna shortlist for my personal counselling because I thought I might have professional contact with them. And that must be a boundary issue. Because I would feel inhibited for various reasons.

I. Your experience is that there seems to be a lot of variation that goes on in personal counselling. Do you think that should be tightened up?

R. Well, yes and no. I keep saying that there's this professional thing and there's the personal thing. From a personal point of view, no. If someone wants to spend 40 hours and it's acceptable, they've got the right accreditation, I'm talking about naturopathy, acupuncture, God, Budda, the life after, I don't care. That's up to them and if it helps them in their personal development that's fine by me. As well as if people want to go into the arcane bits of CBT and stuff, fine. Personal development's wide. So I wouldn't clamp down on it in that way. No I wouldn't want to control it. It's good to have as wide a scope as possible.

But I think for the professional, it's gonna be harder to draw the guidelines professionally. It's gonna be harder for the people making up the rules in the red tape department to know what's acceptable and what isn't.



## APPENDIX E Example of respondent validation covering letter and summary

Covering letter:

19<sup>th</sup> October, 1999

TO: Name of interviewee  
FROM: Mark Donati  
RE: Meeting to discuss our interview on personal development in counselling psychology training

Dear .....,

Thank you for agreeing to a meeting to discuss my analysis of our interview on personal development in counselling psychology training.

Please find enclosed a *Summary Sheet* of the main themes that I felt emerged from our discussions, along with a transcript of the interview itself. It is not essential that you read them in advance of our meeting because we will go through the analysis in detail together. However, in response to feedback from a previous interviewee, I would like to give you the opportunity to do so if you wish.

The *Summary Sheet* is divided into the 4 main areas of personal development that we discussed - just to refresh your memory a little, these areas are summarised below.

### 1. The definition of personal development

In this section I asked how you would define personal development; how important you felt it was for counselling psychologists; and whether or not its importance depended on a practitioner's theoretical orientation.

### 2. The selection of trainees

Here we talked about the importance of applicants' personal suitability for training; how their personal motivators for training may relate to their personal

## APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF RESPONDENT VALIDATION

development during training; and the extent to which such personal issues could or should be evaluated in trainee selection.

### 3. The facilitation of personal development

In this section we looked at the issue of how personal development is or should be facilitated in training, and which experiences you have personally found most beneficial. We discussed various facilities, such as personal therapy, personal development groups, personal journals, client work and supervision, as well as other factors that might have a significant impact on a trainee's personal development.

### 4. The assessment of personal development

Here we talked about how, or even if, trainers should assess trainees' personal development and what kind of form such assessment might take. We also discussed the issue of how a training course should respond when a trainee encounters serious personal development difficulties during training.

In the *Summary Sheet*, the emergent themes are presented in relation to each of these 4 areas. The bracketed numbers, e.g. (001), refer to the numbered paragraph in the interview transcript that illustrates or supports that particular theme.

The basic aim of the meeting is to enable me to check the accuracy of my understanding of your responses, and to provide you with an opportunity to verify, clarify, or modify my interpretations. This kind of feedback from participants - or *Respondent Validation* as it is known - is an important criterion of methodological rigour when conducting this kind of qualitative data analysis.

Thanks again for your participation. I looked forward to discussing the analysis with you!

Yours sincerely,

Mark Donati  
Ph.D. Research Student

Tel: 0171 477 8000, ext. 4581  
Email: [M.A.Donati@city.ac.uk](mailto:M.A.Donati@city.ac.uk)



Summary (from an interview with a trainee):

## SUMMARY SHEET

### 1. THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal development is about a capacity to reflect on and understand how one's own personal history, values, beliefs and issues may impact on one's professional practice

Personal development can be defined as a process by which the trainee comes to a clearer understanding of how their own particular constellation of past and present personal experiences, relationships, beliefs, values and issues may impact on their professional work with clients. It may also help them to resolve present personal concerns or troubles. The importance of personal development and awareness for a counselling psychologist is underscored by the identity as a *'Reflective Practitioner'* (002, 008, 010).

Personal development is equally important for counsellors in all theoretical orientations

Personal development is equally important to counselling in all models of practice. This is because of the universal use of the self as a therapeutic medium. Moreover, personal development is of universal importance because the 'person' of the counsellor has an important bearing on the models or techniques that they select in the first place, as well as the way in which they use them (020).

Personal development & personal counselling should be more clearly defined

The trainee may find it difficult to satisfactorily define what person development means to them, and they may also find a definition hard to come by in the counselling literature. There also seems to be a bewildering amount of scope permitted to trainees regarding the possible nature and content of their personal counselling (023, 135). Although in personal terms this freedom may be a good thing, in terms of professional regulation and coherence it may be problematic. Therefore, the profession of counselling psychology might look towards increasing regulation, definition and guidance regarding this core part of training:

'just as it tells us there should be 40 hours, it should have something to say about what those 40 hours should cover.' (024).

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## 2. THE SELECTION OF TRAINEES

A degree of 'real life' experience is a fundamental to effective counsellor training and practice

Because '*you can only take your clients as far as you've been*', it is crucial that would-be counsellors are able to bring a depth, variety and richness of life experience to their training and client work. It may therefore seem '*appalling*' that applicants are sometimes accepted for training straight from graduation. Although age is admittedly not always an accurate guide to life experience, younger trainees are *generally* less likely to have had important formative experiences, such as their own careers, and living independently of their families (172, 176). There should therefore be a minimum age limit of 25 for counselling psychology, training courses (014, 170).

It is important to keep the selection criteria for personal suitability 'loose'

The 'wounded healer' stereotype of counsellors can be an inaccurate and unhelpful view of counsellors' personal motivators. It can therefore also be inappropriate for trainee selection to be influenced by such a 'model' (180). There is an important distinction to be made between being a 'wounded healer' and being a 'wounded *and* healed healer' (182), and selectors should avoid evaluating personal suitability for training on the basis of a pre-defined profile of the 'ideal' counsellor or their motivators. Moreover, diversity amongst trainees and counsellors is very valuable and important, and should therefore be welcomed by selectors: '*different kinds of people work well in different ways*' (190).

---

## 3. THE FACILITATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Personal and professional development are affected by diverse factors

A diversity of experiences, from both inside and outside training, feed into personal development and ultimately one's professional work. For example:



#### APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF RESPONDENT VALIDATION

- **A chat over a cup of tea with fellow trainees (069):** Illustrates the potential influence of peer group interaction and sharing of the training experience on trainees' personal and professional learning.
- **Life events outside of the course (069):** Reminds us of the ever-present wider context in which counselling training sits, and it's immense potential to affect the training and client work in sometimes subtle but profound ways.
- **The search for placements and a personal counsellors (075):** Illustrates how initial contact with and experience in the 'real world' of counselling can have a major formative effect on the trainee's emerging sense of professional identity. For example, the need to describe and defend what one is and does as a counselling psychologist to other professionals who maybe don't know or feel threatened; the attempt to come to terms with the immense and sometimes bizarre diversity of the various professional tribes; and the need to work out where one stands in relation to them, may all be particularly pertinent issues for trainees in the fledging profession of counselling psychology.
- **Workshops, case studies and 'hands-on' work (076):** Trainees would like to have more of this in their training. This may illustrate the prominence, even urgency, of trainees' desire to develop a sense of professional competence, and their insatiable appetite for training experiences that they feel make a direct and practical contribution to this. Hence what could be considered an aspect of *professional* development may, at this stage, be in the forefront of trainees' *personal* development concerns. Thus, more hands-on work: *'would add to the personal understanding'* (076).

**NB.** It is the critical process of 'reflection' that enables the trainee to extract and draw together the potential personal development and learning value from these diverse experiences (012 & 084). Furthermore, the range of potential influences on personal development clearly illustrates its comprehensive and holistic nature.

#### **The course has not explicitly addressed trainees' underlying personal development concerns**

Personal development has been referred to frequently but *'obliquely'* by course trainers (094). Trainees may be engaging in various personal development activities provided by the course, but there has been little open communication about their broader context and framework of the personal development component of training: *'yes we're all becoming this or doing this. But how we're all doing this, and what we should say about, and who is not looked at.'* (100). Consequently, there may be a sense in which trainees are left to fend for themselves regarding their personal development. There is a sense in which personal development and learning has to be a private affair: *'a lot of learning is*

*like that, isn't it' (102).* However, trainees' concerns regarding the appropriate remit of personal counselling and the relationship between personal development and theoretical integration are very common. This suggests that there are '*key simmering underlying issues*' for trainees that the course is not addressing (102). These issues may be so important to trainees that they take it upon themselves to discuss them in their own circles outside of timetabled course activities.

**NB.** This scenario may reflect a broader tacit assumption in counsellor training that the intimate process of personal development is not something that can or should be assisted by general or public discussion.

Personal therapy must have stronger empirical support before it can be made a training requirement

Personal therapy should not be a course requirement '*until we know more about it empirically*' (129). So far there is little evidence to support its value, and there are powerful arguments against it. In addition, the blanket requirement of 40 hours seems particularly arbitrary and meaningless, given that the therapeutic significance of the quantity would differ considerably with the many orientations in which trainees could have their personal counselling. This potential variation between trainees' personal counselling experiences is also increased by:

- the lack of professional clarity and regulation regarding how personal counselling can and should be used by trainees;
- the current shortage of chartered counselling psychologists to provide personal counselling to trainees.

In addition, the requirement of personal therapy seems more pertinent to training in certain orientations, such as Psychodynamic, where concepts such as counter-transference are more integral features of practice. However, despite this caveat regarding the importance of personal counselling, the broader issue of personal development remains equally important for training in all models (133).

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#### 4. THE ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Assessing the personal development of trainees is rendered necessary by its professional function

Unlike personal development or therapy for purely personal (i.e. non-professional) reasons, personal development is supposed to have an important professional function for counsellors. That is why it is a basic training requirement. It is therefore of professional, even ethical, importance that trainers attempt to evaluate the personal development of trainees in some way (034).



However, although the intended professional function of personal development for trainees may provide a certain definitional focus that makes its assessment more plausible than it would be for the 'lay person', the criteria for assessing trainees' personal development should only ever be generalised up to a point. Personal development is a complex idiosyncratic process (see below). Therefore a flexible, subjective and individualised approach to its assessment is very important (030).

**The assessment of trainees' personal development should be qualitative, subjective and ongoing**

Quantitatively, one could only compare trainees' personal development in terms of the amount of time spent engaged in course facilities (e.g. 40 hours in personal counselling) (028). However, personal development is essentially a *qualitative* process, in which trainees have different starting points (030). Consequently, personal development assessment should also be qualitative and subjective, and ideally incorporate the trainees themselves, as well as their trainers (036, 038). Personal development should also be assessed in an ongoing way, throughout training. This would help trainers to be sensitive and responsive to the problems that trainee's may experience in their personal development work, and to avert the need to ultimately 'fail' trainees for personal development reasons (052, 054). Seen more in terms of monitoring perhaps, the assessment of personal development could thus serve a helpful preventive and facilitative purpose.

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## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There seems to be *too much* difference between the various BPS accredited counselling psychology courses, in terms of the eventual qualification obtained, trainee intakes, personal contact and course content. Diversity on such key features needs to be reduced and more closely regulated, otherwise this may create significantly different '*creatures*' who all define themselves as counselling psychologists (196).

**APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF RESPONDENT VALIDATION**



## APPENDIX F Survey questionnaire: trainer and trainee versions

### 1. TRAINER VERSION

#### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING

#### QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

This questionnaire aims to gain an impression of your views and experiences, as someone involved in the training of counselling psychologists, concerning a range of issues on the topic of personal development in counselling psychology training. It is divided into 4 main sections. These relate to:

- 1) The definition of personal development
- 2) The selection of trainees
- 3) The facilitation of personal development
- 4) The assessment of personal development

At the end, you will also be asked some **concluding questions** and to provide a little bit of **background information** about yourself and your professional training/experience. A pilot of the questionnaire suggests that it should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

Please do your best to answer all of the questions as honestly as you can and in the order in which they are presented.

Base your responses, where appropriate, on your experience of the counselling psychology training at the institution where you do *most if not all* of your training work.

There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, just your views and experiences.

**PLEASE NOTE: ALL DATA WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE**

***Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.***

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**SECTION 1 - THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

This section is concerned with your views and experiences regarding the definition and importance of personal development within the context of counselling psychology training.

The first question is a 'warm-up' question. It is intended to help get you thinking about personal development in a reflective way and should give you a good starting point for answering the rest of the questions.

**1. What is personal development? How would you define it?**

Please use as much or as little of the space provided as you need to write down your ideas, and feel free to continue on the other side of this sheet if you wish.

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**SECTION 1 - continued - THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about the definition and importance of personal development. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainer, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

2.	I find personal development a difficult thing to define	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Personal development is important for counselling psychologists	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Aims and objectives for personal development are clearly defined in the training	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Aims and objectives for personal development should be <i>more</i> clearly defined in the training	1	2	3	4	5
7.	My theoretical orientation affects the way I understand my own personal development	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Personal development and self-awareness are practically synonymous	1	2	3	4	5
9.	There are basic aims and objectives of personal development for all trainees	1	2	3	4	5
10.	i) Personal development is equally important for counselling practitioners in all theoretical orientations	1	2	3	4	5
	ii) Please give a brief explanation of your response to this question:					
	.....					
	.....					
	.....					
11.	The main purpose of personal development in counselling psychology training is to promote trainees' personal growth	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Personal development requires more than self-awareness	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I see my own personal development as a way of contributing to the development of wider society	1	2	3	4	5
14.	The main purpose of personal development in counselling psychology training is to enhance trainees' professional competence	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Counselling psychology training courses should have a basic consensus regarding the definition of personal development	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION 2 - THE SELECTION OF TRAINEES**

This section is concerned with your views on the selection of trainee counselling psychologists. Specifically, it inquires about the issues of trainees' *personal* suitability, readiness and motivators for training.

1. a) Are there any personal qualities, capacities or attributes that you think are essential in prospective trainees (please tick)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

b) If you answered 'Yes', could you briefly say what you think these are:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

c) If you answered 'Yes', do you tend to see these personal qualities as (please tick *one* box):

*EITHER:*

☐ a) basic, stable personality traits

*OR:*

☐ b) qualities that individuals can acquire

d) Are there any personal qualities, capacities or attributes that you would particularly look to *avoid* in a prospective trainee (please tick)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

e) If you answered 'Yes', could briefly say what you think these are:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



**SECTION 2 - continued - THE SELECTION OF TRAINEES**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about the selection of trainees. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainer, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 3 = uncertain/don't know  
 4 = agree  
 5 = strongly agree

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.  | Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Selectors' assessments of applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training are inevitably subjective  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | There are 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' reasons or motivators for wanting to train as a counselling psychologist   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | Selectors should favour applicants with certain kinds of motivators for training (i.e. 'more appropriate' motivators)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | In trainee selection, the applicant's ability to reflect critically and constructively on their personal motivators is more important than the nature of the motivators (i.e. whether or not they are 'appropriate') | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | The course selectors should ensure that prospective trainees are aware of the personal and emotional demands of the training   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | It should be a course entrance requirement that trainees have spent a period of time out in the 'real world', either before or since their graduation  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | The selection process should require trainees to reflect deeply on their decision to train and their own personal suitability/readiness for training   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | I think that more should be done to improve the assessment of applicants' personal suitability/readiness during selection  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | It is essential that selectors on a course have agreed criteria regarding the personal qualities that they are looking for in prospective trainees   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | It is very difficult to assess an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | It is essential that more than one person is involved in the assessment of an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

14. Please rate the following selection methods in terms of how useful you think each is in assessing an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training, using the scoring key below as a guide:

1 = very low usefulness  
 2 = low usefulness  
 3 = uncertain/don't know  
 4 = high usefulness  
 5 = very high usefulness

a) References.....	1	2	3	4	5
b) Personal Statements (e.g. written on application forms).....	1	2	3	4	5
c) Interviews where one applicant is interviewed once by a single interviewer...	1	2	3	4	5
d) Interviews where one applicant is interviewed more than once, each time by a different single interviewer.....	1	2	3	4	5
e) Interviews where one applicant is interviewed simultaneously by more than one interviewer, i.e. by a panel of interviewers.....	1	2	3	4	5
f) Group interviews/discussions before one selector.....	1	2	3	4	5
g) Group interviews/discussions before a panel of selectors.....	1	2	3	4	5
h) A residential setting selection process.....	1	2	3	4	5
i) Other (please specify):					
.....	1	2	3	4	5

Please note: 'Other' options are provided throughout the questionnaire, in case you wish to specify some other response that is not included in the range of options given



**SECTION 3 - THE FACILITATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

This section has 2 parts. *Part A* asks some general questions about personal development and how it is facilitated or brought about during counselling psychology training. *Part B* focuses specifically on the topic of personal counselling.

**PART A – GENERAL QUESTIONS**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about personal development and its facilitation in counselling psychology training. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainer, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | Developing my professional competence is very important to my sense of personal development                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | The intensity and workload of the training make personal development very difficult for trainees                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed in the training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | I would like the subject of personal development to be <i>more</i> openly and fully discussed in the training                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | There is a high level of peer group support and cohesion in the training   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | A trainee's professional competence relies on their mastery of counselling skills and theory                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | There should be more counselling skills training, role play and workshops in the training                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | The training clearly addresses the issue of how to integrate one's personal philosophy with one's counselling approach/model | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | A trainee's professional competence stems from their personal development  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of their training                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Trainees' personal development should be <i>better</i> integrated into the other aspects of their training                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | i) I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development in the training                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

ii) If you have tended to *disagree*, could you briefly say why:

.....

.....

APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

13. i) Below is a list of experiences that may affect trainees' personal development. Please rate each experience in terms of how important you think it tends to be to counselling psychology trainees' personal development, using the scoring key below as a guide:

1 = very low importance  
2 = low importance  
3 = uncertain/don't know  
4 = high importance  
5 = very high importance

Please IGNORE any listed experiences that are not included in the training

a) personal counselling.....	1	2	3	4	5
b) personal development groups.....	1	2	3	4	5
c) group tutorials.....	1	2	3	4	5
d) individual tutorials.....	1	2	3	4	5
e) keeping a personal diary/journal/log.....	1	2	3	4	5
f) peer group support, relationships, conversations.....	1	2	3	4	5
g) looking for a personal counsellor.....	1	2	3	4	5
h) looking for placements.....	1	2	3	4	5
i) client work.....	1	2	3	4	5
j) supervision (of client work).....	1	2	3	4	5
k) counselling skills training, role-play, workshops.....	1	2	3	4	5
l) written work (e.g. case studies, process reports, essays).....	1	2	3	4	5
m) theoretical learning.....	1	2	3	4	5
n) personal life experiences/relationships outside of the course.....	1	2	3	4	5
o) other (please specify): .....	1	2	3	4	5

- ii) If any of the above experience/s are *not* included in the training, but which you feel *should* be, please use this space to briefly say which one/s and why:

.....  
.....

- iii) If you think that any of these experiences have a *negative* impact on trainees' personal development, please use this space to briefly say which one/s and why:

.....  
.....

**SECTION 3 – continued - THE FACILITATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**PART B – PERSONAL COUNSELLING**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about personal counselling. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainer, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

1.	Personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees	1	2	3	4	5
2.	i) Personal counselling is more important if you are training as a counselling practitioner in certain theoretical orientations	1	2	3	4	5
	ii) If you have tended to <i>agree</i> with this statement, could you briefly say in which orientation(s) you feel personal counselling is more important, and why:					
	.....					
	.....					
	.....					
3.	Personal counselling is sufficient to facilitate counselling psychology trainees' personal development	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of personal counselling	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The aims and objectives of personal counselling should be <i>more</i> clearly defined in the training	1	2	3	4	5
6.	There are not enough personal counsellors who are able to work with trainees who may not have a 'problem'	1	2	3	4	5
7.	It is important that trainee's are very selective when choosing their personal counsellor	1	2	3	4	5
8.	A trainee's personal counselling should focus on those issues that are most pertinent to their client work	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I think that some explanation should be given by the BPS as to why 40 hours has been chosen as the minimum personal counselling requirement	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I am concerned about the effect that the financial cost of personal counselling may have on trainees' enthusiasm and willingness to do it	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I am familiar with the research that has been carried out on personal counselling	1	2	3	4	5
12.	You don't need to have a 'problem' to benefit from personal counselling	1	2	3	4	5



APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

13.

Trainees should have complete freedom regarding the material or issues they bring to their personal counselling

12345
14.

Counselling psychology trainees should be allowed greater scope regarding when they can start and finish the personal counselling requirement during their BPS accredited training

12345
15.

The training provides opportunities for trainees to discuss their feelings and expectations concerning the personal counselling requirement

12345
16.

i) I think there is an important distinction between personal *counselling* and personal *therapy*

12345
- ii) If you have tended to *agree* with this statement, please say briefly why:

.....

.....

.....
17.

It is not justifiable to make personal counselling a training requirement without stronger research evidence for its professional benefits

12345
18.

If personal counselling were not a training requirement most trainees would probably not do it

12345
19.

In my experience, counselling psychology trainees tend to see personal counselling as...
- a)

an opportunity to work on/resolve some personal problems.....

12345
- b)

an opportunity for personal growth.....

12345
- c)

a way to gain the experience of being a 'client'.....

12345
- d)

an opportunity to observe and learn from an experienced professional in action.....

12345
- e)

a space to deal with and reflect on the experience of training and client work.

12345
- f)

an opportunity to learn more about a particular theoretical model.....

12345
- g)

just something they have to do to fulfil the requirements of the training.....

12345
- h)

other (please specify):

.....

12345

APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

20. i) Some theoretical orientations are more suited than others for use in the personal counselling of counselling psychology trainees 1 2 3 4 5

ii) If you have tended to *disagree* with this statement, could you briefly explain why:

.....  
.....  
.....

iii) If you have tended to *agree* with the above statement, please rate the following theoretical orientations for their suitability for use in personal counselling, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = very low suitability
- 2 = low suitability
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = high suitability
- 5 = very high suitability

a) Psychoanalytic.....	1	2	3	4	5
b) Psychodynamic.....	1	2	3	4	5
c) Humanistic.....	1	2	3	4	5
d) Cognitive-Behavioural.....	1	2	3	4	5
e) Systemic.....	1	2	3	4	5
f) Personal Construct Psychology.....	1	2	3	4	5
g) Existential.....	1	2	3	4	5
h) Integrative.....	1	2	3	4	5
i) Other (please specify): .....	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION 4 – THE ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

This section is concerned with your views on the assessment of personal development in counselling psychology training.

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about the assessment of personal development in counselling psychology training. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainer, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 3 = uncertain/don't know  
 4 = agree  
 5 = strongly agree

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | It is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | I am not exactly sure how one should assess the personal development of trainees   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Personal development can only be assessed qualitatively  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | A trainee's personal development can be assessed through their written work (e.g. case studies, process reports, personal journal/log, essays)   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | I have not given a lot of thought to the question of how to assess the personal development of trainees  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | It would be useful to have a tool that could help assess the personal development of trainees  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | Personal development can be adequately assessed through a trainee's general professional competence  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | It is more important for trainers to ensure that trainees are engaging effectively in the <i>process</i> of personal development, rather than to try to assess the <i>outcomes</i> of their personal development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | It is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of their training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | Trainees' personal development should be closely monitored in the training   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | i) There are minimum criteria of personal development that all trainees must meet  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

ii) If you have tended to *agree* with this statement, could you briefly say what you think these are:

.....  
 .....  
 .....



## APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

- |     |  |                   |
|-----|--|-------------------|
| 13. | It is very difficult for trainers to provide 'hard' evidence when they have serious doubts about the personal development, readiness or suitability of a trainee   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 14. | I have serious doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of some trainees  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 15. | There are close links between the training centre and trainees' placements   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 16. | Personal tutors could be used more effectively in the assessment of trainees' personal development   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 17. | Trainers should have agreed criteria and methods for assessing trainees' personal development  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 18. | i) Please rate the following people in terms of their suitability to assess the personal development of counselling psychology trainees, using the scoring below as a guide: <div style="margin-left: 40px; margin-top: 5px;">           1 = very low suitability<br/>           2 = low suitability<br/>           3 = uncertain/don't know<br/>           4 = high suitability<br/>           5 = very high suitability         </div> |                   |
|     | a) Personal counsellor.....  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | b) Personal development group facilitator.....   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | c) Personal tutor.....   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | d) Teachers of counselling skills .....  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | e) Teachers of counselling theory.....   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | f) The trainee her/himself.....  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | g) Trainee's peers on the course.....  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | h) Trainee's clients.....  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | i) Trainee's family and friends.....   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | j) Placement supervisor/s.....   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
|     | k) Other (please specify):<br>.....  | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 19. | Personal counsellors should provide feedback to the training centre regarding trainees' personal development   | 1   2   3   4   5 |
| 20. | Personal development group facilitators should provide feedback to the training centre regarding trainees' personal development  | 1   2   3   4   5 |

**CONCLUDING QUESTIONS**

1. Are there any changes that you would particularly like to see to the way in which counselling psychologists are trained, either in general or with specific reference to personal development?:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Are there any issues or aspects of personal development that you feel particularly require further discussion or research?:

.....

.....

.....

3. How important do you think further research on personal development is? (please tick):

☐ Unimportant      ☐ Not that important      ☐ Quite important      ☐ Important      ☐ Very important

4. Are there any particular experiences, occupations or roles that you feel have most influenced your views and responses on this questionnaire? If so, could you briefly say what these are:

.....

.....

5. Has the experience of completing this questionnaire affected in any way your views on personal development or the way you see it? If so could you briefly say how:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Are there any other comments you would like to make about this questionnaire or this topic (please feel free to make use of the other side of this sheet of paper)?:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

## YOUR PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DETAILS

1. i) At which of the following institutions are you currently involved in the training of counselling psychologists (please tick as appropriate):

- ☐ [Institution 1]
- ☐ [Institution 2]
- ☐ [Institution 3]
- ☐ [Institution 4]
- ☐ Other/s (please specify): .....

ii) If you are involved in the training of counselling psychologists at more than one of these institutions, at which institution do you do *most* of your training work (i.e. which is the one upon which you have based responses on this questionnaire)?:

.....

iii) At the institution where you do most or all of your training work, are you a:

- ☐ 'Visiting' member of the training team *OR*
- ☐ 'Core' member of the training team

2. Are you a:

- ☐ *Fully* Chartered Counselling Psychologist
- ☐ *Partially* Chartered Counselling Psychologist  
(i.e. currently completing your training to become chartered)
- ☐ Other: if you are not a *Fully* or *Partially* Chartered Counselling Psychologist, how you would describe yourself professionally?:

.....

3. i) If you are a *Fully* or *Partially* Chartered Counselling Psychologist, what was/is your route to chartering?

- ☐ British Psychological Society (BPS) Accredited Course
- ☐ Independent Route (i.e. BPS Diploma in Counselling Psychology)
- ☐ Grandparent Route (i.e. BPS statement of equivalence)

ii) If you chartered via the 'Grandparent Route', in what discipline was your previous training:

- ☐ Counselling
- ☐ Psychotherapy
- ☐ Clinical Psychology
- ☐ Other (please specify):.....



APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

4. Approximately how much client work have you done? You may answer in years, months or client hours:

.....

5. How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation:

- ☐ Psychodynamic
- ☐ Cognitive Behavioural
- ☐ Person-Centred
- ☐ Humanistic
- ☐ Systemic
- ☐ Existential
- ☐ Personal Construct Psychology
- ☐ Integrative
- ☐ Eclectic
- ☐ Other:.....

6. i) Before you began your professional training, had you had any counselling/therapy of your own?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you answered 'Yes', could you say roughly how much you had? You can answer *either* in terms of a total number of sessions *or* a frequency over a period of time (e.g. once a week for 2 years):

.....

7. i) Did you have any personal counselling during your professional training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you answered 'Yes', how much personal counselling did you have during your training? You can answer *either* in terms of a total number of hours *or* a frequency over a period of time (e.g. once a week for two years):

.....

iii) If you answered 'Yes', was this personal counselling an obligatory part of your training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

8. What was your age when you first began your professional training:.....

9. What is your current age:.....

10. Are you:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

11. How would you describe your cultural/ethnic background?

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Other (please specify): .....

12. Is English your first/native language?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No, my first language is (please write): .....
- ☐ I am bilingual

=====

***You have now completed the questionnaire!***

***Thanks again for your participation***

## 2. TRAINEE VERSION:

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

This questionnaire aims to gain an impression of your views and experiences, as a counselling psychology trainee, concerning a range of issues on the topic of personal development in counselling psychology training. It is divided into 4 main sections. These relate to:

- 1) The definition of personal development
- 2) The selection of trainees
- 3) The facilitation of personal development
- 4) The assessment of personal development

At the end, you will also be asked some **concluding questions** and to provide a little bit of **background information** about yourself and your professional training/experience. A pilot of the questionnaire suggests that it should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

Please do your best to answer all of the questions as honestly as you can and in the order in which they are presented.

There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, just your views and experiences.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL DATA WILL BE TREATED IN THE STRICTEST CONFIDENCE

*Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.*

---



**SECTION 1 - THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

This section is concerned with your views and experiences regarding the definition and importance of personal development within the context of counselling psychology training.

The first question is a 'warm-up' question. It is intended to help get you thinking about personal development in a reflective way and should give you a good starting point for answering the rest of the questions.

**1. What is personal development? How would you define it?**

Please use as much or as little of the space provided as you need to write down your ideas, and feel free to continue on the other side of this sheet if you wish.

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**SECTION 1 - *continued* - THE DEFINITION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about the definition and importance of personal development. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainee, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 3 = uncertain/don't know  
 4 = agree  
 5 = strongly agree

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.  | I find personal development a difficult thing to define   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | The aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | Personal development is important for counselling psychologists   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | Aims and objectives for personal development are clearly defined on the course  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | Aims and objectives for personal development should be <i>more</i> clearly defined on the course                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | My theoretical orientation affects the way I understand my own personal development   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | Personal development and self-awareness are practically synonymous  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | There are basic aims and objectives of personal development for all trainees  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | i) Personal development is equally important for counselling practitioners in all theoretical orientations                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | ii) Please give a brief explanation of your response to this question:  |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....   |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....   |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 11. | The main purpose of personal development in counselling psychology training is to promote trainees' personal growth         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | Personal development requires more than self-awareness  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | I see my own personal development as a way of contributing to the development of wider society                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | The main purpose of personal development in counselling psychology training is to enhance trainees' professional competence | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | Counselling psychology training courses should have a basic consensus regarding the definition of personal development      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## SECTION 2 - THE SELECTION OF TRAINEES

This section is concerned with your views on the selection of trainee counselling psychologists. Specifically, it inquires about the issues of trainees' *personal* suitability, readiness and motivators for training.

1. a) Are there any personal qualities, capacities or attributes that you think are essential in prospective trainees (please tick)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

b) If you answered 'Yes', could you briefly say what you think these are:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

c) If you answered 'Yes', do you tend to see these personal qualities as (please tick *one* box):

*EITHER:*

☐ a) basic, stable personality traits

*OR:*

☐ b) qualities that individuals can acquire

d) Are there any personal qualities, capacities or attributes that you would particularly look to *avoid* in a prospective trainee (please tick)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

e) If you answered 'Yes', could briefly say what you think these are:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



**SECTION 2 - continued - THE SELECTION OF TRAINEES**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about the selection of trainees. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainee, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree  
 2 = disagree  
 3 = uncertain/don't know  
 4 = agree  
 5 = strongly agree

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.  | Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Selectors' assessments of applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training are inevitably subjective  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | There are 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' reasons or motivators for wanting to train as a counselling psychologist   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | Selectors should favour applicants with certain kinds of motivators for training (i.e. 'more appropriate' motivators)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | In trainee selection, the applicant's ability to reflect critically and constructively on their personal motivators is more important than the nature of the motivators (i.e. whether or not they are 'appropriate') | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | The course selectors ensured that I was aware of the personal and emotional demands of the training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | It should be a course entrance requirement that trainees have spent a period of time out in the 'real world', either before or since their graduation  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | The selection process required me to reflect deeply on my decision to train and my own personal suitability/readiness for training   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | I think that more should be done to improve the assessment of applicants' personal suitability/readiness during selection  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | It is essential that selectors on a course have agreed criteria regarding the personal qualities that they are looking for in prospective trainees   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | It is very difficult to assess an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. | It is essential that more than one person is involved in the assessment of an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

14. Please rate the following selection methods in terms of how useful you think each is in assessing an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training, using the scoring key below as a guide:

1 = very low usefulness  
 2 = low usefulness  
 3 = uncertain/don't know  
 4 = high usefulness  
 5 = very high usefulness

a) References.....	1	2	3	4	5
b) Personal Statements (e.g. written on application forms).....	1	2	3	4	5
c) Interviews where one applicant is interviewed once by a single interviewer...	1	2	3	4	5
d) Interviews where one applicant is interviewed more than once, each time by a different single interviewer.....	1	2	3	4	5
e) Interviews where one applicant is interviewed simultaneously by more than one interviewer, i.e. by a panel of interviewers.....	1	2	3	4	5
f) Group interviews/discussions before one selector.....	1	2	3	4	5
g) Group interviews/discussions before a panel of selectors.....	1	2	3	4	5
h) A residential setting selection process.....	1	2	3	4	5
i) Other (please specify):					
.....	1	2	3	4	5

Please note: 'Other' options are provided throughout the questionnaire, in case you wish to specify some other response that is not included in the range of options given

SECTION 3 - THE FACILITATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section has 2 parts. *Part A* asks some general questions about personal development and how it is facilitated or brought about during counselling psychology training. *Part B* focuses specifically on the topic of personal counselling.

PART A – GENERAL QUESTIONS

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about personal development and its facilitation in counselling psychology training. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainee, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

1.	Developing my professional competence is very important to my sense of personal development	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The intensity and workload of the course make personal development very difficult for trainees	1	2	3	4	5
3.	The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed on the course	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I would like the subject of personal development to be <i>more</i> openly and fully discussed on the course	1	2	3	4	5
5.	There is a high level of peer group support and cohesion on the course	1	2	3	4	5
6.	A trainee's professional competence relies on their mastery of counselling skills and theory	1	2	3	4	5
7.	There should be more counselling skills training, role play and workshops on the course	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The course clearly addresses the issue of how to integrate one's personal philosophy with one's counselling approach/model	1	2	3	4	5
9.	A trainee's professional competence stems from their personal development	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of their training	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Trainees' personal development should be <i>better</i> integrated into the other aspects of their training	1	2	3	4	5
12.	i) I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development on the course	1	2	3	4	5

ii) If you have tended to *disagree*, could you briefly say why:

.....

.....



## APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

13. i) Below is a list of experiences that may affect trainees' personal development. Please rate each experience in terms of how important you feel it has been to *your personal development since you started training*, using the scoring key below as a guide:

1 = very low importance  
2 = low importance  
3 = uncertain/don't know  
4 = high importance  
5 = very high importance

Please **IGNORE** any listed experiences that you have not had, or not had yet

a) personal counselling.....	1	2	3	4	5
b) personal development groups.....	1	2	3	4	5
c) group tutorials.....	1	2	3	4	5
d) individual tutorials.....	1	2	3	4	5
e) keeping a personal diary/journal/log.....	1	2	3	4	5
f) peer group support, relationships, conversations.....	1	2	3	4	5
g) looking for a personal counsellor.....	1	2	3	4	5
h) looking for placements.....	1	2	3	4	5
i) client work.....	1	2	3	4	5
j) supervision (of client work).....	1	2	3	4	5
k) counselling skills training, role-play, workshops.....	1	2	3	4	5
l) written work (e.g. case studies, process reports, essays).....	1	2	3	4	5
m) theoretical learning.....	1	2	3	4	5
n) personal life experiences/relationships outside of the course.....	1	2	3	4	5
o) other (please specify): .....	1	2	3	4	5

- ii) If any of the above experience/s are *not* included on your course, but you feel *should* be, please use this space to briefly say which one/s and why:

.....  
.....

- iii) If you feel that any of these experiences has had a *negative* impact on your personal development, please use this space to briefly say which one/s and why:

.....  
.....

**SECTION 3 – continued - THE FACILITATION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**PART B – PERSONAL COUNSELLING**

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about personal counselling. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainee, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

1.	Personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees	1	2	3	4	5
2.	i) Personal counselling is more important if you are training as a counselling practitioner in certain theoretical orientations	1	2	3	4	5
	ii) If you have tended to <i>agree</i> with this statement, could you briefly say in which orientation(s) you feel personal counselling is more important, and why:					
	.....					
	.....					
	.....					
3.	Personal counselling is sufficient to facilitate counselling psychology trainees' personal development	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of personal counselling	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The aims and objectives of personal counselling should be <i>more</i> clearly defined on the course	1	2	3	4	5
6.	There are not enough personal counsellors who are able to work with trainees who may not have a 'problem'	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I was/will be (please delete as appropriate) very selective when choosing my personal counsellor	1	2	3	4	5
8.	A trainee's personal counselling should focus on those issues that are most pertinent to their client work	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I think that some explanation should be given by the BPS as to why 40 hours has been chosen as the minimum personal counselling requirement	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The financial cost of personal counselling significantly reduces my enthusiasm and willingness to have it	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I am familiar with the research that has been carried out on personal counselling	1	2	3	4	5
12.	You don't need to have a 'problem' to benefit from personal counselling	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | Trainees should have complete freedom regarding the material or issues they bring to their personal counselling  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | Counselling psychology trainees should be allowed greater scope regarding when they can start and finish the personal counselling requirement during their BPS accredited training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | The course provides opportunities for trainees to discuss their feelings and expectations concerning the personal counselling requirement  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | i) I think there is an important distinction between personal <i>counselling</i> and personal <i>therapy</i>   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | ii) If you have tended to <i>agree</i> with this statement, please say briefly why:  |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....  |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....  |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....  |   |   |   |   |   |
| 17. | It is not justifiable to make personal counselling a training requirement without stronger research evidence for its professional benefits   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | If personal counselling were not a course requirement I would probably not do it   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. | I see personal counselling as...   |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | a) an opportunity to work on/resolve some personal problems.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | b) an opportunity for personal growth.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | c) a way to gain the experience of being a 'client'.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | d) an opportunity to observe and learn from an experienced professional in action.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | e) a space to deal with and reflect on the experience of training and client work.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | f) an opportunity to learn more about a particular theoretical model.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | g) just something I have to do to fulfil the requirements of the course.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | h) other (please specify):   |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | .....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

20. i) Some theoretical orientations are more suited than others for use in the personal counselling of counselling psychology trainees 1 2 3 4 5

ii) If you have tended to *disagree* with this statement, could you briefly explain why:

.....

.....

.....

iii) If you have tended to *agree* with the above statement, please rate the following theoretical orientations for their suitability for use in personal counselling, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = very low suitability
- 2 = low suitability
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = high suitability
- 5 = very high suitability

a) Psychoanalytic.....	1	2	3	4	5
b) Psychodynamic.....	1	2	3	4	5
c) Humanistic.....	1	2	3	4	5
d) Cognitive-Behavioural.....	1	2	3	4	5
e) Systemic.....	1	2	3	4	5
f) Personal Construct Psychology.....	1	2	3	4	5
g) Existential.....	1	2	3	4	5
h) Integrative.....	1	2	3	4	5
i) Other (please specify):					
.....	1	2	3	4	5

# SECTION 4 – THE ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section is concerned with your views on the assessment of personal development in counselling psychology training.

Listed below are a series of statements that relate to beliefs about the assessment of personal development in counselling psychology training. For each statement please circle a number from 1 to 5 to indicate how closely it corresponds to your own views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainee, using the scoring key below as a guide:

- 1 = strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | It is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | I am not exactly sure how one should assess the personal development of trainees   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | Personal development can only be assessed qualitatively  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | A trainee's personal development can be assessed through their written work (e.g. case studies, process reports, personal journal/log, essays)   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | I have not given a lot of thought to the question of how to assess the personal development of trainees  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | It would be useful to have a tool that could help assess the personal development of trainees  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | Personal development can be adequately assessed through a trainee's general professional competence  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | It is more important for trainers to ensure that trainees are engaging effectively in the <i>process</i> of personal development, rather than to try to assess the <i>outcomes</i> of their personal development | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | It is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of their training  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. | I feel that my personal development is closely monitored on the course   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. | i) There are minimum criteria of personal development that all trainees must meet  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

ii) If you have tended to *agree* with this statement, could you briefly say what you think these are:

.....

.....

.....

## APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | It is very difficult for trainers to provide 'hard' evidence when they have serious doubts about the personal development, readiness or suitability of a trainee   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. | I have serious doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of some of the trainees on the course   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. | There are close links between the training course and trainees' placements   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. | Personal tutors could be used more effectively in the assessment of trainees' personal development   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. | Trainers should have agreed criteria and methods for assessing trainees' personal development  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. | i) Please rate the following people in terms of their suitability to assess the personal development of counselling psychology trainees, using the scoring below as a guide:<br><div style="margin-left: 40px;">             1 = very low suitability<br/>             2 = low suitability<br/>             3 = uncertain/don't know<br/>             4 = high suitability<br/>             5 = very high suitability           </div> |   |   |   |   |   |
|     | a) Personal counsellor.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | b) Personal development group facilitator.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | c) Personal tutor.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | d) Teachers of counselling skills .....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | e) Teachers of counselling theory.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | f) The trainee her/himself.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | g) Trainee's peers on the course.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | h) Trainee's clients.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | i) Trainee's family and friends.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | j) Placement supervisor/s.....   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|     | k) Other (please specify):<br>.....  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. | Personal counsellors should provide feedback to the training course regarding trainees' personal development   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. | Personal development group facilitators should provide feedback to the training course regarding trainees' personal development  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



**CONCLUDING QUESTIONS**

1. Are there any changes that you would particularly like to see to the way in which counselling psychologists are trained, either in general or with specific reference to personal development?:

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Are there any issues or aspects of personal development that you feel particularly require further discussion or research?:

.....

.....

.....

3. How important do you think further research on personal development is? (please tick):

☐ Unimportant      ☐ Not that important      ☐ Quite important      ☐ Important      ☐ Very important

4. Are there any particular experiences, occupations or roles that you feel have most influenced your views and responses on this questionnaire? If so, could you briefly say what these are:

.....

.....

5. Has the experience of completing this questionnaire affected in any way your views on personal development or the way you see it? If so could you briefly say how:

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Are there any other comments you would like to make about this questionnaire or this topic (please feel free to make use of the other side of this sheet of paper)?:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**YOUR PERSONAL/PROFESSIONAL DETAILS...**

1. At which institution is your current training based (please tick as appropriate)?

- ☐ [Institution 1]
- ☐ [Institution 2]
- ☐ [Institution 3]
- ☐ [Institution 4]

2. What is the title of the course you are currently engaged in?

- ☐ Diploma in Counselling Psychology
- ☐ M.Sc. Counselling Psychology
- ☐ Post-M.Sc. Diploma in Counselling Psychology
- ☐ Practitioner Doctorate in Psycho Therapeutic and Counselling Psychology
- ☐ Other (please specify): .....

3. Are you on this course as a:

- ☐ Part-time student    OR
- ☐ Full-time student

4. In relation to this particular course, what year are you currently in:

- ☐ 1st
- ☐ 2nd
- ☐ 3rd
- ☐ 4th
- ☐ 5th
- ☐ 6th
- ☐ Other (please specify): .....

5. Approximately how long is it since you first began your counselling psychology training (i.e. on a BPS accredited course). You can answer in years and/or months:

.....

6. Do you plan to become a chartered counselling psychologist?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know/not sure

APPENDIX F: TRAINER AND TRAINEE QUESTIONNAIRES

7. How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation:

- ☐ Psychodynamic
- ☐ Cognitive Behavioural
- ☐ Person-Centred
- ☐ Humanistic
- ☐ Systemic
- ☐ Existential
- ☐ Personal Construct Psychology
- ☐ Integrative
- ☐ Eclectic
- ☐ Other (please specify): .....

8. i) Before you started your counselling psychology training, had you done any other counselling/therapist training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you answered 'Yes', could you describe what kind of training this was (e.g. its level, duration, orientation)?

.....

9. i) Before you started your counselling psychology training, had you any previous practical experience as a counsellor?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you answered 'Yes', could you describe what kind of experience this was (e.g. the setting, client group, approach used)?

.....

10. i) Before you started your counselling psychology training, had you had any counselling/therapy of your own?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you answered 'Yes', could you say roughly how much you had? You can give answer *either* in terms of a total number of sessions *or* a frequency over a period of time (e.g. once a week for 2 years)

.....

11. i) Since you started your counselling psychology training, have you had any personal counselling?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you answered 'Yes', how many hours have you had?: .....

12. i) Have you seen any clients since you started your counselling psychology training?



- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

ii) If you have, could you say roughly how many client hours you have completed:

.....

13. Are you:
- ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female

14. What is your age? :.....

15. How would you describe your cultural/ethnic background?
- ☐ Black
  - ☐ White
  - ☐ Asian
  - ☐ Other (please specify).....

16. Is English your first/native language?
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No, my first language is (please write): .....
  - ☐ I am bilingual

=====

***You have now completed the questionnaire!***

***Thanks again for your participation***



**APPENDIX G Prospective letter sent to Course Directors**

21st September, 1999

Mark Donati  
Ph.D. Research Student  
Department of Psychology  
City University  
Northampton Square  
London, EC1V 0HB

Name & address of  
Counselling Psychology Course Director

Dear .....

Mary Watts at City University has suggested I contact you as a course director at an institution that runs counselling psychology training courses currently accredited by the BPS to both Parts 1 and 2 of their Diploma in Counselling Psychology. Mary is currently supervising my Ph.D. research, which is concerned with the topic of personal development in counselling psychology training.

My interest in studying personal development stems from my belief that, although it has become an increasingly popular feature of modern counsellor training, the area still lacks a substantive literature of its own, especially in terms of psychological research. We feel that research perspective could do much to enhance our understanding of this fundamental yet highly complex and personal dimension of professional training and practice, and we believe that the discipline of counselling psychology is uniquely well placed to provide it.

We are particularly interested in developing a theoretical understanding of how trainers and trainees in counselling psychology view and experience a range of important but complex issues for personal development in training. These issues concern the definition, facilitation and assessment of trainee personal development, and the selection of candidates for training. We are also interested in mapping any differences



## *APPENDIX G: PROSPECTIVE LETTER TO COURSE DIRECTORS*

that may exist between counselling psychologists in their views and experiences, of which the maturing discipline might usefully become aware. Ultimately, we hope that our research will make a practical contribution to the personal development of counselling psychologists and to the professional development of the discipline as a whole.

In order to help us achieve these aims, we would like to be able to sample the views and experiences of a cross-section of trainers and trainees at Part 1 and 2 accredited counselling psychology training centres. As a course director at one of these centres, I am writing to you to seek your permission to distribute among your trainers and trainees a survey instrument that we are using to investigate this area. The instrument is based on a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with counselling psychology trainers and trainees conducted at an earlier stage of the research. It is particularly important that we gain the participation of trainees who are at various stages in their training. We would therefore like to be able to come in person to your institution, at an appropriate time and place in early December to distribute surveys to each of your training cohorts and their trainers.

Should you allow me to approach your trainers and trainees, I would like to emphasise that their participation will remain anonymous and entirely voluntary, and that all data will be treated in the strictest confidence.

I do hope that you share our belief in the potential value of this project and that you will feel able to support us in our request. I will contact you by telephone early next week to receive your feedback and to answer any questions you may wish to ask about the research.

In the meantime, thank you very much for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Donati  
Ph.D. Research Student

Tel: 0171 477 8000, ext. 4581  
Email: [m.a.donati@city.ac.uk](mailto:m.a.donati@city.ac.uk)



## APPENDIX H Questionnaire covering letters for trainers and trainees

Trainee covering letter:

27<sup>th</sup> January, 2000

Mark Donati  
Centre for Health & Counselling Psychology  
City University  
Walmsley Building  
St John Street  
London, EC1V 0HB

Tel: 0171 477 8000, ext. 4581  
Email: [M.A.Donati@city.ac.uk](mailto:M.A.Donati@city.ac.uk)

Dear Counselling Psychology Trainee,

**Re: Survey of personal development in counselling psychology training**

Your Course Director ..... has kindly given me permission to contact you, as someone engaged in counselling psychology training at ....., to seek your participation in a survey I am carrying out on the topic of personal development in counselling psychology training in the UK.

The survey is part of my Ph.D. research, which aims to improve counselling psychology's understanding of this core yet severely under-researched area of training. I am particularly interested in finding out how those currently involved in counselling psychology training view a range of personal development issues, which I believe are in need of greater study and discussion. These issues concern the definition, facilitation and assessment of personal development, and the selection of trainees.



#### APPENDIX H: QUESTIONNAIRE COVERING LETTERS

To help me do this, I have devised a detailed questionnaire with which I am hoping to survey trainees and trainers at 4 key centres for counselling psychology training in the UK ..... The survey should thus provide a unique and valuable opportunity for counselling psychology's trainers and trainees to share and clarify their views and experiences regarding this complex and emotive topic. It is intended that the survey's findings will be presented at the Division of Counselling Psychology's next annual conference, as well as in a relevant academic journal. Ultimately, it is hoped that the research will be able to make a practical contribution to the personal development of counselling psychologists and to the professional development of the discipline as a whole.

Whilst I do appreciate how precious your time is, I nonetheless hope that you may be interested in participating in the survey, so that your views and experiences as a counselling psychology trainee, can be included and the findings will be as representative as possible. Moreover, I am sure you will find completing the questionnaire an interesting reflective experience in itself.

If you would like to participate, I would very grateful if you could complete and return the enclosed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope. A pilot of the questionnaire suggests that it should take you no more than 30 minutes to complete. It is based on themes extrapolated from a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with trainers and trainees conducted at an earlier stage of the research. If would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the above address or telephone number and I will be very happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous, and all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,

Mark Donati  
Ph.D. research student



**Trainer covering letter:**

27<sup>th</sup> January, 2000

Mark Donati  
Centre for Health & Counselling Psychology  
City University  
Walmsley Building  
St John Street  
London, EC1V 0HB

*Tel: 0171 477 8000, ext. 4581*

*Email: M.A.Donati@city.ac.uk*

Dear Counselling Psychology Trainer

**Re: Survey of personal development in counselling psychology training**

Your Course Director ..... has kindly given me permission to contact you, as someone involved in counselling psychology training at ..... to seek your participation in a survey that I am carrying out on the topic of personal development in counselling psychology training in the UK.

The survey is part of my Ph.D. research, which aims to improve counselling psychology's understanding of this core yet severely under-researched area of training. I am particularly interested in finding out how those currently involved in counselling psychology training view a range of personal development issues, which I believe are in need of greater study and discussion. These issues concern the definition, facilitation and assessment of personal development, and the selection of trainees.

To help me do this, I have devised a detailed questionnaire with which I am hoping to survey trainees and trainers at 4 key centres for counselling psychology training in the UK ..... The survey should provide a



#### APPENDIX H: QUESTIONNAIRE COVERING LETTERS

unique and valuable opportunity for counselling psychology's trainers and trainees to share and clarify their views and experiences regarding this complex and emotive topic. It is intended that the survey's findings will be presented at the Division of Counselling Psychology's next annual conference, as well as in a relevant academic journal. Ultimately, it is hoped that the research will make a practical contribution to the personal development of counselling psychologists and to the professional development of the discipline as a whole.

Whilst I do appreciate how precious your time is, I nonetheless hope that you may be interested in participating in the survey so that your views and experiences can be included, and the findings will be as representative as possible. Moreover, I am sure you will find completing the questionnaire an interesting reflective experience in itself.

If you would like to participate, I would very grateful if you could complete and return the enclosed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope, which should take no more than 30 minutes to complete. It is based on themes extrapolated from a qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with trainers and trainees conducted at an earlier stage of the research. If you would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me at the above address, telephone number or by email and I will be very happy to answer any questions you may have.

**Your participation is entirely voluntary and anonymous, and all responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.**

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Donati  
Ph.D. research student

## APPENDIX I Raw data for key survey items

### KEY TO SUBSEQUENT DATA PRINTOUT

Unless otherwise indicated within the key below, *data values* are to be read as follows:

- 1= strongly disagree
- 2 = disagree
- 3 = uncertain/don't know
- 4 = agree
- 5 = strongly agree

99 = missing data

*Data labels* are to be read as referring to survey items in the following way (please note: items are listed below in the order that they appear in the subsequent printout):

Item 2	Personal development is important for counselling psychologists
Item 3	Personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees
Hyp 2	The aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee
Item 5	Aims and objectives for personal development are clearly defined on the course
Item 6	Aims and objectives for personal development should be more clearly defined on the course
Item 15	Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training
Hyp 6	I think more should be done to improve the assessment of applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 16	It is very difficult to assess an applicant's personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17a	References: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17b	Personal statements: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17c	Interviews where one applicant is interviewed once by a single interviewer: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17d	Interviews where one applicant is interviewed more than once each time by a different single interviewer: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17e	Interviews where one applicant is interviewed once by a panel of interviewers
Item 17f	Group interviews before one selector: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17g	Group interviews before a panel of selectors: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Item 17h	A residential setting selection process: please rate their usefulness in assessing personal suitability/readiness for training
Hyp 3	Developing my professional competence is very important to my sense of personal development
Item 7	The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed on the course
Item 8	I would like the subject of personal development to be more openly and fully discussed on the course
Item 9	Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of their training
Item 10	Trainees' personal development should be clearly integrated into the other aspects of their training

# APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

Item 11	I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development on the course
Item 4a	Personal counselling: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4b	Personal development groups: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4c	Group tutorials: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4d	Individual tutorials: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4e	Keeping a personal diary/journal: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4f	Peer group support: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4g	Looking for a personal counsellor: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4h	Looking for placements: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4i	Client work: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4j	Supervision: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4k	Counselling skills training: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4l	Written work: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4m	Theoretical learning: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 4n	Personal life experiences: please rate its importance to personal development
Item 12	It is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees
Item 13	I am not exactly sure how one should assess personal development
Hyp 4	It is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of their training
Hyp 5	The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment
Item 14	I have serious doubts about the personal suitability of some trainees
profstat	Professional status: trainer (data value = 1) or trainee (data value = 2)?
pdyn	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: Psychodynamic (1) or not (0)
cbt	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: cognitive-behavioural (1) or not (0)
pc	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: person-centred (1) or not (0)
humani	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: humanistic (1) or not (0)
systemi	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: systemic (1) or not (0)
existen	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: existential (1) or not (0)
pcp	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: personal construct psychology (1) or not (0)
integra	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: integrative (1) or not (0)
eclect	How would you describe your preferred theoretical orientation: eclectic (1) or not (0)
pcouns	Before you started training, had you had any counselling/therapy of your own? (1 = yes, 2 = no)
Sex	Male (1) or Female (2)?
Age	In years



## APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

## DATA PRINTOUT

participant	Item 2	Item 3	Hyp 2	Item 5	Item 6	Item 15	Hyp 6
1	4	4	3	1	2	4	3
2	5	5	2	3	4	4	5
3	5	5	3	2	4	4	4
4	5	4	4	4	2	4	4
5	4	2	2	2	4	99	3
6	5	4	5	2	4	3	2
7	5	5	3	3	4	4	4
8	1	5	4	4	5	1	1
9	5	5	4	1	4	2	4
10	4	2	4	2	2	4	4
11	5	4	2	3	4	4	3
12	5	4	5	4	2	2	2
13	5	5	2	2	4	4	4
14	5	5	2	3	4	4	3
15	1	5	2	2	5	99	3
16	4	2	4	1	5	99	4
17	5	5	4	4	5	4	2
18	4	1	4	2	4	4	4
19	4	5	4	4	3	3	3
20	4	3	4	2	4	3	4
21	5	5	2	4	3	5	3
22	5	5	4	2	5	4	4
23	4	4	2	3	3	4	3
24	5	5	4	2	3	5	3
25	5	5	3	1	5	4	4
26	5	5	5	3	2	4	3
27	5	5	5	3	4	4	4
28	5	5	5	4	5	2	3
29	5	4	2	4	1	1	2
30	5	4	3	5	2	4	4
31	4	5	4	2	4	1	2
32	5	4	2	2	5	3	2
33	5	4	2	2	2	3	2
34	5	4	4	3	4	4	4
35	5	3	5	1	5	99	5
36	1	4	2	1	5	4	4
37	5	5	4	2	2	4	4
38	5	5	4	3	4	1	3
39	5	4	2	99	4	3	2
40	5	4	4	3	2	4	2
41	5	3	5	3	4	3	2
42	5	5	2	4	2	2	4

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 16	Item 17a	Item 17b	Item 17c	Item 17d	Item 17e
1	5	4	4	2	3	4
2	2	3	3	2	4	4
3	4	4	4	2	4	3
4	4	4	4	3	4	4
5	3	4	3	2	3	4
6	2	3	5	2	2	3
7	2	2	5	5	5	5
8	5	1	4	2	2	2
9	5	4	4	2	2	4
10	4	2	4	2	4	4
11	3	4	5	4	3	4
12	4	2	4	2	4	2
13	4	2	4	3	4	3
14	4	5	5	4	4	2
15	4	5	5	4	4	2
16	2	3	2	2	4	5
17	2	4	4	5	2	4
18	4	1	4	4	4	4
19	4	4	4	4	3	4
20	4	4	4	2	2	4
21	2	4	4	2	2	4
22	3	3	4	3	4	4
23	4	4	4	2	2	4
24	4	3	4	3	2	5
25	4	4	4	1	1	4
26	2	4	4	1	2	4
27	5	5	5	2	4	5
28	4	3	4	2	1	4
29	4	4	4	4	4	5
30	2	2	3	2	2	4
31	4	2	4	3	2	4
32	2	4	4	2	2	4
33	4	4	4	2	2	4
34	3	4	4	2	2	99
35	2	5	4	4	4	5
36	2	1	4	3	4	4
37	4	3	4	4	4	2
38	2	4	4	4	4	4
39	3	2	5	5	4	4
40	4	3	4	2	3	4
41	3	3	4	4	5	3
42	4	4	5	4	3	3

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 17f	Item 17g	Item 17h	Hyp 3	Item 7	Item 8
1	2	4	3	4	4	3
2	4	5	2	2	3	4
3	3	3	4	3	4	4
4	4	4	3	5	2	5
5	2	4	3	4	2	4
6	4	4	4	5	3	4
7	4	4	4	4	2	1
8	2	2	2	4	4	4
9	4	4	1	4	1	5
10	4	4	5	4	4	4
11	3	4	3	3	3	4
12	2	4	3	4	1	5
13	3	4	4	5	2	5
14	2	2	2	5	2	5
15	4	3	4	5	2	5
16	2	2	4	5	1	5
17	4	3	4	4	4	4
18	4	4	4	4	3	4
19	4	3	3	4	3	4
20	2	4	3	4	1	4
21	4	4	5	5	2	4
22	4	4	3	5	2	4
23	2	2	4	4	3	3
24	2	4	3	5	4	4
25	1	4	4	4	1	5
26	1	4	2	4	4	2
27	3	5	3	4	2	4
28	2	4	3	4	2	5
29	4	5	3	4	2	4
30	4	3	4	5	4	3
31	4	2	1	5	2	4
32	3	2	2	4	2	4
33	2	4	4	5	4	2
34	3	4	4	4	2	4
35	4	2	1	5	1	5
36	4	4	5	4	1	5
37	4	2	5	4	4	4
38	4	4	1	5	3	4
39	2	2	3	5	2	4
40	4	4	2	4	4	2
41	4	3	3	5	5	2
42	4	4	3	1	2	4



APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 4a	Item 4b	Item 4c
1	2	3	4	4	4	4
2	2	5	1	3	4	2
3	4	4	4	5	4	4
4	2	4	4	4	4	2
5	2	4	2	3	99	2
6	4	4	2	99	3	5
7	3	4	2	5	4	4
8	4	4	4	5	5	5
9	2	4	1	5	99	2
10	4	3	4	2	99	4
11	4	5	2	4	99	2
12	4	2	4	4	1	1
13	4	5	2	4	99	4
14	3	4	4	5	5	1
15	2	5	1	5	99	2
16	2	4	1	2	99	2
17	4	4	2	4	4	4
18	3	4	3	1	3	99
19	4	3	4	5	5	5
20	4	4	2	3	99	4
21	4	4	2	4	5	4
22	3	4	3	5	4	3
23	3	3	4	4	4	2
24	3	4	2	5	5	4
25	1	5	2	4	4	99
26	3	3	4	5	5	4
27	2	5	2	5	5	4
28	4	4	2	5	4	4
29	4	3	3	4	99	4
30	3	4	4	4	4	4
31	4	4	2	5	3	4
32	3	4	2	4	99	4
33	4	2	4	4	4	2
34	3	4	3	4	99	4
35	5	5	2	4	99	4
36	1	4	1	4	99	2
37	4	3	3	5	4	3
38	2	4	1	5	3	5
39	3	4	3	5	4	4
40	4	2	4	4	4	4
41	3	3	3	4	2	2
42	2	4	2	4	2	2

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 4d	Item 4e	Item 4f	Item 4g	Item 4h	Item 4i
1	4	2	4	2	2	4
2	3	2	2	4	4	4
3	4	2	4	4	4	4
4	4	4	5	4	4	5
5	2	2	4	2	3	99
6	4	4	5	3	3	5
7	99	3	4	4	5	5
8	5	5	5	5	5	99
9	2	5	5	4	4	5
10	4	3	5	4	4	5
11	3	4	5	4	4	5
12	1	2	4	4	2	4
13	4	4	4	4	4	5
14	1	4	5	3	3	5
15	2	3	4	5	4	5
16	4	3	5	3	4	5
17	5	4	5	4	4	5
18	1	4	5	1	3	5
19	5	5	5	5	5	5
20	3	99	5	2	99	5
21	1	2	4	3	3	5
22	99	99	4	3	4	5
23	2	2	4	3	3	4
24	5	5	5	5	5	5
25	99	99	4	4	4	5
26	2	4	5	5	5	5
27	2	2	4	5	3	5
28	2	3	5	4	4	5
29	99	5	j	4	5	5
30	4	4	4	3	3	4
31	4	3	4	4	4	4
32	99	2	4	3	2	99
33	2	2	4	2	2	5
34	4	5	4	4	4	99
35	2	2	4	2	4	5
36	1	2	2	3	2	4
37	3	1	4	4	4	5
38	2	2	4	2	5	5
39	4	2	3	4	2	5
40	3	4	4	99	99	4
41	99	2	4	4	4	4
42	99	4	4	2	4	99

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 4j	Item 4k	Item 4l	Item 4m	Item 4n	Item 12
1	4	2	4	3	4	4
2	5	4	3	3	4	4
3	5	4	3	4	5	4
4	4	4	3	2	4	4
5	99	4	99	4	4	4
6	4	5	4	4	5	3
7	5	5	5	4	5	4
8	4	1	2	4	5	2
9	5	5	2	2	5	3
10	5	3	5	5	5	2
11	5	5	5	4	5	4
12	4	4	4	4	4	4
13	5	5	5	5	5	4
14	5	4	99	4	4	4
15	5	5	4	4	5	5
16	5	1	2	4	4	4
17	5	5	3	4	5	4
18	5	5	5	5	5	4
19	5	5	5	5	5	3
20	4	4	3	4	4	3
21	4	4	5	5	5	2
22	3	4	3	4	4	4
23	4	4	2	4	4	4
24	5	5	5	4	2	3
25	5	4	4	4	4	5
26	5	4	2	2	5	4
27	4	4	4	4	5	4
28	5	4	3	4	5	4
29	5	4	4	4	4	2
30	4	4	4	4	4	4
31	4	4	4	4	4	1
32	99	4	4	4	5	4
33	5	5	4	4	4	2
34	99	4	4	3	4	4
35	5	4	2	2	4	2
36	4	2	3	3	4	4
37	5	4	3	3	4	2
38	5	4	5	4	4	3
39	5	4	3	3	2	2
40	4	4	4	4	4	4
41	4	2	4	4	5	4
42	99	5	99	4	5	3



APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 13	Hyp 4	Hyp 5	Item 14	profstat	Pdyn
1	3	2	3	2	2	0
2	3	1	5	4	1	1
3	3	2	4	99	2	0
4	4	2	4	4	2	0
5	4	4	3	3	2	0
6	4	2	4	3	2	0
7	3	3	3	4	2	0
8	4	4	4	2	2	0
9	5	2	3	4	2	0
10	4	4	2	4	2	0
11	2	3	3	3	2	0
12	5	3	4	2	2	0
13	3	3	3	3	2	0
14	4	3	4	2	2	0
15	4	3	4	3	2	0
16	4	4	4	3	2	0
17	4	3	4	3	2	0
18	4	5	5	5	2	0
19	4	3	3	3	2	0
20	5	4	3	4	2	0
21	4	2	3	4	2	0
22	4	2	4	4	2	0
23	2	2	3	2	2	0
24	5	2	3	2	2	1
25	5	1	5	3	2	0
26	4	3	3	2	2	0
27	4	3	4	2	2	1
28	4	2	4	4	2	1
29	5	4	2	2	2	0
30	2	2	3	2	2	0
31	5	4	3	3	2	0
32	4	3	3	2	2	0
33	2	2	3	2	2	0
34	4	2	3	2	2	0
35	4	5	4	3	2	0
36	4	2	4	3	2	0
37	5	4	3	4	2	1
38	4	4	3	2	2	0
39	4	2	4	3	2	0
40	2	2	2	3	2	0
41	4	4	3	3	2	1
42	4	4	3	2	2	0

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	cbt	pc	humani	systemi	existen	pcp
1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	1	0	0
3	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	1	0	0	0	0	0
5	1	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	1	0	0	0	0
7	0	1	0	0	0	0
8	1	1	0	0	0	0
9	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0	0	0
11	1	0	1	0	0	1
12	0	0	0	1	0	0
13	1	0	1	0	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	1	0	0	0	0	0
17	1	1	0	0	0	0
18	0	1	1	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	0	0	0	1	1	0
21	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	0	0	0	0	1	0
23	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	0	0	0	0	1	0
27	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	0	1	1	1	1	0
29	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	0	0	1	0	0	0
31	1	0	0	0	0	0
32	1	0	0	0	0	0
33	0	0	0	0	0	0
34	0	1	1	0	0	0
35	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	0	0	0	0	0	0
37	0	0	0	0	0	0
38	0	1	1	0	0	0
39	0	0	0	0	0	0
40	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	0	0	0	0	0	0
42	0	0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Integra	eclect	pcouns	sex	age	culture
1	1	0	1	2	28	2
2	0	0	1	1	42	2
3	1	0	1	2	47	2
4	1	0	1	2	42	2
5	0	0	1	2	48	2
6	0	0	2	2	34	1
7	0	0	1	2	50	2
8	0	0	2	2	37	3
9	1	0	2	2	27	2
10	1	0	2	1	59	2
11	1	0	1	2	48	3
12	0	0	1	2	24	2
13	1	0	2	2	35	2
14	1	0	1	2	35	2
15	1	0	1	2	35	2
16	0	0	2	2	49	2
17	0	0	1	1	50	2
18	0	0	2	2	22	4
19	1	0	1	2	45	2
20	0	0	1	2	46	2
21	1	0	1	2	41	2
22	0	0	1	1	37	2
23	1	0	1	2	45	2
24	1	0	1	2	49	2
25	1	0	1	2	54	2
26	1	0	2	2	48	2
27	0	0	2	2	25	2
28	1	0	1	2	26	2
29	1	0	2	1	27	2
30	0	0	2	1	53	2
31	0	0	2	2	23	3
32	0	0	1	2	25	2
33	1	0	1	2	49	2
34	0	0	1	2	31	2
35	1	0	2	2	29	2
36	1	0	2	2	40	2
37	1	0	1	2	50	2
38	0	0	1	2	38	1
39	1	0	1	2	39	2
40	1	0	1	2	34	5
41	0	0	1	2	27	2
42	1	0	2	2	30	2



APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 2	Item 3	hyp 2	Item 5	Item 6	Item 15	hyp 6
43	3	3	3	2	2	5	3
44	5	5	2	1	5	99	5
45	4	4	4	2	2	4	4
46	5	5	4	2	3	3	3
47	4	2	4	3	3	4	3
48	4	2	4	2	4	2	3
49	5	5	99	1	4	3	3
50	4	2	2	2	3	3	3
51	5	5	2	2	2	4	3
52	99	5	99	99	99	3	3
53	5	5	4	4	4	2	3
54	4	5	4	2	2	5	4
55	5	99	2	1	5	99	4
56	1	5	2	2	5	4	3
57	5	5	3	4	4	5	5
58	5	5	2	1	5	4	4
59	5	4	4	2	3	4	4
60	5	4	3	2	4	3	3
61	5	5	2	3	4	4	3
62	5	5	3	4	2	3	3
63	1	5	1	4	4	5	4
64	5	4	3	2	2	4	3
65	5	5	2	1	4	3	4
66	5	3	5	3	4	2	3
67	5	5	3	2	5	4	5
68	5	5	2	2	5	3	5
69	4	4	2	3	3	4	2
70	5	5	4	3	4	3	4
71	5	5	2	2	2	2	2
72	4	3	2	2	3	4	2
73	5	5	4	2	1	4	4
74	5	4	2	1	5	4	4
75	4	2	2	4	2	3	2
76	5	5	3	1	4	4	5
77	5	5	5	4	5	4	4
78	5	4	4	2	2	2	2
79	5	5	3	2	4	3	4
80	4	4	4	2	4	3	3
81	5	4	3	2	4	2	4
82	4	4	4	99	4	3	2
83	5	1	5	3	3	5	4
84	5	4	2	4	3	3	3

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 16	Item 17a	Item 17b	Item 17c	Item 17d	Item 17e
43	3	4	4	3	3	3
44	2	5	5	4	4	4
45	2	4	2	1	5	1
46	4	3	4	3	4	4
47	3	3	3	2	3	4
48	3	4	4	3	2	4
49	3	3	3	3	3	3
50	3	4	4	3	4	3
51	2	2	4	2	4	4
52	4	4	4	4	4	3
53	3	2	4	4	4	5
54	4	4	2	1	3	4
55	2	4	4	2	4	4
56	3	2	4	3	4	4
57	2	2	3	2	3	3
58	4	3	4	5	2	5
59	3	3	3	2	4	5
60	2	1	99	2	3	4
61	4	2	4	2	4	4
62	4	4	4	2	3	4
63	1	3	4	2	2	5
64	4	2	3	4	4	3
65	4	99	99	2	4	4
66	4	5	5	3	2	5
67	4	2	4	1	3	4
68	2	5	5	1	1	4
69	2	2	4	2	4	4
70	5	3	3	1	2	4
71	4	4	4	3	3	4
72	2	4	4	4	2	4
73	4	4	4	2	4	4
74	2	2	4	3	4	4
75	4	4	4	2	2	2
76	3	4	5	2	4	4
77	2	3	4	3	4	4
78	3	4	4	2	4	4
79	4	4	4	2	2	2
80	2	3	4	3	4	3
81	4	2	4	2	3	4
82	2	3	4	1	2	3
83	2	2	2	5	4	2
84	2	4	4	3	3	4

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 17f	Item 17g	Item 17h	Hyp 3	Item 7	Item 8
43	1	1	1	5	4	4
44	4	5	5	5	2	5
45	3	3	4	5	2	5
46	4	4	4	4	1	5
47	3	4	3	5	3	4
48	2	2	4	4	2	4
49	3	3	3	4	2	4
50	4	3	3	3	4	3
51	4	3	3	4	4	99
52	3	3	3	3	4	4
53	2	2	4	4	2	4
54	5	5	5	4	4	2
55	99	4	99	5	1	5
56	4	4	4	4	2	4
57	3	3	4	5	3	5
58	2	5	5	5	1	5
59	3	5	3	3	4	2
60	3	4	4	4	2	4
61	2	3	5	4	5	2
62	2	3	5	5	3	2
63	3	5	3	4	2	5
64	4	4	5	5	4	3
65	3	3	3	4	3	4
66	5	5	1	5	4	4
67	3	4	3	2	1	5
68	1	5	5	4	3	4
69	4	5	5	4	3	3
70	3	4	5	4	2	5
71	4	4	3	4	2	4
72	4	4	4	5	2	4
73	3	3	3	5	2	5
74	2	2	1	5	1	5
75	2	2	5	4	4	4
76	2	3	3	5	3	5
77	3	3	3	4	3	4
78	4	4	3	1	4	3
79	3	3	5	4	2	4
80	4	4	4	4	2	4
81	4	4	3	4	4	4
82	4	2	2	4	2	4
83	2	2	2	2	3	4
84	3	4	3	5	4	3



APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 4a	Item 4b	Item 4c
43	3	2	4	5	3	4
44	1	5	1	5	5	4
45	3	4	4	2	5	5
46	1	5	1	99	99	1
47	3	4	3	4	5	4
48	4	4	2	2	99	2
49	2	4	2	4	99	4
50	4	3	4	2	4	5
51	5	3	5	4	5	4
52	3	4	3	3	4	2
53	2	4	3	4	3	3
54	4	4	4	5	5	2
55	5	5	1	99	4	2
56	2	4	2	4	99	3
57	2	4	1	5	5	4
58	1	5	1	4	3	4
59	4	3	4	4	4	4
60	2	4	2	2	4	4
61	4	4	3	5	4	99
62	4	3	4	5	5	4
63	3	4	3	5	5	5
64	4	5	2	4	5	4
65	3	4	2	4	3	4
66	5	2	4	4	4	4
67	2	5	2	5	99	3
68	3	3	4	4	4	4
69	4	3	4	4	4	4
70	2	5	2	5	99	2
71	2	4	3	4	99	2
72	3	3	3	2	2	4
73	4	4	3	4	99	4
74	2	5	1	4	3	2
75	4	2	4	4	4	2
76	3	5	2	5	5	1
77	4	3	4	5	5	4
78	4	3	99	4	4	2
79	2	3	4	5	99	4
80	3	4	3	3	4	3
81	4	2	4	5	4	4
82	2	4	2	4	99	4
83	3	4	3	2	2	2
84	4	3	4	99	99	3

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 4d	Item 4e	Item 4f	Item 4g	Item 4h	Item 4i
43	3	3	5	3	4	99
44	4	4	2	2	2	4
45	4	2	5	2	4	4
46	1	4	3	2	2	4
47	5	2	5	4	4	5
48	4	3	4	1	1	5
49	99	4	5	2	4	5
50	5	3	5	3	99	5
51	4	2	5	2	4	5
52	3	4	4	1	4	5
53	4	99	4	4	2	5
54	4	2	4	3	3	5
55	1	5	4	99	99	5
56	4	3	4	3	3	4
57	4	4	4	5	5	5
58	3	4	5	2	3	4
59	4	3	5	3	3	5
60	4	3	4	2	99	5
61	2	99	4	3	3	5
62	3	4	4	3	3	2
63	5	4	4	4	3	4
64	5	5	5	3	4	5
65	4	3	4	3	4	4
66	4	5	4	4	99	5
67	2	99	3	3	99	4
68	2	2	4	1	1	5
69	4	4	4	4	4	4
70	2	99	5	2	2	5
71	2	99	4	4	4	99
72	5	2	4	2	2	4
73	4	4	4	4	4	5
74	3	4	5	4	4	5
75	99	3	4	4	4	4
76	1	5	5	4	3	5
77	4	4	5	5	4	4
78	4	4	2	4	5	5
79	99	4	5	2	4	2
80	4	3	3	3	3	4
81	4	4	4	2	2	5
82	4	4	4	3	4	4
83	4	2	2	2	2	4
84	4	5	5	5	5	5

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 4j	Item 4k	Item 4l	Item 4m	Item 4n	Item 12
43	4	5	99	5	5	4
44	4	5	5	4	5	5
45	4	4	5	5	5	2
46	4	4	3	3	5	5
47	5	5	5	5	2	4
48	5	4	4	2	4	3
49	5	4	4	4	4	4
50	5	4	4	4	4	3
51	5	5	5	5	4	2
52	5	4	5	4	4	5
53	4	4	4	3	3	2
54	5	5	4	4	4	4
55	5	5	5	5	4	4
56	4	4	4	3	3	4
57	5	4	4	3	4	5
58	5	3	4	2	5	3
59	4	4	4	3	5	4
60	5	4	3	4	5	4
61	5	5	3	2	25	4
62	5	4	4	3	4	4
63	5	4	4	3	4	4
64	5	5	4	3	5	4
65	5	5	4	2	4	4
66	5	5	4	2	4	2
67	3	2	3	3	4	4
68	5	5	5	4	5	4
69	5	5	5	4	4	4
70	1	5	2	2	5	5
71	99	4	4	4	4	4
72	4	4	4	4	4	4
73	5	5	5	5	5	5
74	5	5	5	5	5	5
75	4	4	2	2	4	4
76	5	5	4	4	5	4
77	5	5	4	4	5	4
78	5	4	5	5	5	4
79	2	4	4	2	4	4
80	4	4	4	5	4	4
81	5	5	4	4	2	4
82	5	5	4	5	4	4
83	4	4	2	4	5	1
84	5	4	5	5	4	4



APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 13	Hyp 4	Hyp 5	Item 14	profstat	Pdyn
43	4	5	4	3	2	0
44	2	1	5	5	2	0
45	4	4	4	5	2	0
46	4	3	3	3	2	0
47	4	4	5	2	2	0
48	4	3	4	2	2	0
49	4	1	3	2	2	0
50	4	2	3	4	2	0
51	4	3	3	3	2	99
52	4	3	3	3	2	1
53	4	3	3	2	2	99
54	4	1	4	4	1	0
55	2	2	5	2	1	0
56	4	3	4	3	1	0
57	4	1	4	5	1	0
58	5	3	4	5	1	0
59	2	2	4	4	1	0
60	4	1	4	4	1	99
61	2	2	4	2	1	0
62	4	2	4	3	1	1
63	4	2	4	5	1	1
64	2	2	4	4	1	1
65	4	4	4	5	1	0
66	5	1	5	4	1	0
67	4	3	3	4	2	0
68	2	2	3	4	1	0
69	2	2	4	4	1	0
70	4	3	3	4	2	0
71	4	2	4	4	2	0
72	4	3	3	3	2	0
73	2	2	3	3	2	0
74	5	4	5	5	2	0
75	5	2	2	3	2	0
76	4	1	5	4	2	0
77	2	1	3	3	2	1
78	4	4	4	3	2	0
79	4	1	4	3	2	1
80	4	3	4	4	2	1
81	4	4	4	2	2	0
82	3	4	2	2	2	1
83	5	5	5	5	1	0
84	3	3	3	3	2	0

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	cbt	pc	humani	systemi	existen	pcp
43	0	0	0	0	0	0
44	0	0	0	0	0	0
45	1	0	0	1	0	0
46	0	0	1	0	0	0
47	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	1	1	1	0	0	0
49	0	0	0	0	0	0
50	0	0	0	1	0	0
51	99	99	99	99	99	99
52	0	0	0	0	0	0
53	99	99	99	99	99	99
54	0	0	0	0	0	0
55	0	0	0	0	0	0
56	1	1	0	0	0	0
57	0	0	0	0	0	0
58	1	0	0	1	0	0
59	0	0	0	0	1	0
60	99	99	99	99	99	99
61	0	0	0	0	0	0
62	0	0	1	1	0	0
63	0	0	0	1	0	0
64	0	0	0	0	0	0
65	0	0	0	0	0	0
66	0	0	1	0	1	0
67	0	0	0	0	0	0
68	1	1	0	1	0	0
69	0	0	1	0	0	0
70	0	0	1	0	0	0
71	0	0	1	0	0	0
72	1	0	0	1	0	0
73	0	0	0	0	0	0
74	0	0	0	0	0	0
75	0	0	0	0	0	0
76	0	0	1	1	1	0
77	0	0	0	0	0	0
78	0	0	0	0	0	0
79	0	0	0	0	0	0
80	0	0	0	1	0	0
81	0	0	0	0	0	0
82	1	0	0	0	0	0
83	1	0	0	0	0	0
84	1	0	0	0	0	0

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Integra	eclect	pcouns	sex	age	culture
43	1	0	1	2	30	6
44	1	0	1	2	39	2
45	1	0	1	2	43	2
46	1	0	1	2	24	3
47	1	0	2	2	57	2
48	1	0	2	2	25	3
49	0	0	2	2	33	7
50	1	0	1	1	56	2
51	99	99	99	2	99	99
52	1	0	1	99	31	2
53	99	99	99	2	99	99
54	1	0	1	99	39	8
55	0	0	2	1	42	2
56	1	0	1	2	35	2
57	0	1	2	2	44	2
58	1	0	2	1	32	2
59	0	0	1	2	35	2
60	99	99	2	1	35	2
61	1	0	1	1	44	2
62	1	0	2	2	41	5
63	0	0	1	2	49	2
64	1	0	2	2	51	2
65	1	0	1	2	40	2
66	0	0	1	2	33	2
67	1	0	1	2	32	2
68	1	0	1	2	32	2
69	0	0	2	2	58	2
70	1	0	1	2	36	2
71	0	0	1	2	30	1
72	0	0	1	2	99	2
73	1	0	2	1	29	1
74	1	0	2	2	56	2
75	1	0	1	2	36	2
76	1	0	1	2	35	2
77	0	0	1	1	43	2
78	0	0	1	2	33	2
79	1	0	1	2	31	2
80	1	0	1	2	49	2
81	0	1	2	2	33	2
82	0	0	1	2	30	1
83	0	0	2	1	45	2
84	0	0	1	2	48	2



APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 2	Item 3	hyp 2	Item 5	Item 6	Item 15	hyp 6
85	5	5	2	1	4	4	4
86	5	4	4	2	3	3	4
87	4	5	2	2	4	3	3
88	5	1	2	2	5	5	4

participant	Item 16	Item 17a	Item 17b	Item 17c	Item 17d	Item 17e
85	4	2	4	4	4	4
86	4	4	4	3	3	4
87	2	4	4	3	4	4
88	2	2	2	2	4	5

participant	Item 17f	Item 17g	Item 17h	Hyp 3	Item 7	Item 8
85	4	4	5	4	4	3
86	3	3	3	4	2	4
87	2	2	3	4	2	4
88	4	5	5	4	1	5

participant	Item 9	Item 10	Item 11	Item 4a	Item 4b	Item 4c
85	2	4	3	5	4	3
86	3	4	3	5	99	2
87	2	4	2	5	99	4
88	4	5	2	5	4	5

participant	Item 4d	Item 4e	Item 4f	Item 4g	Item 4h	Item 4i
85	3	4	4	4	1	4
86	99	99	5	2	99	4
87	2	4	5	3	2	5
88	5	3	4	5	5	5

APPENDIX I: RAW DATA FOR KEY SURVEY ITEMS

participant	Item 4j	Item 4k	Item 4l	Item 4m	Item 4n	Item 12
85	4	4	3	1	3	4
86	3	3	3	3	4	3
87	5	4	4	4	4	4
88	5	4	5	5	5	5

participant	Item 13	Hyp 4	Hyp 5	Item 14	prostat	Pdyn
85	3	2	2	4	1	0
86	4	2	3	4	2	0
87	2	5	3	2	2	0
88	2	5	4	4	1	0

participant	cbt	pc	humani	systemi	existen	Pcp
85	0	0	0	0	0	0
86	1	0	0	0	0	0
87	0	0	0	0	0	0
88	0	0	0	0	0	0

participant	integr	eclect	pcouns	sex	age	culture
85	3	2	2	4	1	0
86	4	2	3	4	2	0
87	2	5	3	2	2	0
88	2	5	4	4	1	0



## APPENDIX J    Tables showing frequencies and percentages for whole sample, trainers and trainees for key survey items

### SURVEY ITEM 2: *'Personal development is important for counselling psychologists'*

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	5	6	2	11	3	4
disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
uncertain/don't know	1	1	0	0	1	2
agree	20	23	2	11	18	27
strongly agree	61	70	15	79	46	68

\* 1 missing case

**Table 17. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'Personal development is important for counselling psychologists'**

### SURVEY ITEM 3: *'Personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees'*

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS*		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	3	3	2	11	1	1
disagree	7	8	0	0	7	10
uncertain/don't know	6	7	1	6	5	7
agree	26	30	4	22	22	32
strongly agree	45	51	11	61	34	49

1 missing case

**Table 18. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'Personal counselling should be obligatory for counselling psychology trainees'**



**SURVEY ITEM 4: ‘..experiences that may affect trainees’ personal development..’**

FACILITATION METHOD	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Client work	4.6	0.6	4.4	0.8	4.7	0.6
Supervision	4.5	0.7	4.8	0.4	4.5	0.8
Personal life experiences	4.3	0.8	4.2	0.8	4.3	0.8
Counselling skills training	4.2	0.9	4.4	0.6	4.1	0.9
Peer group contact/support	4.2	0.8	4.0	0.8	4.3	0.8
Personal counselling	4.1	1.0	4.1	1.0	4.1	1.0
Personal development groups	4.0	0.9	4.1	0.8	4.0	1.0
Written work	3.9	1.0	3.9	0.8	3.9	1.0
Looking for a placement	3.5	1.1	3.2	1.2	3.5	1.0
Group tutorials	3.3	1.1	3.6	1.0	3.3	1.2
Individual tutorials	3.3	1.2	3.6	1.1	3.2	1.3
Keeping a personal journal	3.3	1.1	3.4	1.0	3.3	1.1
Looking for a personal counsellor	3.3	1.1	3.2	1.1	3.3	1.1
Theoretical learning	3.7	1.0	3.2	1.1	3.9	0.9

**Table 19. Overall, Trainer and Trainee mean importance ratings and standard deviations for experiences that may affect trainees’ personal development**

**SURVEY ITEM 5: ‘Aims and objectives for personal development are clearly defined in the training’**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	14	16	4	21	10	15
disagree	37	42	7	37	30	46
uncertain/don't know	17	19	5	26	12	18
agree	16	18	3	16	13	20
strongly agree	1	1	0	0	1	2

\* 3 missing cases

**Table 20. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: ‘Aims and objectives for personal development are clearly defined in the training’**



**SURVEY ITEM 6: 'Aims and objectives for personal development should be more clearly defined in the training'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	2	2	0	0	2	3
disagree	19	22	3	16	16	24
uncertain/don't know	13	15	3	16	10	15
agree	34	39	8	42	26	38
strongly agree	19	22	5	26	14	21

\* 1 missing case

**Table 21. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'Aims and objectives for personal development should be more clearly defined in the training'**

**SURVEY ITEM 7: 'The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed in the training'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	13	15	3	16	10	15
disagree	33	38	3	16	30	44
uncertain/don't know	16	18	7	37	9	13
agree	24	27	5	26	19	28
strongly agree	2	2	1	5	1	1

**Table 22. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'The subject of personal development is openly and fully discussed in the training'**

**SURVEY ITEM 8: 'I would like the subject of personal development to be more openly and fully discussed in the training'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	1	2
disagree	8	9	4	21	4	6
uncertain/don't know	9	10	3	16	6	9
agree	45	51	7	37	38	56
strongly agree	24	27	5	26	19	28

\* 1 missing case

**Table 23. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'I would like the subject of personal development to be more openly and fully discussed in the training'**



**SURVEY ITEM 9: 'Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of the course'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	5	6	1	5	4	6
disagree	23	26	5	26	18	26
uncertain/don't know	24	27	4	21	20	30
agree	32	36	7	37	25	36
strongly agree	4	5	2	11	2	3

**Table 24. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'Trainees' personal development is clearly integrated into the other aspects of the course'**

**SURVEY ITEM 10: 'Trainees' personal development should be better integrated into the other aspects of the course'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
disagree	7	8	1	5	6	9
uncertain/don't know	19	22	4	21	15	22
agree	45	51	9	47	36	52
strongly agree	17	19	5	26	12	17

**Table 25. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'Trainees' personal development should be better integrated into the other aspects of the course'**

**SURVEY ITEM 11: 'I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development in the training'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	12	14	4	21	8	12
disagree	28	32	5	26	23	34
uncertain/don't know	19	22	4	21	15	22
agree	27	30	6	32	21	31
strongly agree	1	1	0	0	1	2

\* 1 missing case

**Table 26. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: 'I am satisfied with the provisions that are made for trainees' personal development in the training'**



**SURVEY ITEM 12: *'it is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees'***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	2	2	1	5	1	1
disagree	12	14	1	5	11	16
uncertain/don't know	11	13	1	5	10	15
agree	53	60	14	73	39	57
strongly agree	10	11	2	11	8	12

**Table 27. Overall, trainer and trainee frequency and percentage distributions for: *'It is important during training to assess the personal development of trainees'***

**SURVEY ITEM 13: *'I am not exactly sure how one should assess the personal development of trainees'***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
disagree	16	18	7	37	9	13
uncertain/don't know	8	9	2	11	6	9
agree	51	58	7	37	44	64
strongly agree	13	15	3	16	10	15

**Table 28. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: *'I am not exactly sure how one should assess the personal development of trainees'***

**SURVEY ITEM 14: *'I have serious doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of some trainees'***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
disagree	24	27	2	11	22	32
uncertain/don't know	28	32	2	11	26	38
agree	26	30	10	53	16	24
strongly agree	9	10	5	26	4	6

\* 1 missing case

**Table 29. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: *'I have doubts about the personal suitability/readiness of some trainees'***



**SURVEY ITEM 15: *‘Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training’***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS*		TRAINEES**	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	4	5	0	0	4	6
disagree	10	11	1	6	9	14
uncertain/don't know	23	26	4	22	19	30
agree	37	42	8	44	30	45
strongly agree	8	9	5	28	3	5

\* 1 missing case

\*\* 5 missing cases

**Table 30. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: ‘Trainee selection is important to the success of personal development during training’**

**SURVEY ITEM 16: *‘It is very difficult to assess an applicant’s personal suitability/readiness for training’***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	1	1	1	5	0	0
disagree	29	33	8	42	21	30
uncertain/don't know	16	18	2	11	14	20
agree	37	42	8	42	29	42
strongly agree	5	6	0	0	5	7

**Table 31. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: ‘It is very difficult to assess an applicant’s personal suitability/readiness for training’**



**SURVEY ITEM 17: '*..selection methods for assessing personal suitability/readiness..*'**

SELECTION METHOD	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personal statements	3.9	0.7	3.5	1.0	4.0	0.6
Individual interview with a panel of selectors	3.8	0.9	4.0	0.8	3.7	0.9
Group interview with a panel of selectors	3.5	1.0	4.2	1.0	3.3	1.0
Residential setting selection process	3.4	1.1	3.9	1.3	3.3	1.1
References	3.3	1.1	2.8	1.2	3.4	1.0
More than one 1-to-1 interview	3.2	1.0	3.3	1.0	3.2	1.0
A single 1-to-1 interview	2.7	1.1	2.5	1.2	2.7	1.0
Group interview with 1 selector	3.1	1.0	3.2	1.1	3.1	0.9

**Table 32. Overall, Trainer and Trainee usefulness ratings for a range of selection methods in assessing the personal suitability/readiness of applicants**

**SURVEY ITEM 2: '*The aims and objectives of personal development are completely different for every trainee*'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES*	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
strongly disagree	1	1	1	5	0	0
disagree	32	37	10	53	22	33
uncertain/don't know	14	16	4	21	10	15
agree	29	33	2	11	27	40
strongly agree	10	11	2	11	8	12

\* 2 missing cases

**Table 33. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: '*The aims and objective of personal development are completely different for every trainee*'**

**SURVEY ITEM 3: '*Developing my professional competence is very important to my sense of personal development*'**

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>count</i>	<i>%</i>
strongly disagree	2	2	0	0	2	3
disagree	3	3	2	11	1	1
uncertain/don't know	5	6	1	5	4	6
agree	47	53	10	53	37	54
strongly agree	31	35	6	32	25	36

**Table 34. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: '*Developing my professional competence is very important to my sense of personal development*'**



**SURVEY ITEM 4. *'It is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of their training'***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	11	13	5	26	6	9
disagree	30	34	9	47	21	30
uncertain/don't know	23	26	2	11	21	30
agree	18	21	1	5	17	25
strongly agree	6	7	2	11	4	6

**Table 35. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: *'It is impossible for a trainee to 'fail' the personal development component of their training'***

**SURVEY ITEM 5: *'The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment'***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
disagree	6	7	1	5	5	7
uncertain/don't know	36	41	1	5	35	51
agree	36	41	13	68	23	33
strongly agree	10	11	4	21	6	8

**Table 36. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: *The way that personal development is assessed is probably inadequate at the moment'***

**SURVEY ITEM 6: *'I think more should be done to improve the assessment of applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training'***

RESPONSE OPTION	OVERALL		TRAINERS		TRAINEES	
	count	%	count	%	count	%
strongly disagree	1	1	0	0	1	1
disagree	16	18	1	5	15	22
uncertain/don't know	30	34	6	32	24	35
agree	34	39	9	47	25	36
strongly agree	7	8	3	16	4	6

**Table 37. Overall, trainer and trainee frequencies and percentage distributions for: *'I think more should be done to improve the assessment of applicants' personal suitability/readiness for training'***



## APPENDIX K Raw data: Examples of survey participants' written responses to the open-ended question 'What is personal development?'

### Examples of trainer responses:

1. *"Personal development is the process of becoming aware of and beginning to explore aspects of one's underlying personality structure which, in the context of counselling psychology training, may impact on one's work with clients/patients. If, for example, a student is unaware of, or unable to tolerate feelings of despair or grief, they will have difficulty in helping their clients to work with those feelings, which may underlie some of the presenting symptoms. "Whatever we avoid in ourselves, we condemn our patients, in their turn, to avoid"."*

**Included the categories:** self-awareness; clinical function; unresolved issues

2. *"It is a process of self-awareness in relation to self and others. It's about learning about myself in many contexts in terms of my reactions, emotions and experiences. This self-knowledge ought to be the bedrock of the therapeutic experience. Without it, the fundamentals of a good therapeutic relationship are shaky. As a professional, I am a member of a group and need to be both fed by them and contribute constructively towards our collective awareness. Developing as best I can within this group means attending, writing, liaising with and for the aims and objectives of the professional area."*

**Included the categories:** Self-awareness; multifaceted; clinical function; inextricable from professional development.

3. *"Growth process; ideally runs in congruency with professional development; learning about one's own personal experience and how this impacts upon one's roles as a practitioner; being able to self-reflect and bracket-off one's own experience from that of clients; movement towards psychological well-being and being able to monitor own needs as a professional and as a person. An ongoing development of self-reflection; as a practitioner - understanding your own 'self'; focusing upon areas of 'weakness', e.g. assertion. confidence building, and addressing these in a constructive and thoughtful manner. Ultimately, personal development enables one to continue to be an effective practitioner and a more 'fully-functioning' person*

## **APPENDIX K: EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO 'WHAT IS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?'**

*as a non-professional; addressing one's own 'defenses' and maladaptive patterns of behaviour, cognitions, etc' being aware of the 'wounded healer' factor in the helping professions."*

**Included the categories:** fulfilling potential; reciprocal relationship with professional development; clinical function; self-reflection; wellbeing & stability; self-awareness; strengths & weaknesses; self-confidence & esteem; active learning; unresolved issues.

4. *"Personal development: awareness of one's wishes, feelings, value systems. Ability to link the above with the client or group that one works with. A continuous process that occurs throughout one's life. Very difficult to define."*

**Included the categories:** self-awareness; clinical function; life/career long; difficult to define.

5. *"Within the context of counselling psychology training, I would define personal development as a process of personal learning and growth, fairly inextricably related to professional development in this profession, and at least in dynamic relationship with it. Personal development is the ongoing process of development of self-awareness and other-awareness, so that personal limitations and blocks are recognised and steps can be taken to change or overcome these, or to ensure that they do not adversely affect one's work. As such, personal development will involve both education and growth, so both training and personal therapy are relevant to the process, as is supervision, reflection on client work, training experience, etc. As it is a very personal process, it is difficult to place in a framework, or structured definition. But as a trainer, if I did not see students struggling with changes and realising that they affected their view of self as well as professionally, I would be concerned they were not engaging in the process (this, of course, applies to myself too)."*

**Included the categories:** fulfilling potential; inextricable from professional development; self-awareness; strengths & weaknesses; unresolved issues; active learning; clinical function; broad & holistic; difficult to define.

### **Examples of trainee responses:**

1. *"To me, personal development denotes personal growth, increasing personal awareness (both self-awareness and awareness of how one relates to others), reflexivity and openness. In many ways, it seems synonymous with wisdom and maturity. I also think of it in a*



## **APPENDIX K: EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO 'WHAT IS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?'**

*humanistic way - awareness of one's organismic self and acceptance of that self; knowing who one is and maximising one's potential/utilising one's abilities fully. Also, having a developed sense of self and integrated identity."*

**Included the categories:** fulfilling potential; self-awareness; self-reflection; openness; maturity; self-acceptance; integration and congruence.

2. *"Personal development involves growth - expansion of self-awareness, risk taking and enlarging of comfort zone. Becoming congruent, free, authentic, centred; knowing strengths and areas of potential development; being unlimited, living more from being balanced between heart soul and mind; physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being increasing; being released; developing intuition and self-trust; being empowered, whole, flexible, and adaptable to surroundings, challenging self to move beyond limitations."*

**Included the categories:** fulfilling potential; self-awareness; self-challenge; integration and congruence; empowerment and liberation; strengths and weaknesses; well-being and stability; spontaneity; intuition and creativity.

3. *"Awareness and understanding of where you've come from as an individual, the people, issues and environment which have affected your personal growth; moving on from old, stuck patterns and being better able to manage self, in relationship with self/other people. Greater self-confidence; less defensive; understanding of own strengths and limitations, things that "push one's buttons"; having worked through personal issues. Personal development is the process of achieving some of these through personal therapy, personal development groups, reading, training, feedback."*

**Included the categories:** self-awareness; fulfilling potential; resourcefulness; self-confidence & esteem; strengths and weaknesses; unresolved issues; broad and holistic.

4. *"Personal development is an ongoing process. It is a journey of personal growth and learning. This development may vary from individual to individual depending on where they are in the continuum. It includes self-awareness, counselling confidence, and professional conduct, awareness of ethics. There may be several ways to measure personal development, i.e. in workshops, reflective journals, case reports, discussion groups."*

**Included the categories:** life/career long; fulfilling potential; individually unique; self-awareness; self-confidence & esteem; reciprocal relationship with professional development;

## **APPENDIX K: EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO 'WHAT IS PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT?'**

broad & holistic.

5. *"Through experiences, both positive and negative, that a person encounters naturally in their life (e.g. going through changes and achievements) one develops and changes as a person. "Personal development" though, I feel is an active promotion that one undertakes to consciously reflect upon what is occurring in your life, through say personal therapy or reflective groups. Although one is constantly developing personally, whether you are conscious of it or not, on a course such as counselling psychology, I think it is fundamental to actively reflect on your working and learning experiences in order to learn from these and move towards developing more fully as a person and a counsellor, in order to increase one's awareness of your strengths and areas of difficulty that need further development. "*

**Included the categories:** active learning; self-reflection; life/career long; fulfilling potential; self-awareness; strengths and weaknesses.

## APPENDIX L Raw data: Examples of reasons for dissatisfaction and satisfaction with course provision given by survey respondents

### Not defined, discussed or integrated

- *"All very scattered and non-specific"*
- *"No discussion on course of what is meant by 'personal development'"*
- *"This has never been addressed. I think the tutors find it a threat"*
- *"Personal development, per se, has not been discussed in any detail on the course so far. In fact, I feel the subject is shied away from - almost something to do outside of the course."*
- *"Seems separate from course -private arrangements for personal therapy, diary not assessed. Not integrated into course structure or philosophy"*
- *"I don't think it's explored directly enough"*
- *"The staff team could be more open about their attitudes to personal development aspects of the course, with one another"*
- *"Not many trainees really feel 'known' by the staff"*

### Left to individual & chance

- *"It personal development seems to be left up to each individual to make of it what they will"*
- *"Personal development is integrated as a requirement of the course but is left to the trainee to do"*
- *Apart from some brief attention to development and the 40 hours therapy requirement, any other development is left up to you."*
- *"There is no space on the course for integration of personal development. One could do it separately in your own personal therapy or in the experiential groups, but that is more by chance than overtly addressing the importance."*
- *"I feel strongly more attention should be given to personal development on the course, as I feel that at the moment, it is taken as a given rather than something that should be actively pursued."*
- *"Personal development is seen as something that should happen naturally but it does need to be actively facilitated."*

### Lip service

- *"The course does not appear to pay more than lip service to personal development"*
- *"Personal therapy not undertaken genuinely - most people concerned with results and getting by"*
- *"I'm not aware of any provision on my course, except for the supply of a blank personal journal and reference to it in theory lectures"*
- *"Although 'theoretically' personal development is presented as important by tutors, etc, no effort is made to integrate it meaningfully and cohesively in the course of training"*



## APPENDIX L: EXAMPLES OF REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION & SATISFACTION

### Inadequately assessed

- *"I have seen the most inappropriate counsellors succeed on the basis of academia and good defenses"*

### Personal development equated with personal therapy

- *"At this stage of my course, personal development seems to be synonymous with therapy - something one does separately and by oneself"*
- *"There is a lot of focus on personal therapy being the personal development part - this is done outside of the course."*
- *"At present, personal development through personal therapy - a bit in isolation - no formal setting to reflect on this"*
- *"Personal development is something that does not just happen through personal therapy, but through the whole process of training"*

### Course is too academic, theoretical, technical

- *"[The course] provides little support to facilitate this. It is an academic course essentially."*
- *"The intellectual, theoretical aspects are really the main emphasis."*
- *"Our course is very rigid and the trainees' needs are subordinates to the needs of the course"*
- *"Not enough support re. realistic pressures of completing coursework, i.e. could be more flexible to enable processing/emotional growth"*
- *"The M.Sc. is treated as a technical science rather than as an art"*
- *"The university's ethos is that students are responsible for their own learning. This is ok when we talk about 'knowledge'. However, counselling psychology training is also about skills development and self-development. These are often new concepts to trainees"*

### Alternative views from respondents who were satisfied with the course provision for personal development

- *"Although I am not satisfied with some points, it may be better to leave personal development as a personal matter"*
- *"The process of personal development is highly private and I would suggest that it is kept that way to allow trainees to engage sufficiently with therapists"*
- *"Well facilitated course - the rest is up to the individual"*
- *"I feel I am developing through therapy and my own efforts"*
- *"The onus is on the trainee to get the help they need, as it can be no other way"*
- *"Personal development is an individual thing and we are all at different stages. So even though it was not integrated well into the rest of the course, I'm not sure it could be done differently - you can't force or dictate personal development"*
- *"There appears to be a concern about exploring the need for measures of personal development, as if there is a right way to be. This is against principles of humanism - the framework of counselling psychology courses"*

## APPENDIX M Raw data: Examples of participants' comments in the concluding section of the questionnaire

### Suggested changes to training

- *"Much greater requirement for personal therapy."*
- *"Much more group work on the course and skills practice with peers."*
- *"Assessed personal development."*
- *"More rigorous personal development component."*
- *"Personal development to take a more central and active role throughout training. more feedback to students re. their personal development progress, etc - collaborative approach to development."*
- *"More closely monitored in-house supervision, closer regular links with supervisors at placements."*
- *"More links between our therapy and the course."*
- *"More closely monitored during training."*
- *"More homogeneity amongst different courses leading to CoP qualification."*
- *"Space to discuss personal development."*
- *"More experiential group work."*
- *"More supervision time should be allocated where client work, personal therapy and theory can be integrated."*
- *"Personal development should be emphasised and applied within each approach and topic."*
- *"More personal tutorials."*
- *"Personal tutors to be clear with students re. the importance and objectives of personal therapy - before it starts - to give the student more clarity about its purpose and to get the maximum out of the experience."*
- *"There should be more workshops geared to exploring core assumptions, attitudes, values, beliefs, interactive skills, reflectiveness, dilemmas, working with resistant clients, personal development groups, role plays."*
- *"More opportunity throughout whole course to reflect and develop."*
- *"I really think the training should be less academic, theory bound and more skills, reflection, group work, role play based."*
- *"More group work reflection on personal development."*

### Suggestions for further research

- *"Alternative (to therapy/counselling) techniques for personal development. Also what are the mechanisms underlying personal development and can strategies be matched to individual's personal development needs?"*
- *"What exactly is personal development?"*
- *"How to assess."*
- *"What to do with trainees who do not develop during the training and lack awareness of their limitations - the whole question of 'unsuitability'."*
- *"The holding/containing function of the training institute as a whole, as the model of a secure base from which the trainee moves forward into their professional practice."*



## APPENDIX M: EXAMPLES OF CONCLUDING COMMENTS

### Reported subjective effects of completing the questionnaire

- *"Made me more keen to see change. Annoyed me again about how badly this is provided for in the course here. I've tried to forget about it and just find the development elsewhere."*
- *"Has made it more at the forefront of my mind and given me some ideas how we might change things on this course."*
- *"It drew my attention to some issues that I am not sure about."*
- *"It's made me think about 1) how we can effectively assess personal development without crossing boundaries of confidentiality, 2) how little our staff team has discussed personal development!"*
- *"First open question really useful to complete, for me personally."*
- *"Highlighted how nebulous the whole idea of 'personal development' is for me."*
- *"I had seen personal development as quite separate to the rest of the course in a way. Now I wonder if it should be more integrated."*

### General Comments

- *"The topic is one I hope will enable us to re-examine what we are doing - some of us are becoming more like doctors other life coaches, teachers, befrienders than therapists/analysts. Personal development should take account of this and encourage debate on how to accommodate all aspects of our professional roles, work and therapeutic relationships."*
- *"It's difficult to imagine a more even-handed way of assessing personal development than asking if trainees have completed 40 hours of personal counselling. I would suggest that the ideographic nature of the content and process make a more specific operationalisation of personal development impossible."*
- *"How refreshing to see the issue of personal development as a central issue within the training!"*
- *"I don't think there's an easy answer."*
- *"There appears to be a concern about exploring the need for measures of personal development, as if there is a right way to be. This is against principles of humanism - the framework of counselling psychology courses."*
- *"I hope that in the future trainees will begin to appreciate more the importance of personal development and not considered personal therapy and experiential groups as 'necessary evils'."*
- *"I know I write all over the questionnaire, but quantitative really is too narrow to get across views."*
- *"I have done a massive turn around on the idea of personal counselling. When I started I only did it because it was a requirement. Now if I had the money, I would continue perhaps indefinitely."*

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