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Counsellor's views of diversity and difference in an NGO counselling environment

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Research Report

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Plagiarism Declaration

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“Until we know the assumptions in which we are drenched, we cannot know ourselves”

Adrienne Rich

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Abstract

The topic of this research is lay counsellors' attitudes towards difference in an NGO organization that offers a counselling service based on Carl Rogers' Person-Centred approach. South Africa post-apartheid is a fragmented and traumatized society and attempts at redressing past inequities have largely overlooked the mental health care sector. As a result, NGO's are increasingly having to fill the gap, with little co-ordination with or co-operation from professional mental health care practitioners. With critical race theory as a theoretical point of departure, Lacau and Mouffe's discourse theory was used to analyze results from in-depth semi structured interviews with counsellors at an NGO in Johannesburg. The findings confirmed that counsellors' attitudes towards difference are shaped by their and the client's racialized identities, with the adherence to Rogerian principles and the need to be a 'good' counsellor, foreclosing any opportunity to critically examine subject positions and the role of history in how such positions are constructed. The introduction of a training component that includes historical analysis and courageous conversations about difference would better equip counsellors to carry the burden of complex presenting issues from a diverse clientele.

CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

Post-apartheid South Africa remains a fragmented and violent society. HIV/Aids, poverty and gender based violence are but a few of the social ills that beset a country with a history of colonial and apartheid oppression. Peterson (2012), looking at reconciliation and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa, argues that the social and political imaginaries that inform nation-building and reconciliation are underpinned by contesting assumptions about how to understand the relations between the past, the present, and trauma, memory and healing:

> For mourning to end and for healing to take place, the social pathologies that haunt the present must be recognized, exorcized and integrated into the national consciousness. (p.215)

In the on-going struggle towards a post-apartheid national identity of cohesion and unity, attempts by government at redressing past inequities have largely overlooked the mental health care sector. The majority of South Africans are exposed, either directly or indirectly, to daily violence and abject poverty. According to Patel and Kleinman (2003), "Factors such as the experience of insecurity and hopelessness, rapid social change and the risks of violence and physical ill-health may explain the greater vulnerability of the poor to common mental disorders" (p. 609).

The debilitating effects of living under adverse social conditions manifest in mental health issues that the public sector cannot adequately address. Inadequate and inconsistent provision of mental health and emotional wellness services due to lack of resources and funding, has resulted in non-governmental organizations (NGO's) increasingly having to fill the gap.

Volunteer lay counsellors in the non-governmental sector are tasked with relieving the burden of qualified practitioners (Jansen van Rensburg, 2008). They are faced with the challenge of dealing with complex social, gender, emotional and economic issues (Dlamini, 2011) and therefore it is apposite that the area of NGO volunteer counselling be of research interest. It is clear that South African mental health care requires significant changes in accessibility, affordability and quality. For that change to take place, there needs to be a recognition and

acknowledgement of differences based on race, class, gender and sexuality. Lay counsellors are statistically more likely to be white, female and middle-aged (Statistics South Africa, 2010), placing the counsellor in a position of power at the outset, in addition to the asymmetrical power dynamic inherent in a counselling space. Young (2000) asserts that structural and institutional relations of power delimit people's material lives, and this includes access to resources. In what the author terms 'cultural imperialism', it is the experience of how dominant meanings of a society render the perspective of one group invisible at the same time as they stereotype and mark that group as 'Other'. These stereotypes are so pervasive as to be uncontested (Young, 2000; Boler and Zembylas, 2003). Dominant culture – such as being white, male, heterosexual, middle-class and able-bodied, creates social divisions whereby a personal sense of identity draws on how we interact with members of our own group, with shared values and attitudes (Payne, 2000). We define who 'we' are in terms of who we are not (ibid.) The interaction of people from different social groups/cultures is thus rule-bounded, whether conscious or not. The group defined by the dominant culture as the stereotyped 'other', is culturally different from the dominant group, as, according to Young (2000), Otherness creates experiences not shared by the dominant group. The experience of being defined by a dominant culture as well as by a subordinate culture, results in what Du Bois calls 'double consciousness' (Du Bois, 1903). The relationship dynamic between the counsellor and counsellee can be regarded as a microcosm of the lived experience outside the counselling room, and potentially a space where double consciousness and hegemonic dominance are re-enacted.

My research focus then is to develop an understanding of whether, and in what ways, socially endorsed difference (race, gender, age, sexuality, disability, class) shapes the counselling alliance, through critical examination of the "one size fits all" notion of sameness, in a lay counselling context. My research site is an organization that offers a lay counselling service, in addition to a number of other projects that are briefly outlined in Chapter Four. Counsellors are trained in the Rogerian Person-Centred Approach, using training material developed over 30 years ago. Much as this approach can be said to be effective, it does not examine the power relations inherent in differences - especially considering our history. The prevailing notion of a 'rainbow' nation that is non-discriminatory and non-racist further serves to inhibit encounters with difference, perpetuating a lived experience (for both counsellor and counsellee) in the counselling environment. While the 'rainbow nation' metaphor, on some

level, provided hope for a united country, this imaginary mainly serves to rationalize or reinvent the status quo (Peterson, 2012).

From personal observation and through informal conversations with other counsellors, it is clear that issues of class, gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation are avoided. Boler and Zymbylas (2003) term the approach to understand the production of norms and differences, a 'pedagogy of discomfort'. It is what the authors call the 'emotional labour' of confronting dominant hegemonic discourses and how they shape our lived experience. The authors note that the awareness that the choices we make are not always our own but choices made due to inscribed hegemonic values can be disturbing. Unconscious emotional stances towards difference need to be examined and this involves moving out of our comfort zones to question taken for granted certainties about our identities (ibid, 2003). Davis and Steyn (2012) suggest that it is in this discomforting space that new thinking and growth can take place. The aim of this research is to uncover how these dynamics are enacted in the counselling dyad and to create an awareness of difference in the counselling relationship in a way that is transformative, on an individual level as well as organizationally.

Chapter two covers the theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory, as a point of departure in carrying out this research project. The literature review in Chapter 3 contains literature that addresses issues salient to the topic, that is, difference; intersectionality; privilege; Mental Health Care; lay counselling; the Rogerian Person-Centred approach and race and difference in a therapeutic space. Chapter four, the chapter on methodology, describes the research methodology, data collection and analysis, as well as information about the site and how participants were recruited. Included in this chapter are limitations, ethical considerations and self-reflection. Chapter five outlines the main findings of the research, as well as a discussion of the findings. Chapter six contains the conclusion based on the findings and the research objective.

CHAPTER 2:

Theoretical framework

2.1 Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is my theoretical point of departure. The major premise of CRT is that "society is fundamentally racially stratified and unequal" (Hylton, 2012, p.24). It is a framework that acknowledges power relations and social constructions of 'otherness'. As Hylton (2012) argues, it is a methodology that confronts Eurocentric epistemologies that reinforce 'colour-blindness' and apolitical, ahistorical points of view. CRT involves a degree of commitment to social justice and change and embraces the intersectionalities of race, gender and sexuality. Therefore CRT is an appropriate lens through which to explore organizational and counselling dynamics at the stated research site. Hylton (2012) emphasizes that research methods and implementation are as important as research purpose, stating that this approach operates from "an anti-essentialist frame to confront accusations of homogenization, over-generalization and reductionism" (ibid, p.29). Some of the major themes of CRT as put forward by Delgado and Stefani (1993, 2012) that are pertinent to the topic of research are a critique of liberalism and liberalism's rights-based remedies in favour of a race conscious approach to transformation; the intersections theory – that is, the examination of race, class, gender and sexuality; the concept of structural determinism and how this occurs without conscious knowledge and inhibits redressing of injustice and white privilege – the advantages, benefits and courtesies that come with membership of a dominant group. Critical research has at its core, the concepts of intersectionality, radicalized power processes and reflexivity (Hylton, 2012). Adopting a critical approach to the research process allows me, as Hylton (2012) states, to locate myself in the research process as a social being. Doing so reinforces my objective of the research, to contribute to social justice and transformation by interrogating a pluralist discourse on difference and how such discursive practices play out, whether consciously or not, in the counselling relationship.

The regular exclusion of race, gender, class and their intersections has resulted, according to Hylton (2012), in storytelling and counter storytelling as tools in the CRT standpoint. In cautioning against how storytelling has weaknesses in that stories are socially constructed and represent limited versions of reality for marginalized groups, Hylton (2012) echoes the

argument of Fine (1994) in how qualitative research potentially perpetuates an 'othering' process through projection by the researcher, as well as the danger of decontextualizing notions of difference from historical, political and social constructions inherent in the creation of what is "other" and what is not.

2.2 Race Theory

The concept of race was challenged more vigorously than ever before in the post-World War II period, as a result of decolonization of the global 'south' and the dislodging of occupying northern powers. Migration and urbanization resulted in previously oppressed groups mobilizing for political and social rights (Winant, 2000). These demands created crises in national political systems and as Winant (2000) states "As racial regimes steeped in discriminatory or exclusionist traditions were pressured to innovate and reform, sociological approaches to race were also transformed" (p. 178). Winant argues that postwar racial theory had a number of limitations, mainly in that they tended towards reductionism by subordinating the race concept to what was believed to be a more objective or 'real' social structure. With the end of the twentieth century, such approaches to race reached their limit. While attempts to address racial prejudice and discrimination resulted in efforts at reform at state level, the shifts in policy to be more democratic and inclusionary had the effect of rendering racial injustice less visible (Winant, 2000). The 'invisibility' of race and the historical socio-political injustices that perpetuate race based inequality in post- apartheid South Africa, can be seen as a consequence of 'democratic' changes that on paper imply a significant move towards transformation, but in reality serve to support an inherited Western liberalist discourse.

2.3 Critical Theory

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), in an attempt to conceptualize critical theory and the ongoing evolution of critical schools of thought, focus on commonalities of critical theory. The authors define critical researchers as those who use their research as a form of social or cultural criticism and who accept the following basic assumptions: that thought is mediated by historical and social power relations; that the relationship between signifier and signified is not stable or fixed and is often a result of capitalist production and consumption; that

language is central to subjectivity; that certain groups are privileged over others; that subordination is most effectively reproduced when the subordinated accept their status as natural and inevitable; that intersections between forms of oppression are often elided; and that mainstream research generally is implicated in the reproduction of class, race and gender oppression, albeit often unintentional (ibid).

> Inquiry that aspires to the name "critical" must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a society or public sphere within the society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label "political" and unafraid to consummate a relationship emancipatory consciousness. (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005, p. 305)

Emancipatory action, according to Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), is that which involves the researcher's ability to uncover the contradictions of what is accepted by dominant culture as natural and inviolable and as such conceal relationships that are unequal, unjust and exploitative. The authors argue that critical theory is particularly concerned with power and justice and the intersections of race, class, gender; ideologies and discourses; cultural dynamics and how they interact in the construction of a social system. Critical theory is premised on analyzing power dynamics and the ways in which competing interests privilege some while marginalizing others. Studies of privilege encompass issues of race, class, gender, able-bodied-ness, ethnicity and sexuality and the aim is to uncover the processes through which power operates. Through the concept of immanence, critical theory is concerned with what could be, with moving towards social reform (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). The authors see immanence in critical theory as "…imagining new ways to ease human suffering and produce psychological health." (p. 308).

Brade (2010) argues that it is a widespread assumption that in order for research to find something 'interesting', one has to look to 'the other', leaving normative hegemonic positions underexposed when researching social differentiation. The author terms these positinalities as 'framed by Firstness'. A focus on the constitution of firstness is not to attempt to stabilize its privileged position, states Brade (2010), rather to make it visible. Positions framed by firstness are articulated when related to 'the other' and articulation varies depending on what

firstness or otherness is being discussed (ibid). The exploration of what constitutes ‘difference’ for the counsellor could potentially be articulated from a position of firstness, be it a position of whiteness, maleness, middle-class-ness, heterosexuality or able-bodied-ness or from a combination of these dominant positionalities.

CHAPTER 3:

Literature Review

I reviewed literature grouped in the following themes: Difference, Intersectionality, Privilege; Mental Health Care in South Africa; Lay Counselling, the Rogerian Person-Centred Approach; Race and Difference in a Therapeutic Space.

3.1. Difference, Intersectionality, Privilege

3.1.1 Difference

The question of what is it about difference that makes it a compelling theme and an area of contested representation, is asked by Hall (2001). In exploring attitudes towards difference and the 'spectacle of the "Other"', Hall makes the significant argument that although 'difference' is often regarded as 'racial' difference, attitudes towards difference are equally applicable to other axes such as gender, sexuality, class and disability. Hall identifies three ways in which the representational practice of stereotyping operates. Firstly, stereotyping "…reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'" (p. 258). Secondly, through a strategy of 'splitting', stereotyping divides, excludes and expels that which is 'different', and in this way, it is part of the maintenance of social order, by symbolically setting up boundaries between Us and Them. Lastly, stereotyping tends to occur where there are marked power inequalities (Hall, 2001). In the context of representation, the circularity of power is notable. Everyone, the powerful and the powerless, is caught up in power's circulation (ibid). Unsettling representations of difference requires conscientising how difference is organized in dominance.

Hall (2001) provides 4 theoretical accounts of difference:

1. The use of language as a model of how culture works – difference is essential to meaning, without it, meaning cannot exist. It is the *difference* between white and black which carries meaning. Therefore meaning depends on the difference between opposites. Binary oppositions, such as black/white, male/female, due to the rigidity of the two-part structure, reduce and over-simplify thereby disallowing any distinctions within the opposing binaries. Hall (2001) refers to Derrida's

argument that one pole of a binary opposition is usually the dominant one, and that a relation of power always exists between the poles of a binary opposition (Derrida, 1974, in Hall, 2001).

2. Hall considers Bakhtin's argument that we need difference because the only way meaning is constructed is through a dialogue with the Other. Meaning arises through the difference between the participants in a dialogue, the Other therefore, is essential to meaning (Bakhtin, 1981 [1935], in Hall, 2001).
3. Drawing on the theories of Douglas and Levi-Strauss, Hall (2001) considers the anthropological concept of difference, in which culture depends on giving things meaning by assigning them to different positions within a classificatory system. The symbolic order called culture is thus the basis of marking difference. Binary oppositions are crucial for all classification as a clear difference between things needs to be established in order to classify them. Stable cultures require that things stay in their appointed place, when things are placed in the wrong category, or fail to fit into a category, cultural order is disturbed. Symbolic boundaries therefore, are required to keep categories 'pure', giving cultures their unique meaning and identity and are central to all culture. Difference and how it is marked, leads to the symbolic closing of ranks, stigmatizing and expelling anything defined as 'impure' (Hall, 2001).
4. From a psychoanalytic perspective, difference is explained through the role it plays in our psychic life. The argument here is premised on the Other being fundamental to the constitution of the Self, to us as subjects and to sexual identity, and draws on Freudian concepts, as well as those expanded upon by Klein and Lacan. The common element amongst the above theorists in understanding difference psychoanalytically, is the role given to the Other in subjective development. Subjectivity can only arise and a sense of 'self' formed through the unconscious and symbolic relations formed by the young child with a significant Other, which is outside or different from itself (Hall, 2001).

Hall (2001) asserts that the concept of difference is ambivalent; it can be both positive and negative. It is necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of language and culture, social identities and a subjective sense of self as a sexed subject. At the same time, it is

threatening, a site of danger, of splitting, hostility and aggression towards the Other (Hall, 2001).

According to Staszak (2008), Otherness is a result of a discursive process through which a dominant in-group –"Us", the Self", constructs one or more dominated out-groups – "Them, the other". Real or imagined differences are stigmatized and presented as a negation of identity and a motive for potential discrimination (Staszak, 2008). Central to the construction of otherness is the asymmetry in power relationships. Staszak states that "Dominated out-groups are others precisely because they are subject to the categories and practices of the dominant in-group and because they are unable to prescribe their own norms" (p.2).

It is through hegemonic constructions of what constitutes 'difference' that serve to disregard the material reality of subjectivity and the multiplicity of all the selves that make up who we are. Ndlovu (2012) explores how singularity of identity is conferred or asserted upon one by others (and by oneself). It is the multiple and sometimes contradictory identities that are formed in response to others that complicate an essentialized concept of a fixed stable singular identity that owes nothing to forces outside of ourselves. In certain moments and in particular contexts, one aspect of identity is made more salient than other aspects (Ndlovu, 2012). He provides an illustration of what it means when the singular aspect of identity being 'marked' black by a white other forecloses all other identities in that moment (Ndlovu, 2012).

3.1.2 Intersectionality

Collins (1999) describes intersectionality as a way of understanding social location in terms of intersecting systems of oppression. Intersectionality operates in a matrix of domination – that is, the organization of power in a society. Collins argues that how these systems come together is historically and culturally specific. Furthermore, as Collins puts it, the systems are organized through four interrelated power domains:

- Structural – law, politics, religion and the economy
- Disciplinary – bureaucratic organization of human behaviour
- Hegemonic - legitimization of oppression through language, media and education
- Interpersonal – everyday interactions of personal life

Dismantling ingrained ways of experiencing and perpetuating social inequality has to consider how the above domains construct differences and maintain structural power differentials that empower and oppress across intersecting axes. When considering dominance and marginalization in this way, essentialist binary thinking makes way for the complexities and interrelatedness of social systems.

3.1.3 Privilege

Privilege, power and oppression exist only through social systems and how individuals participate in them (Johnson, 1997). Johnson (1997) states that systems organized around privilege have three main characteristics: They are dominated by privileged groups, identified with privileged groups and centered on privileged groups – for example, a patriarchy is male dominated, male identified and male centered. A system dominated by a privileged group means that positions of power are occupied by members of that group (Johnson, 1997). Power is identified with members of a dominant group in such a way that it seems normal and natural for them to have power (Johnson, 1997). Dominance is evident in every system of privilege, states Johnson (1997). To be privileged means to have advantages that others are denied by virtue of membership of a dominant group. Privileged groups are seen as the standard for comparison of what is represented as the best of society (Johnson, 1997). This creates the 'us' and 'them' power dynamic, in a process of 'othering' subordinate groups. It is a process that is pervasive not only with race but occurs also in the subject positions of groups based on gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and able-bodiedness. Exclusion from dominance renders the sub-ordinated 'invisible', while the positions of privilege and power remain 'invisible' to members of dominant groups. A marker of dominance is that it allows the privileged group to forget that their position has been created in relation to the less advantaged other (Msebele and Brown, 2011).

Johnson discusses two types of privilege, namely 'unearned entitlements' (like being safe in public spaces for example, something all people should feel) and 'unearned advantage' – when unearned entitlements are available only to some people and not others. As Johnson (1997) asserts, racism, sexism and heterosexism are not just about how people feel; they are built into systems and as such perpetuated whether or not intentionally. Altman (2006) argues that the inability for most white people to reflect on the meaning of their whiteness is because whiteness is a baseline or standard and suggests an absence of colour. The positioning of the counsellor in dominant power structures, be it race, class, heterosexism, requires an awareness that such positioning is shaped by unequal interactions.

Following Baldwin (1993), Altman (2006) argues that whiteness can be defined in terms of privilege. Economic and political privilege is associated with being white and provides a sense of safety and security. Altman continues by elaborating on how what he terms the "fantasy of whiteness" is a defense to ward off feelings of ordinariness, of a lack of specialness or privilege, and is a search for mastery (Altman, 2006). However, he asserts that the search for mastery is problematic when it must entail the construction of a subjected group and disavowal of one's own helplessness, that is "…when the experience of helplessness is warded off, rather than integrated with the experience of mastery" (p.56). Altman (2006) argues that the fantasy of mastery has historically been actualized in slavery and colonialism, and that it is a fantasy of any system of race and class that human vulnerability and powerlessness can be overcome with economic power and privilege. An illusion of power and privilege can be achieved by setting up a contrast with a disempowered and underprivileged other (Altman, 2006). However, to argue that the subordination of others is a function of a quest for mastery that is a part of the human condition is to oversimplify and in some way abdicate personal and collective responsibility for injustice and discrimination.

3.2. Mental Health Care in South Africa

Despite attempts to reform mental health care services, resources remain racially segregated and inequitable, following patterns inherited from apartheid (Lund and Flisher, 2006). Petersen and Lund (2011), in a review of mental health care research from 2000 to 2010, state that common mental disorders often remain undetected and untreated in primary healthcare, and that substantial gaps in service delivery remain. Thom (2000) suggests that a shift is

needed from centralized institutional care to decentralized community based services (Thom, 2000, cited in Petersen and Lund, 2011). Due to the shortage of qualified practitioners, the authors suggest the training of non-specialists to increase access to mental health care and argue that closing the treatment gap provides potential for culturally congruent care (Petersen and Lund, 2011). The results of the review indicate high levels of common mental disorders associated with HIV (47.3%), particularly depression and elevated suicide risk (ibid.) Depression is predicted to be a leading disabling health condition globally by 2020. It is estimated that over 40% of people living with HIV/Aids in South Africa, have a diagnosable mental health issue (South African Depression and Anxiety Group cited in SACAP, 2013). In a special report on mental health care in South Africa published in the Sunday Times on July 6th 2014, the Mental Health Federation of South Africa claims that 17 million people in South Africa are dealing with depression, substance abuse, anxiety, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia (Sunday Times, 2014). According to Dr Melvyn Freeman, head of non-communicable diseases at the Department of Health, 85% of psychologists are in private practice, servicing 14% of the population (ibid).

Common mental disorders are depressive and anxiety disorders that are classified in ICD-10 as "neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders and mood disorders" (Patel and Kleinman, 2003, p.609). Patel and Kleinman (2003) define poverty in their study of poverty and common mental disorders as meaning low socioeconomic status, unemployment and low levels of education. The authors refer to a number of studies in which poverty and socioeconomic problems have been cited as one of the most important factors causing emotional distress. Factors such as "insecurity, hopelessness, poor physical health, rapid social change and limited opportunities as a result of less education, may mediate the risk of suffering from mental disorders" (p. 612).

Patel and Kleinman (2003) suggest that the global mental health movement must play a larger role in public health activities and to do this effectively, mental health professionals will need to confront global poverty and its relation to political and economic developments and its consequences for common mental disorders. The key to secondary prevention, argue the authors, is to strengthen the treatment of common mental disorders in primary health care with primary health care workers needing to be trained to recognize and treat common mental disorders (Patel and Kleinman, 2003). While I acknowledge that 'treating' common mental

disorders falls out of the scope of practice of lay counsellors in the NGO sector, there is certainly a need for lay counsellors to be trained to identify the symptoms and be made more aware of the socioeconomic, political and historical factors that contribute to the context of the client's lived experience and how this impacts on the emotional well-being of the individual. It takes more than empathy and a desire to 'help'. Consciousness raising on subject positions combined with a knowledge of our true history will lay the foundations for more effective intervention by those having to meet an increased need for emotional wellness support in NGO's. The primary burden of mental health care falls on community-based providers. Clinics, support groups and lay counsellors have to step in where institutional help is unavailable (South African Depression and Anxiety Group cited in SACAP, 2013).

The vicious cycle of poverty and mental ill-health in South Africa is exacerbated by the history of violence, exclusion and racial discrimination under apartheid and colonialism, as well as that mental health is not at the forefront of policy development and implementation in the health, education, employment, social development and other key sectors, with little co-ordination across these sectors (The Mental Health and Poverty Project, 2008). Not only are NGO's carrying the burden but services provided at the research site are necessarily limited due to the short term nature of lay counselling and the very few referral paths to professional practitioners or state funded facilities that are available. Activities such as counselling and home-based care have become routine functions in the health care system, state Schneider and Lehmann (2010), and lay workers increasingly occupy a front-line service, mediating a layer between the formal health system and citizens. However, the location of lay workers outside or on the fringes of the formal health system is precarious in that there are, according to Schneider and Lehmann (2010), problematic relationships with health professionals and facilities and inadequate training, support, supervision and career pathing.

In a study of the extent to which the World Health Organizations recommendations have been attained, it was concluded that significant challenges remain in incorporating mental health into primary health care, among these challenges being lack of training for general health providers and insufficient support from mental health specialists (Lund, 2010).
Lund (2010) makes the point that "We can no longer afford to ignore mental health as a building block of population health, and of social and economic development" (p. 548).

3.3 Lay Counselling, and the Rogerian Person-Centred Approach

3.3.1 Lay Counselling

Lay counselling is described by Jansen van Rensburg (2008) as:

> Lay counsellors are usually volunteers in the non-governmental sector. They fulfill a role in relieving the burden of psychologists, counsellors, and health care professionals. Lay counsellors educate clients and provide emotional support, and are mostly active in fields such as trauma, psychological first-aid, gender-based violence, and HIV and AIDS. Lay counsellors are often in close contact with communities and, therefore, more able to alleviate health service barriers in the community and implement community mental health programmes in difficult to reach communities. (Jansen van Rensburg, 2008, p.5)

The training of lay counsellors in South Africa has its roots in psychology, and Rohleder and Swartz (2005) describe lay counsellor training as:

> Counsellors are trained in a client-centred approach to counseling modeled on the approach of Carl Rogers (1967; 1980). The client-centred approach emphasizes the centrality of the counsellor-counsellee relationship and aims to develop counsellors who respect the position of those they counsel without imposing their own values. (p.399)

The practice of lay workers tends to be fluid and complex, which defies attempts to develop a one-size-fits-all package of services, the emergence of lay workers in South Africa offers opportunities for improved access and quality of care (Schneider and Lehmann, 2010).

3.3.2 The Rogerian Person-Centred Approach

The Rogerian Person-Centered Approach (PCA) adopted by the organization is based on humanist concepts and was developed by Carl Rogers in the early 1940's (Corey, 2009). Premised on the idea that the client is the 'expert', Rogers maintained that three core attributes of the counsellor were necessary in order for the client to "…move forward and become what they are capable of becoming" (Corey, 2009, p. 169). According to Corey (2009) the emphasis is on how clients act in the world with others, how they can move

forward constructively, and how internal and external obstacles to growth can be successfully overcome. 'External' obstacles appear to preclude those obstacles that exist due to the clients possible marginalization as a consequence of being marked 'different' – through one or more of the intersecting axes of socially constructed 'otherness'. Structural power relations, and the reality of social systems that historically privilege some while subordinating others are thus overlooked in how this approach views the counselling relationship.

At the core of the person-centered approach is the assumption that it is not knowledge, theories or techniques that facilitate a therapeutic process, but the *attitude* of the counsellor (Corey, 2009). Rogers (1980) argues that three conditions must be present to create a growth promoting climate – a) congruence, b) unconditional positive regard, that is, a positive, accepting attitude towards the client and, c) empathic understanding. The latter attribute refers to an ability to deeply grasp the subjective world of the other person (Corey, 2009; Rogers, 1980). The ability of the counsellor to be fully present and to listen actively with empathy, are undoubtedly necessary conditions for a therapeutic process. A person-centered approach, however, is grounded in the belief that all people are autonomous and capable of self-direction, particularly when the counsellor possesses the aforementioned attributes. It is this assumption of homogeneity of clientele seeking out counselling intervention that is problematic, particularly in the South African context, where agency and opportunity to act on it, is a deeply contested issue.

Cain (2008) asserts that the person-centered approach is one that can be effective when working with a client that represents a diversity of cultural backgrounds, as the core therapeutic conditions are universal. Furthermore, it is an approach that does not attempt to impose a 'right' way of being on the client (Cain, 2008, cited in Corey, 2009).

From Roger's perspective, the client-counsellor relationship is characterized by *equality* (Corey, 2009. Emphasis added). According to Rogerian theory, each individual constructs a subjective view of the world through their collective experiences, and therefore no other person can prescribe what is correct or incorrect behaviour for any other person and the counsellor must respect this, remain non-directive and allow each individual to live according to this reality and make all decisions regarding their personal growth and direction (Kensit, 2000). The concept of self-actualization is described by Kensit (2000) as "The desire sees movement from heteronomy (control by external forces) to autonomy (control of inner

forces)" (p. 346). Unconditional positive regard requires the counsellor to not judge the individual, and to respect, support and listen to the client, creating a trusting environment in which the client directs the session (Kensit, 2000). The counsellor needs to also have genuineness in actively listening and understanding the client's world. Kensit (2000) in a critique of the Rogerian approach notes that it overlooks cultural and social factors on an individual's behaviour and attitudes. It follows then that it overlooks too, the same external forces shaping the counsellor. Quinn (1993, in Kensit, 2000) argues that empathy only evolves if the counsellor is genuinely interested in entering the client's world and is actually concerned about the client. While the counsellor may well have been trained to present as non-judgemental, warm, and congruent (genuine) and has the best intentions in demonstrating active, accurate and empathic listening skills, to fully integrate the above qualities requires critical self-reflection as well as acknowledgement and understanding of the structural power differentials that inform the client's world as well as their own.

3.4 Race and Difference in a Therapeutic Space

A body of literature on race and intersectional dynamics in the therapeutic relationship revealed few contributions from a South African perspective and even less from a lay counselling context. Literature on the issue of difference in the therapeutic relationship appears to be largely written from the psychoanalytic perspective. From a review of available literature, issues of difference in therapy are beginning to receive attention in the ways in which difference is elided or addressed, in the counselling room. Msebele and Brown (2011) state that racial differences (of whiteness and blackness), tap into internalized patterns of binary thinking that create hierarchies of 'otherness'. Speaking of the changing United States demographics, Sue (1996) states that the need for cultural relevance, inclusion and equal access, has necessitated changes at individual, professional, institutional and societal level. As such, institutions are faced with the challenge of producing practitioners who are "culturally competent" (Sue, 1996, p. 813). This statement is problematic as it appears to endorse a liberal individualistic ideology that serves to erase difference. Vera and Speight (2003) argue that a commitment to multiculturalism in counselling must include a commitment to social justice - "Social justice has to do with how advantages and disadvantages are distributed to individuals in society" (Miller, 1999, p.11, cited in Vera and Speight, 2003).

Vera and Speight (2003) assert that multicultural competency cannot be limited to an awareness of cultural differences, and should be conceptualized to include interventions beyond the context of counselling. This includes the ability to function as a change agent on a societal level. Multicultural counselling, and specifically, multicultural counselling competencies, has received empirical and theoretical attention (Vera and Speight, 2003). While these competencies outline ways in which counsellors can integrate diversity issues into their work, to what degree these competencies improve the counselling service will need to be clarified in future research.

Leary (2000) argues instead for giving difference careful consideration rather than attempting to transcend it. However, there may be some merit in Multicultural Counselling and Therapy (MCT) theory in that it does question Eurocentric therapeutic foundations. Leary (1995) acknowledges that Eurocentric paradigms developed in the 19th century are inappropriate, and an Afrocentric approach would make treatment more accessible. However, as she cautions, this perspective can perpetuate racialized identities and implies that the black client be "set apart to be understood" (Leary, 1995, p.131). As Suchet (2004) states, being white is seen as an unmarked and invisible identity. The challenge, according to Suchet, is to incorporate social processes into a model of subjectivity that is multi-dimensional and which considers how many forms of difference "intersect, disrupt, enhance, and disturb the complex formation of subjectivity" (2004, p.423). Furthermore, she argues that 'race' incorporates other socio-political experiences such as class, education and marginality, and as such emerges in the therapeutic space with people of the same race (ibid.). Swartz (2007) interrogates issues of race and difference from a South African perspective, taking into account her own lived experience as a white South African and the discomforting encounters with difference as a therapist. More work from a South African perspective needs to be done to explore the therapeutic dynamics that include and do not avoid, the experience of difference in such a setting.

Those involved with and committed to redressing the injustices of the past try to dislodge, disrupt and undercut the power of race; however, as Dolby (2000) argues, many common approaches to multiculturalism are flawed, relying as they do on a simplistic notion of race and difference, failing to take into account the "intricacy" of race as a social force (p. 388). Race cannot be addressed through paradigms that assume it is fixed, stable and essential

(McCarthy, 1995, in Dolby, 2000). Further problematizing the notion of a multicultural approach is the concept of cultural competency. Cultural competency is defined by Green (1999) as the ability to "deliver professional services in a way that is congruent with behaviour and expectations normative of a given community and that are adapted to suit the specific needs of individuals and families from that community" (p. 87, cited in Pon, 2009, p.60). Culture itself is a concept with contested meaning. Defining the concept of culture writes Dervin (2011) is problematic. He cites Bhatia (2007), in the suggestion that the meaning of culture is related to power relationships and composed of conflicting representations. These conflicting representations are reflected in the contestations of theorists on identities and otherness that feature in this essay. He goes on to agree with Abdallah-Pretcielle (2003, cited in Dervin, 2011) that culture should be less defined as characteristics and traits than as the relations and interactions between individuals and groups. Furthermore, referencing Wikan (2002), Dervin makes the point that culture is often seen to be static and representative of all its members, it is however, an object of power, which provides some people with the "right to define what is to count for what" (Wikan, 2002, p.75, cited in Dervin, 2007).

Msebele and Brown (2011) argue that there is an assumption that the issue of 'race' has been resolved in the therapeutic space, and while the authors concede that there have been significant shifts globally – giving the example of the defeat of the oppressive apartheid regime – a widening wealth inequality continues that they view as inseparable from race. In post-Apartheid South Africa this is certainly the case. The cross-cutting intersections of race and class are therefore salient in considering how difference is considered in the South African context. Arredondo (1999) argues that the counsellor, client and the counselling process are influenced by the race relations in the larger society (Sue, Arredondo and McDavis, 1992, in Arredondo, 1999). Swartz (2007) acknowledges how past experiences of entrenched and racialized divisions continue to shape the negotiation of power in therapeutic spaces. The author writes from a psychoanalytic perspective and despite psychoanalytic therapy being obviously out of the scope of practice of lay counsellors, Swartz's exploration of the ways in which race, class and gender differences complicate, hinder or enrich the therapeutic relationship carries relevance that transcends theoretical frameworks. Swartz argues that:

> It is impossible for two bodies to share a space and not communicate, even if no words are spoken. Our age, race, gender, culture, and some things about our characteristic ways of being communicate before we open our mouths. (ibid, 2007, p. 184)

Swartz (2007) asserts that recognition of difference creates a space "… through which a resonance of alikeness might eventually be built" (p. 189). The dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexuality are centered, according to Suchet (2004) "…on the dialectics of power/powerlessness, domination/control, affirmation/exclusion, and rejection/acceptance" (p.431). Msebele and Brown (2011) put forward that it is imperative that the therapeutic profession (and I argue that this includes counselling, be it professional or lay counselling) "…which is predominantly white, has a *moral* responsibility to take black people's experiences of racism properly into account in the consulting room" (Msebele and Brown, 2011, p. 453. Emphasis in the original). The authors argue that it is easy for white therapists to dissociate their own privileged positions, by mistakenly believing they operate outside and independently of the racial hierarchies that structure our lived experience (ibid, 2011).

Altman (2006) looks at the ways persistent racism is shaped by how we are socialized through the cultural attitudes and values we internalize, outside of conscious awareness. These values and attitudes are built into the structure of language (Altman, 2006).

> On a psychological level, we can consider how guilt and shame about white privilege, or, more accurately, about white people's attachment to white privilege, contributes to the formation of a blind spot about the meaning of whiteness in the minds of whites. (p. 48)

The historical legacy of racism as it is built into language and culture calls for action in the form of painful self-scrutiny in order for any kind of reversal to take place (Altman, 2006).

The literature review, in keeping with the topic of the research project, looks at the concept of difference and how it is a function of dominance and power relations. Difference in a counselling context necessitated a review of literature on lay counselling, the Rogerian approach, the research site, race in a therapeutic space, and mental health care in South

Africa. The review reflects the challenges faced by NGO's in meeting the gap in mental health care, and the benefits and limitations of the person-centered approach which potentially inhibits engagement with race in a counselling space. The methodology chapter which follows describes the research design most appropriate for the site, the topic and the themes that emerged in the literature review.

CHAPTER 4:

Methodology

The methodology chapter describes the research method used for data collection and analysis, as well as providing information about the site, sampling, limitations and ethical considerations. Included in this chapter is a section on self-reflection.

4.1 Methodology: Qualitative Research

Qualitative research, with its focus on meaning and understanding, is the most appropriate approach to adopt with regard to this research topic. As Merriam (2009) describes it, qualitative research is interested in "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p.14). It is concerned with the understanding of phenomena from the participant's perspective, the insider's view (ibid). Furthermore it acknowledges the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. The development of 'action' research means that 'subjects' are seen as partners in the research process, and as respondents, participants and stakeholders in a paradigm that is based on avoidance of harm, fully informed consent and the importance of confidentiality (Punch, 1994).

4.2 Data Collection: In-depth semi-structured interviews

Fontana and Frey (2005) argue that the interview is unavoidably "historically, politically and contextually bound" (p.695), thereby refuting the tradition of gathering data "objectively" to be used "scientifically." Contrary to the 'neutrality' of the scientific view regarding interviewing, the authors put forward the concept of empathic interviewing as an approach to the interview process that emphasizes taking a stance, and acknowledging the 'active' nature of the process whereby the interviewer and interviewee collaborate to create a story.

Fontana and Frey (2005), quoting Scheurich (1995), trace the evolution of the interview as a methodology from being an instrument of diagnosis and measurement, to one that takes an empathic stance:

> The conventional, positivist view of interviewing vastly underestimates the complexity, uniqueness, and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction. (Scheurich, 1995, p.241 in Fontana and Frey, 2005)

The interview from this perspective becomes an instrument of social reform in a more humanized approach, and is appropriate to the aims and objectives of this research.

The interview context is one of interaction and relation, and the nature of the interaction can shape the knowledge generated (Fontana and Frey, 2005). The empathic approach, assert the authors, is a method of morality. My intention is not to "privilege any ways of looking at the world" (ibid., p 697). Despite denials, qualitative researchers are, according to Fine (1994), implicated at the hyphen of Self-Other – that being the hyphen that separates and merges personal identities between 'us' and our inventions of 'them'. Self and Other are "knottily entangled" (Fine, 1994, p.72). Fine (1994) goes on to comment that:

> When we opt, instead, to engage in social struggles *with* those who have been exploited and subjugated, we work with the hyphen, revealing far more about ourselves, and far more about the structures of Othering. (ibid, p. 72. Emphasis in the original)

The concern with the assumptions present in the interview process, as well as the controlling role of the interviewer, has contributed to a new direction in qualitative interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 2005) and has pertinence in terms of my positionality as an 'insider'. There is increased attention paid to:

a) to the voices of the respondents (Marcus and Fisher, 1986, in Fontana and Frey, 2005);

b) the importance of the researcher's gender (Gluck and Patai, 1991, in Fontana and Frey, 2005);

c) the role of other elements (race, class, age etc.) (Seidman, 1991, in Fontana and Frey, 2005).

There is a growing awareness amongst researchers that in knowing others, we come to know ourselves (Fontana and Frey, 2005). This process requires the researcher to be reflexive about

how the interview is conducted as well as *what* it accomplishes (Holstein and Gubrium, 2002, in ibid).

Fine (1994) suggests that researchers be aware of that space between the researcher and the respondent, of what is happening and what is not, within:

> The negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence. (ibid, p. 72)

It is important to recognize the 'hyphen' between Self and Other when inscribing the other in the research process: the self being the researcher and the Other, the participant, as well as those on whose behalf the participant speaks. In this research it is of particular importance as counsellees themselves are not participants, and any deficit (or not) in the counselling experience due to attitudes towards what is Other/different for the counsellee is therefore not explored. Fine (1994) cautions against the researcher translating 'for' others in order to promote social justice, stating:

> The power of my translation comes far more from my whiteness, middle-class-ness, and education than from the stories I tell. (ibid, p.80)

The concern about the role of the interviewer has led to new ways of conducting interviews in ways that limit or minimize the interviewer's influence. These ways include polyphonic interviews, where voices are recorded and the multiple perspectives are reported, with differences and problems discussed (Krieger, 1983, in Fontana and Frey, 2005) and interpretive interactionism, which follows in the footsteps of creative and polyphonic interviewing. These epiphanies add, in the words of Denzin (1989a in Fontana and Frey, 2005) "those interactional moments that leave marks on people's lives [and] have the potential for creating transformational experiences for the person" (p.15).

An interview process that is set up to exclude the interviewer's participation on a congruent, authentic level with the purpose of extracting information from the respondent raises ethical concerns as well as limiting revelation of lived experience. As the researcher, I am mindful

that in approaching the interview process in a collaborative, authentic and empathic manner, that I do not 'set up' the interviewee to avoid expression of assumptions and attitudes that may differ from my own. It is therefore important that an atmosphere of trust be established at the outset, by disclosing aims and objectives of the research, including confidentiality and anonymity issues. However, I am aware too; of how much do I reveal of myself and how do I reconcile this with my role and position (Behar, 1996, in Fontana and Frey, 2005). As a counsellor myself, I am not assuming that a degree of trust will already be in place, no matter whether or not a shared experience with a common purpose is seemingly implicit. As emotionally invested as I am in the research topic, a consciousness is needed around unwittingly leading the interviewee towards responses that comply (or do not comply) to my assumptions about the emergence of potentially discomforting attitudes towards difference.

4.3 Data Analysis: Discourse analysis

Lessa (2006) summarises Foucault's (1972) definition of discourse as

> Systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak. (Lessa, 2006, p.285)

Discourse theory attempts to understand the social, through the use of discourse analytical tools, as a discursive construction whereby all social phenomena can be analyzed (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Laclau and Mouffe construct their theory by combining and modifying two theoretical traditions, namely Marxism and structuralism (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Marxism is a starting point for thinking about the social, and structuralism provides a theory of meaning. Laclau and Mouffe fuse the two into a poststructuralist theory whereby the whole social field is regarded as a web of processes in which meaning is created (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The creation of meaning as a social process is, according to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) about the fixation of meaning - we constantly attempt to fix the meaning of signs by placing them in relation to other signs. It is these attempts, the authors argue, that never completely succeed and this is the point of entry for discourse analysis.

> The aim of discourse analysis is to map out the processes in which the struggle for meaning of signs is to be fixed, and the processes by which some fixations of meaning

> become so conventionalized that we think of them as natural. (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p. 25)

A discourse is created by the partial fixation of meaning around nodal points (Laclau and Mouffe, in Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). A nodal point is a privileged sign around which other signs are positioned, and whose meaning is acquired from their relationship to the nodal point (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). A discourse then is the fixation of meaning in a domain, and the meaning of each sign is determined by its relation to other signs, this is done by the exclusion of all other possible ways the signs could have related to other signs (ibid). In this way a discourse can be seen as a reduction of possibilities, and Laclau and Mouffe term all the possibilities that the discourse excludes the field of discursivity (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The field of discursivity holds all the surplus of meaning produced by the articulatory practice, which is, as Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) put it "…the meanings that each sign has, or has had, in other discourses, but which are excluded by the specific discourse in order to create a unity of meaning" (p. 27). The field of discursivity is thus everything that the discourse excludes, but because a discourse is constituted in relation to an outside, it is always in danger of having it's unity of meaning disrupted by other ways of fixing the meaning of signs. That is, it can never be so fixed that it cannot be undermined or contested by the meaning in the field of discursivity (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The concept of Laclau and Mouffe's element is those signs whose meanings are multiple and not yet fixed, for example 'the body' is an element in that there are multiple ways of understanding it, it only has meaning when positioned in relation to other signs. The positioning of the element to create its meaning is done through the process of articulation, which Laclau and Mouffe define as "…any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). Peck (1994) asserts that if ideologies work by articulating elements into meanings that become common sense, they are also susceptible to change or challenge by disrupting the chain of meaning. Elements that are particularly open to different meaning are what Laclau and Mouffe call floating signifiers, these signs being those that contesting discourses ascribe meaning to in their own particular way, that is, the struggle between discourses to fix the meaning of important signs (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). The possibilities of meaning that a discourse displaces to the field of discursivity will always threaten to disrupt or destabilize the

fixity of meaning (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Articulations reproduce or challenge existing discourses, and therefore every articulation is an active reduction of the possibilities of meaning as it positions signs in relation to each other in one way, thereby excluding alternative forms of organization (ibid).

Discourses aim to structure signs as if all signs have a fixed and unambiguous meaning in the total structure, as if society, and our identities, are obvious, logical facts (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Focusing on expressions in their capacity as articulations, discourse analysis explores what meanings are established by positioning elements in particular relationships with one another, and what potential meanings are excluded. By identifying the nodal points of a discourse, one can recognize the signs that are privileged and how they are defined in relation to other signs, as well as how other discourses define the same signs, that is, the floating signifiers, in other ways. The examination of the meanings of the floating signifiers allows for the emergence of struggles over competing meanings (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002).

According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), the production of meaning is a key instrument for the stabilization of power relations, in that through meaning production, power relations become natural and common-sense and therefore, unquestioned and unscrutinized (ibid; Boler and Zymbylas, 2003). The aim then of the analysis is not to expose objective reality but to look at how the reality is constructed to appear objective and normal. According to Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, we construct objectivity through the discursive production of meaning and it is this construction process that analysis is focused on. The reproduction and change of ascriptions to meaning are political acts.

In discourse theory, politics refers to the ways in which we constitute the social at the exclusion of alternative ways. Discourses that are so established that their contingency is overlooked, are called objective – objectivity is the historical outcome of political processes and struggles to the point where the discourse is sedimented and appears to seem natural (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). The boundary between what is objective and what is political (that is, the natural and the contested) is thus a fluid one, with sedimented discourses being problematized in new articulations at any given time. Just as ideologies work through

articulating elements into a chain of meaning, they are also susceptible to challenge by disrupting the chain (Peck, 1994). My responses and, in some instances through probing, a discourse was dislodged through reframing of the issue being explored as a social concern by situating it in a sociohistorical context (Peck, 1994).

Peck (1994) asserts that the framing of race and racism serves to repress the reality that, as individuals, we are also members of social groups that are comprised of intersections of race, class and gender that shape our identities, our relationships. Our thoughts, feelings, and actions are products of history that has created divisions of race and class, and that the concept of the individual is a product of that history too (Peck, 1994).

Between objectivity and the political comes the concept of hegemony, state Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), because just as the objective (that which is understood to be natural) can become political (contested), so too can the political become objective. This re-articulation or reproduction from political conflict to objectivity develops through hegemonic interventions that suppress alternative understandings of the world (ibid). Objectivity is what masks the fact that all discourses are contingent by obscuring alternative understanding of meaning and is what can be regarded as sedimented power.

Discourse analysis is not merely a method of data analysis, but a theoretical and methodological whole. Intertwining theory and method (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002), it is a methodology that looks at the role of language in the social construction of the world (ibid). It is through discourse that societal power relations are constructed and maintained. Finding commonalities and differences between interview discourses, in order to understand how attitudes towards differences are constructed and whether these constructed meanings reinforce dominant hegemonic meaning systems or not, and how they are related to power dynamics within dominant discourses. The analysis of discourse will include themes of internalized dominance and internalized oppression.

4.4 Site

The research site is an organization in Johannesburg that provides a volunteer counselling service, among other services. It is an organization that I am actively involved with as a

volunteer counsellor, supervisor and facilitator. The three Johannesburg branches are demographically diverse and counsellors are confronted with challenges that are representative of geographical locality. Interviews took place at the branch from where the respondent is based, or where the respondent requested that the interview be conducted.

Penner (2002) defines volunteerism as "long-term, planned, prosocial behaviours that benefit strangers and occur within an organizational setting." (p.448). Volunteer demographics in South Africa follow those seen internationally. According to Wilson (2000) more women than men volunteer, white people are more likely than black people to volunteer and volunteering peaks in middle-age. A report released by Statistics South Africa on volunteer activity reveals similar statistics (Statistics SA, 2010) Jansen van Rensburg (2008) states in her research into lay counselling and volunteerism at the organization chosen for this study, that in developing countries, volunteers often lack skills and volunteering can be seen as an opportunity to gain skills for future employment. Organizations are therefore challenged to invest in training of volunteers in order to meet this expectation (ibid).

The organization, despite being perceived as primarily a counselling organization by the general public, is actively involved in a number of projects that contribute to the vital need of marginalized communities to have accessible interventions that address social as well as individual challenges. For the purposes of ensuring anonymity of the organization, these projects will not be described in detail, but are mentioned as they highlight the fact that the organization is not only positioned to make a significant impact on social change; it is already doing so in these communities.

The organization provides young people access to gender, sexuality and HIV information, services and resources to mediate gender inequality, unhealthy choices and HIV infection. Currently approximately 7000 learners are benefiting from this programme. The organization provides emotional well-being services to corporates through training in soft skills. Mobile Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) units are operating in Alexandra township. The organization, through a trauma intervention programme operating in police stations, provides training and skills to victim supporters, providing them with opportunities for future employment. The organization is also involved with training peer educators.

A summary of contact statistics and number of counsellors for the three centres is attached (Appendix D). In a previous study conducted at the organization, Matthis (1983) argues that the non-directive Rogerian approach assumes a culturally, intellectually, emotionally and economically homogenous clientele and found that it had limitations in the lay counselling context. This finding is relevant to current counselling experience at the organization, as it would appear, in terms of counselling approach, there has been little to no change despite significant social change and an increased need for the service. Both Jansen van Rensburg (2008) and Matthis (1983) reported counsellors expressing a need for more training.

4.5 Sampling

My sample of 10 counsellors are respondents to a request for participants in this research, which was extended to the organization's three branches in Johannesburg. An email request for participants was sent out to the counsellor mailing list. The request included the participant information sheet and stipulated that respondents must be active counsellors at the organization, that is, counsellors involved through telephone counseling, face-to-face (f2f), or facilitating, or all the above.

Included in the demographic profile of each of the 10 participants were age (increments of 5 years), religion (only noted if participant mentioned his/her religion during the process of the interview), face-to-face and/or telephone counselling, the number of years counselling at the organization and tertiary education details. Eleven respondents were interviewed with an inadvertent deletion of the second interview. Six interviewees have post graduate degrees, four have degrees/diplomas and one is currently completing a tertiary diploma.

To further ensure anonymity the demographic profile details are excluded from the main body of this report and attached as an appendix (Appendix E). Initially I had planned to identify each participant by using interview numbers only in the interests of ensuring anonymity but after consideration, decided to use pseudonyms. The anonymity of using an interview number has the effect of reducing participants to the very sameness and 'equality' that I am attempting to disrupt in the counselling approach.

Counsellors at the organization have all undergone training comprising two courses, a personal growth course to deal with any unresolved personal issues and a counselling skills

course based on Carl Rogers Person-Centred Approach. After successful completion of both courses, counsellors are selected through an interview process and enter an internship period, after which they undergo another selection process.

4.6 Limitations and ethical considerations

The organization is a complicated space, mirroring the communities which the organization serves. The research process needed to be carried out with sensitivity, with as little intrusion as possible. Furthermore, the organization will be anonymous throughout the report. It is imperative that the organization benefits from this research in a tangible way in the form of facilitating conversations about difference, diversity and social justice as an additional training component. For the purposes of anonymity the organization's Johannesburg branches will be identified as Centre A, Centre B, and Centre C.

Included in organizational and participant consent forms is the permission to record interviews for accurate reporting of data (Appendix A and B). Attached as Appendix C is the Participant Information Sheet. All recordings and transcripts are stored by myself under secure conditions.

My position as a researcher poses challenges in that I am emotionally invested in both the site and the research topic. As an insider, I have the advantage of access and I am cognizant of how my positionality may influence the interview process. Particularly with regard to my whiteness, my gender and my relative seniority and how this may misrepresent me and my stated intention.

It is particularly important then, that in my attempt to elicit the emergence of potentially discomforting attitudes towards perceived differences in a counselling environment, that I remain mindful of my own attitudes – not only towards the participants' perceptions of difference, but also my own perceptions of difference that seem to exist (or not) between myself and the participants'.

Due to most counsellors in Centre C having ready access to email, most of the respondents came from that branch. I had not considered this being a factor in the recruitment of participants. Furthermore, the logistics involved in accessing the other centres became problematic in that centre management did not want to be held responsible for me travelling

to Centres A and B on my own, and transport and time issues for participants having to travel to Centre C resulted in limited access to these centres.

4.7 Self Reflection

My insider status, despite allowing access to a sensitive environment, posed limitations in that there were moments when I found myself counselling the counsellor. However, this could be an indication of the heavy burden lay counsellors in the organisation carry, as my 'counselling' was not centred on the interviewee but more on the challenges of having to hear harrowing stories.

The counsellors who demonstrated the most overt, and the most honest, oblivion to their whiteness and their privilege were counsellors who identified strongly with their faith. My own antitheism disanchored me from this particular discourse.

On reflection the voices that held the platform in my analysis are representative of the power structures in South African society, those who hold social, cultural and economic capital and those who do not. That this resulted in the relatively muted representation of ‘black’ voices is as significant. However, another reason for this is that black counsellors were less ‘othering’ in their responses and therefore contributed less to my argument.

CHAPTER 5:

Findings and Discussion

Data collected from the semi-structured in-depth interviews was analysed using discourse analysis based on Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory. Key signifiers were identified through the grouping of repetitive themes to reveal the nodal points, master and floating signifiers, and myths. Nodal points organize discourses, master signifiers organize identities and myths organize social spaces (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Floating signifiers are those signs that are the points of struggle over meaning between discourses, and as such are 'elements', that is, the signs that are particularly open to different ascriptions of meaning (Rear and Jones, 2013). The main nodal points that emerged were 'counsellor', 'difference', 'culture', 'race', 'language and education' and are discussed below. What was not articulated was as significant as what was articulated in the production of meaning in nodal points. Included in the discussion are my responses (AR) to illustrate those instances where meaning ascribed to a dominant discourse is disrupted. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) argue that the product of any research through discourse analysis is a political intervention, "A contingent articulation of elements which reproduces or challenges the given discourses in the never-ending struggle to define the world" (p. 49). I attempt to reframe a discourse to disrupt the objectivity of its meaning, either by disclosing my own counselling experiences or introducing an alternative view on what was a seemingly given construction of truth. Thus dissolution of a dominant hegemonic discourse as an objective reality takes place. However, truth itself is a discursive construction and in positioning myself in the discourse and destabilizing it from the inside is not to assume my articulation or re-articulation constitutes the truth. I am anchored in the same discourses as those I try to analyze, that is I am white, privileged, and a counsellor.

5.1 Counsellor

The trope of the 'good' Person-Centred counsellor emerged as nodal point, seemingly crystallized, around which the discourse of counselling was reproduced. The Person-Centred counsellor is first and foremost non-judgemental, empathic and accepting of everyone and everything. Counsellors are encouraged to embrace the Rogerian approach without

interrogating its inherent Eurocenticism, and adherence to the fundamental principles of a person-centered model of counselling forecloses exploration of difference in the counselling relationship. The key principles of the Person-Centred Approach become an assumed identity for the counsellor in the counselling relationship, subsuming all other identities of the counsellor including their race, their positionality and the person they are outside the counselling room. The counsellor's need to be perceived as a 'good' counsellor is reflected in having to demonstrate that the skills taught have been learned. However, it is this very need to 'perform' counselling that serves to obscure and suppress uncomfortable encounters with difference in the counselling room. Some counsellors interviewed 'performed' good counselling not only in some of their responses but also at the start of the interview in the self-representing as a 'good' counsellor through the interpretation of my question of the meaning of difference:

> "I must not judge the client because I must be, when I say empathetic, fill the shoes, to be in - her shoes or his shoes as a counsellor and then understanding his or her world…" Grace

> "Well, you know when you talk about difference; the first thing that pops into my mind is that – difference is not supposed to make a difference…" Ingrid

> "My speciality about being professional, so - the set-up of setting it also gives the person space to express his or her feelings, so the other important thing, the confidentiality is very important. So the method of how we do things, it makes the person feel comfortable" Mpho

Ingrid produces a narrative on good counselling by framing difference as a concept to be overcome through practicing Rogerian counselling principles, which is echoed by Galia:

> "… when you counsel someone, you have to come into a counselling situation if you are - as a counsellor, being totally open to whatever the person is, wants to be, and whoever they are, without judging and not, you know, labelling them in any kind of category…" Ingrid

> "…and you have to always show the qualities of congruence, empathy, love, warmth, respect, tolerance, acceptance to *anyone* you meet…" Galia

Being 'a counsellor' becomes a singular identity in that moment, positioning the counsellor as one who is non-judgemental and accepting of the client right at the outset of the interaction. Incorporating Lacan's theory of the subject into discourse theory, the idea of a whole self is a myth. Like the social, the individual is partly structured by discourses but the structuring is never complete. Identity is created by identifying with something, and this 'something' is the subject positions offered by discourses (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Master signifiers are the signs that organize identity discourses and are what Laclau and Mouffe call nodal points of identity. 'Counsellor' is a nodal point of identity and is discursively constructed as being "non-judgemental", "empathic", "accepting", "warm". By following the behavioural instructions associated with 'counsellor', the identity of counsellor is acquired.

Taking the signifiers of what a 'counsellor' is, is given meaning through chains of equivalence such as helping, understanding, non-judgement, empathy, warmth, acceptance - the counsellor becomes a counsellor through the combination of these signs. The signifiers of what a client is, are articulated through what the counsellor is not – in need of help, uneducated, poor, 'other', 'different'. Counsellors are not seen as being different; it is the other that signify difference, all that the counsellor is not. Who the counsellor is remains contested and a floating signifier; as it can be filled with different content. That a signifier is floating indicates that one discourse has not succeeded in fixing its meaning and other discourses are struggling to appropriate it. Training that emphasized difference as being what the counsellor was not, was articulated as follows:

> "Throughout the training it was emphasized that you *will* encounter people who are not the same as you and you will encounter different religions, different races, different classes, different genders…" Galia

> "…I think during the training you learn about that you are going to be dealing with very many different people, different backgrounds and everything else…" Brigette
> **"*Your* background isn't explored that much is it? You are going to be dealing with people from different backgrounds…" AR**

> "But not about the…" Brigitte
>
> **"But *what* backgrounds are different?" AR**

The sign of the non-judgmental counsellor can be seen to be a struggle with the individual within when the counsellor attempts to fix the meaning of judgement:

> "But it comes back to the whole thing of – of – not *judging* – which is core to what we do – sooo– who am I to judge *why* somebody has made the decision to spend money on something that – *apparently* is trivial – when they're struggling to pay the rent – uh – you know – I mustn't actually judge, I must only…" Rachel

> "…and then I have to say no but you have to accept their choices, you can't judge their choices, that's what they chose to do or a mistake happened or whatever, but that you must accept that about them, you mustn't judge them, I'm always very careful not to judge - the choices that they've made." Galia.

The above articulations, at the same time as emphasizing the importance of being non-judgemental, indicate that judgement is in fact, taking place. The dominant discourse of what being a counsellor means is disrupted by signs such as, for example, 'disconnected', 'judgmental', 'racialized'. Through acknowledgement of my own experiences of not always feeling what a counsellor is, created a space for the possibility of a counsellor being someone who is also what a counsellor is not.

The need to 'help' was repeatedly expressed and this 'helping' falls into the discourse of what it means to be a 'good' counsellor "….if you really – want to help that individual and you – you know, get into that context and into their shoes". Despite the inherent contradiction with the Person-Centered approach being one that invests the client with personal agency and autonomy and therefore theoretically, being in a position to 'help' his or herself. The rush to practice 'counselling' can be likened to the rush to apply knowledge where attention is placed on the 'other' whom we are 'helping', rather than ourselves (Pon, 2009). In the following example, the counsellor positions herself at the centre. The relationship between the individual and the social context is ultimately a power relationship; the use of power is

exemplified in who has the ability to determine who is part of the centre and who is Other (Zamudio, Rios and Jaime, 2008).

> "I became a counsellor because I wanted to become a counsellor – it wasn't about *who* I was going to counsel – it was – just the feeling that - if I – knew I that I was doing the job in a – counselling – in an *effective* way - then it didn't matter – who comes through the door, what matters is what I can hopefully give to *them*…" Rachel

Caroline challenges the counsellor discourse somewhat by considering that being a good counsellor is something intrinsic about a person and cannot be taught:

> "…you can train it to a certain extent, but to a certain extent it's either intrinsic to the person or not. An awareness of others, an awareness of diversity, and I think that's where the whole counselling approach of being completely non- judgemental works - and I think that that is where only certain types of people will fit in as counsellors, where their *basic* belief system is non-judgement." Caroline

Pope (1996, in Wheeler, 2010), created a Counsellor Characteristic Inventory from 22 personality characteristics that were identified in studies of counsellor competence, and experts were asked to rank order ten characteristics that are regarded as the most important and the least teachable. These characteristics emerged as being acceptance, emotional stability, open-mindedness, empathy, genuineness, flexibility, interest in people, confidence, sensitivity and fairness. The characteristics of acceptance, empathy and genuineness are core values in the Rogerian model and, as Pope points out, the least teachable.

In the following exchange, after talking about the scapegoating or stereotyping of black people, the person behind the counsellor speaks only after I have inserted my voice, challenging the notion of the 'good' counsellor by suggesting that a counsellor is also a human who brings their own lived experience into the counselling dyad, attempts to disrupt the discourse of counsellor:

> "Ja – [unclear] that has happened to me and I've behaved like that, I've felt like that – I have thought like that. I can't say that I haven't, I won't deny it and – you know it is what it is and the first place to start is acknowledging that you – feel a certain way and

then you work from there and as a counsellor I should be very tolerant and not judgemental and very understanding and it's something I need to work on" Galia

"**But that thing about being a counsellor and having to be tolerant and understanding and not judgemental and it is so much a part of the core – belief of this approach that we're trained in – Rogerian person centered - that it can be very tempting then to convince yourself that you actually *are* tolerant and non-judgemental…" AR**

"Yes. Oh ja, yes yes" Galia

"…and this is what I've learned and in your heart you want to be a counsellor, a good counsellor but then all these things - happen" AR

"We can't ignore them, we can't. We can't say we are counsellors now so we are tolerant and accepting of everybody, no…" Galia

Through a strategy of multivocality (the delineation of different voices in the texts) which is premised on all utterances inevitably drawing on, incorporating or challenging earlier utterances (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002), an earlier opinion expressed by the counsellor is challenged by the counsellor herself.

5.2 Language and Education

The issues of language differences are entwined with that of education, with counsellors expressing a need to 'simplify' their way of speaking to be understood. The client is perceived as being uneducated in relation to the counsellor. Structural inequalities pre-determine access to resources that create social mobility. The vast disparity in the educational system inherited from the apartheid government continue, and this fact was not considered.

The emphasis on language and education as issues of difference in the counselling process reproduces a dominant discourse centred on deficit models in explaining what 'holds' others back. Such discourse gives primacy to individual culture rather than social structural forces (Zamudio et al).

> "…I *have* to remember that I have a vocabulary and a way of *speaking* that *can* be quite inaccessible and that I *really* do have to think *very* carefully about words I use…" Rachel

> "And you need to be careful about the language you use, to make sure that people - you need to keep it simple in certain situations so that people whose first language is not English may not understand a lot of the words you are saying and may not feel comfortable enough to ask you, so you need to, I needed to be aware of that" Brigitte

> "…maybe it's judgemental again, but it's different working with an educated person versus a non-educated person, just in terms of the language one uses, you know, you have to *simplify* your language a lot if you're not working with an educated person – and of course everybody deserves a chance to have counselling and therapy but - I think maybe perhaps it seems to me it would be easier if they knew – if they had a bit of a university degree you know" Galia

> "I think difference in intellectual capacity is a consideration in counselling, so in terms of the level at which you pitch in your counselling. If it's obviously somebody who's got a lower capacity, they wouldn't understand difficult words" Caroline

> "…I mean, that person is no different from me in almost every single way besides the fact that I continued at school and she didn't, that's really the only difference between us." Kyle

Social mobility in South Africa is a myth for the majority of black South Africans, perpetuated by the liberalist discourse of equal opportunity. The articulations of education and language, implies that the opportunity for education (and therefore being able to speak English) is equally available. Language held a different meaning for Grace, in that it wasn't a barrier in the counselling process, but language for Mpho, posed obstacles in having to keep to the Rogerian principles of reflecting feelings in a language that was not English:

> "Most of the time we don't have language barriers because you find people coming understand Zulu, Sotho, it can be one, or we can say maybe two out of ten. Because it doesn't happen most of the time, because when they come we use their home language

> most of the time, we don't use English because the people we deal with are the people of the community" Grace

> "You know the training, it's fine done in English, it's ok, it just reminds me back then when I was doing the course, I feel like no, there are some certain feelings which are not there in our language in Venda, in Zulu, but if I'm saying they are stressed then that's it, you know. So somehow I think you have to find a *way* of expressing that feeling in a different way, so it gives you that thing that you have to *think* about it, how they use it, how - you know, so for them if you say stress, it's not really stress, it's - something powerful, but in - you have to find that word in Sotho, so it becomes that way" Mpho

Describing an exercise done in another training course where toy animals were used to portray feelings, Mpho suggests that using aids like these would contribute to overcoming the above language difficulties:

> "That one, if we can add it on our client it will really help a lot, because remember the language it's also very, very kind of - but if we add those animals and then it's easy to describe the feelings, it's easy to understand what is happening to a person" Mpho

5.3 Culture

Race is rarely directly addressed, instead the word 'culture' is often articulated instead, evidence of either oversensitivity and denial or what Hall (1981) terms inferential racism – "apparently naturalized representations of events and situations relating to race that have racist premises and propositions inscribed into them as a set of unquestioned assumptions" (Hall, 1981, p.36, cited in Peck, 1994).

> "I think culturally there was a gulf for me in that *what* he was talking about I just found it very difficult to connect, because although I was trying to leave *my* stuff behind, it was very much in the foreground in this situation, I couldn't really – I couldn't really honestly relate" Brigitte

Rachel talks about her experience as a trainee counsellor and hearing the stories of other trainee counsellors as helping her learn about their 'culture'. The word 'culture' is used in

place of 'black' and signifies too that 'black culture' is violent and abusive. The splitting off and projection onto the other is evidenced below:

> **"Yes – what – when you say 'horrific' what comes to mind? In terms of learning about a culture and finding…?"AR**
>
> "Young girls being – young girls being sexually assaulted and sexually exploited and - within the family and family members just don't believe it and then it comes into the counselling room but at *least* it's not – it's not a *shock*, it's not the first time you – you know, I've actually heard it – as a first-hand experience from somebody so I'm – you know, there's then an – I have an awareness that – unfortunately this does happen – that it's…" Rachel
>
> **"Quite common…?"AR**
>
> "Ja…" Rachel
>
> **"In – cultures – and I'm going to say – when you say cultures, do you mean …"AR**
>
> "In fact its common - yes I do, but in fact of course, it's quite – it's not – I mean I know that again – within orthodox Jewish circles, there is – there is violence, there is abuse – very, *very* difficult to get it acknowledged…" Rachel

In the need to construct a self, constructed racial categories serve to create a not-me other, splitting off occurs and those aspects of 'self' one considers undesirable (often sexual and aggressive aspects) are projected onto the not-me other. The disavowed self requires continual warding off (Altman, 2006). "To the extent that the construction of racial categories is driven by the white need for a degraded other, racism is inherent in race" (ibid, p. 56).

> "Ja! And of course he's cheating on her and drinking but the truth is there are many Jewish men who are cheating on their wives and drinking – (small laugh)- but I think I have fallen into the race trap more than any other – differences trap – (laughs)" Galia

Through a strategy of 'splitting', stereotyping divides, excludes and expels that which is 'different', and in this way, as Hall argues, it is part of the maintenance of social order, by symbolically setting up boundaries between Us and Them, and stereotyping tends to occur where there is marked power inequalities (Hall, 2001).

An awareness of structural disadvantage will provide white counsellors with a perspective on presenting issues of sexual and domestic violence, without which the black client may feel trapped whereby disclosing such experiences confirms the very racial stereotypes that are affecting them alongside the abuse they are victims of (Msebele and Brown, 2011).

Group formation plays a part in the struggle of how the myth about society is to be filled with meaning and different understandings of society create different groups (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Group formation (as in black people and Jewish people) can be understood as a reduction of possibilities, where some possibilities of identification are more relevant while others are ignored (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2009; Ndlovu, 2012). 'Blacks', like all other group formations, obscures the differences that exist within the group, and they only work, like discourse generally, by excluding alternative interpretations (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). With Laclau and Mouffe's logic of equivalence, all people who are identified as not white are subsumed into one category - 'black', with all internal differences erased. The practice of stereotyping the Other results in a singular identity being asserted on those who are marked in this way (Ndlovu, 2012). The logic of equivalence is illustrated with how all people who are not white people are identified as 'black', making only black and white identities possible. The logic of difference on the other hand, makes space for more identities such as black men, black women, white men, white women. However, both the logic of equivalence and difference are, on their own, problematic.

Counselling is regarded by Galia and Kyle as something white people do:

> "…I just find that certain cultures see counselling in a certain way – the white affluent culture sees counselling as necessary, vital, important, something they can afford, it's a luxury but it's not a luxury to them because they can have it and – most of them have it – (laughs) - and stick with it for a certain amount of time." Galia

> "I guess Western people, white people, have also been practising therapy for over 100 years" Kyle

> "I suppose my – it brings an element of concern – uh – first of all I'm not – I'm not a born and bred South African so I have to understand, I've had to learn and understand as much as possible about South African culture and my concern is that when I do

> work with and counsel – people who come from a very different background from myself and that can be people who are Afrikaans, as well as – as black South Africans, that I *don't* understand enough of their culture…" Rachel

Where the counselling process has been ineffective, "…those couples would never come again and never contact me again", "and it was a bit disappointing for me as a counsellor because I'm like, putting in all this effort to be their counsellor and it doesn't feel like they're taking it seriously and I'm not saying it's because of their race but …." The counsellor puts it down to "… counselling is not really a part of my [their] culture…"

Culture is spoken of in articulations that assume the objective reality of what 'culture' means. This shifts the race discourse to a culture discourse. The shift back to a race discourse is a result of my rearticulating it or asking for clarification. The nodal point being 'culture' and the master signifiers being 'traditions' and belief systems:

> "…and when I have people in here that don't take counselling seriously you know, because from what I understand about the black culture, counselling is not – it's not emphasized as something everyone must have – in fact they believe a lot in ancestors, and the spirit life and superstition and that's their culture…." Galia

Wetherell and Potter (1992) assert that there has been a discursive shift from the race discourse of the past to one of a culture discourse. The authors identified two interpretative repertoires that see culture categorized as cultural heritage and culture as therapy (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, in Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). By categorizing culture as heritage, politics is separated from culture so that social and political problems become understood as 'cultural' problems. The culture as therapy discourse is illustrated by the idea that if only black people could continue with counselling and understand that it's "ok to feel worse" their problems would be solved. What is implied is that white people understand counselling and the benefits of committing to it; black people however don't, because it's not 'their culture'.

> The use of the word 'race', itself, is laden with complex meaning and connotation, and often reference is made instead to 'culture', which becomes euphemistic for describing difference along racial lines. (Esprey, 2013, p.35)

This semantic hypersensitivity, states Esprey (2013), highlights the complexity of speaking about race in South Africa. On the personal level, cultural value systems are integrated into the structure of self early on in life, further inhibiting critical reflection on how and why we occupy our subject positions in a society (Altman, 2006). The separation of self and other in the process of othering maintains and reproduces imperialist and colonialist discourses (Pon, 2009).

Culture is defined and understood without consideration of power and how cultural 'others' are created, and assumes a collection of absolute, stable, fixed traits and values (Pon, 2009). Young's (2000) description of cultural imperialism includes the universalization of the dominant group's experience and culture which is regarded as normative. Dominant groups project their own experiences as representative of humanity, and Young (2000) further asserts that the dominant group reinforces its position by bringing other groups under the measure of its dominant norms. The cultural expressions of the dominant group become the norm and are seen as unremarkable, whereas the differences with subordinate groups are constructed as a lack and marked as other. Through stereotyping, the Other becomes marked as well as invisible (Young, 2000; Hall, 2001).

When the collective and individual are investigated through discourse analysis the starting point is to identify which subject positions the discursive structure indicate as relevant by looking at the nodal point around which identity is organized. According to Laclau and Mouffe, identity is discursively constituted through chains of equivalence where signs are linked together in chains of opposition to other chains which define how the subject is and how it is not and is always relational. The subject, like discourse, is changeable and contingent never complete or fixed (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002). Group formation or collective identity works in the same way, and is a reduction of possibilities.

Black counsellors use of the sign 'culture' is related to gender issues and violence, again culture takes on the meaning of defining black 'culture' as violent and abusive:

> "…Also looking at things coming from a cultural background that these duties must be done by a woman, a woman must treat her husband in such and such a way. People end up actually abusing their responsibilities and actually they end up subjecting especially those who do not have power you know, to all kinds of abuse. But

> sometimes of course it is true that the cultural violence has come from the oppression and repression and stuff like that, but at the same time it is all about being human and actually looking at and making border lines where it must stop, where responsibility is and where it stops and where abuse is and making the differences" Robert

> "So you know it's not easy in the black community, most of men in the black community, they are abusive in a way, because when you say a hundred houses, maybe you can find 80% of the houses, there is an abusing father but people don't talk about it. It's something that - as a wife you feel that shame because you will have anything that your husband who's feeding and doing all the thing and clothing - and when you go out people think ok, perceive you as...." Grace

When I interrupt by introducing the discourse of white men being just as capable and culpable when it comes to violence and abuse:

> **"And - it's something - I find -with conversations with white people, white men particularly, there is a perception that *black* men are bad and violent and they drink and they are irresponsible. But it's without taking into consideration first of all that white men are not perfect…" AR**

Grace's responses indicate doubtfulness or certainly a reluctance to believe or pursue this idea.

5.4 Difference

Difference was a floating signifier in the struggle of the meaning of difference to the counsellor, and also how the counsellor struggled internally to articulate difference in the 'right' way. The question of what difference means to the counsellor was interpreted in a number of ways.

> "…but I think you know also as a counsellor you – you're trained – to not – focus on the difference." Ingrid

> "As a counsellor myself how I perceive difference is that each individual has got different mechanisms that he actually invests in or that he can put into use to navigate through life problems and issues" Robert

Frequently articulated was how practising 'good' counselling transcends all differences:

> "But interestingly I've – I feel that some of the best connections I've made with clients have been where they could *absolutely* have seen that – absolutely – and yet I've been able to – to - sort of – push – somehow or other, push that away and just work with – with what's there…" Rachel

> "But the most successful counselling experience I had was with an older, Muslim man. And I'm a young white Jewish girl…" Galia

> "I *think* because the core principles of what we work with, the person-centered approach, the empathy, the congruence, etc., *all* of that is universal…" Rachel

> "And sometimes you know even though you *have* this difference when you respond empathically, when you focus on feelings, which is universal – small laugh – everyone has, you know, when you talk about basic feelings, its universal, it's all over the world, it's the same, we experience it the same, so when you connect on that level then it's as if – even if there's a difference, we can still connect so that's - that's how I see it…" Ingrid

> "I've found that with most people, that talking about differences, that at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter, as long as you make a connection with the person, and as long as you understand the relationships that they are having and that they are going through, that is the only thing that is really important." Caroline

> "So there is a certain amount of trust, that if you can put that trust in the *other* person, that they don't expect you to know *exactly* what it's like to be them, then you can move along and still help them, you can move past that, you almost *transcend* some of the initial difficulties of the call" Kyle

Msebele and Brown (2011) note that while binary thinking is limiting it doesn't preclude warm alliances or helpful interventions. However, this does not mean that it undoes stereotyping and generalizations.

Difference is imagined at the research site along the lines of a liberal political discourse that emphasizes equality and equal individual rights without consideration of the social, the

economic, the historical or the political power structures that inevitably weaken and undermine a liberalist stance. Power operates in the organization through erasing of difference by avoiding it, thus creating a space for the re-enactment of power differentials in a counselling context. The sense-making of what constitutes difference is articulated through the lens of internalized dominance and internalized oppression, whereby past and present injustices and inequality are elided from/in the counselling discourse:

> "Well I believe that we are all equal – but it's – you know the way that you view it – because — we're all different…" Ingrid

Liberalism is based on a belief in the primacy and autonomy of the individual (Peck, 1994). An extension of this essentialized individualism is capitalism, and equality then is viewed as those conditions whereby everyone has equal access to the resources required in the pursuit of their private ends (Peck,1994). The emphasis on individual opinions, rights and experiences that liberalism supports means that when our generalizations are located in our own experiences, there is an expectation that they will be respected because no-one has a right to judge another's experience (Peck, 1994). Liberal discourses, in an attempt to correct racially based inequalities, fail to do so by locating racism as a problem of and for individuals, thereby overlooking the institutionalized structural power relations that perpetuate inequities. Peck (1994) notes that a consequence of liberal individualism is that race relations are not understood in a socio, political and historical context.

Coupled with 'difference' is the concept of 'sameness'. Being a good counsellor then is more possible when not having to navigate (or ignore) differences:

> "Yees! Ja – because that is the same as me, it's more familiar to me maybe I think as a counsellor I'm more fit to take this on – (small laugh) – because we might have similar issues, backgrounds whatever, whereas if someone's so different from me maybe I get a bit like 'oh I'm going to have to really try hard to really relate and see their world because it's so different from mine'…" Galia

> "I think it is, I mean, it's just a normal walk of life, if you meet someone and they've got things in common with you it's much easier to talk to that person, than to someone

who doesn't have something in common with you so sameness makes it easier.." Ingrid

"*Conversely* although I will never overtly say that I'm Jewish, it's *very* easy for Jewish people to pick up. And my, the clients that I've had who are Jewish are – seem to –relax *very* quickly and – because they can also use language that they know I will understand – so it works both ways – (small laugh)" Rachel

Perceived 'sameness' makes counselling 'easier'. Identification, according to Ndlovu (2012) is an ongoing, incomplete articulation which at times foregrounds sameness by making connections with some and simultaneously highlighting differences from others (Ndlovu, 2012).

5.5 Race

"Yes – I think for me race has been the most contentious issue – of the differences" Galia

"Why do you think that is? Do you think that it's because it's more visible – it's immediately visible…?" AR

"It's immediately visible – also I feel like sometimes the black community is used as a scapegoat – the reason we don't have a nice country is because of our black government and the reason we don't, you know – our country is falling apart is because we have too many black people and you know, all this kind of – it's the black peoples fault. And sometimes I buy into that I'm like, yes, yes, it's these black people and they're this and they're that and I'm stereotyping them and I'm putting them into a box and I'm trying to keep my white kind of thing alive you know, that white people do know what they're doing and they can build a country better than they can and - it's been a very contentious issue but I'm *trying* not to fall into that, as I say I'm trying to see that they *are* human beings, they have flaws, we have flaws – ideally we should all work together for the benefit of this country but I must be honest I *have* fallen into the thing of – I'll put it on the blacks – (small laugh) – and it's them and it's their problem and when black people come in here – I think I'm coming with a bit of

> that – well you know, *they're* the ones who don't get married and they have the child out of wedlock, of course they're unhappy, you know? – (small laugh) it's so easy…" Galia
> **"You almost expect it**…"AR

Racism and the process of racialization, writes Rejane Williams (2015) in an opinion piece published in The Saturday Star (24 January 2015, p. 15), has resulted in generations of groups living with the belief that they are superior or inferior to 'others'. The process of articulation in conversations on racism is analyzed by Peck (1994) using a series of shows hosted by Oprah Winfrey in the United States. "Racism in 1992" is a 13 episode series aired over the period of a year. Emerging from these conversations, as Peck notes, is the construction of race and racism formulated within liberal politics, therapeutic and religious discourses. Peck suggests that these frameworks are discourses that work as societal 'regimes of truth' (Peck, 1994; Hall, 1992). Power relations are enacted within discourses through their ability to impose constraints and win consent to abide by these constraints, thereby achieving social dominance to the extent that these constraints become common sense, natural and legitimate (Peck, 1994). Ideologies are most effective when they are least visible and Hall (1981, cited in Peck, 1994) argues that race, much like gender, appears to be regarded as natural, and as such is one of the most naturalized of existing ideologies.

> "…and it was a bit disappointing for me as a counsellor because I'm like, putting in all this effort to be their counsellor and it doesn't feel like they're taking it seriously and I'm not saying that it's because of their race but…" Galia

> "And economic difference of course, and *there* I think it's *very* hard not to go into your head and I'm thinking ok *why* are you doing this and why aren't you trying that because that's not our business and that's not our job…" Rachel

> **"You know – speaking – saying what you've said now and – where you said it was a difficult – you said that? That it was a difficult subject – difference…" AR**
> **"**It's a touchy subject, it's a sensitive subject" Galia

"So in some ways it gets sort of – ignored or not focused on because it is so sensitive and touchy and I'm wondering if that person [centred approach] - whether that isn't a 'buy in' to this rainbow nation metaphor…" AR

"Yessss" Galia

"…that we're all the same now, we're all equal…" AR

"Yes - oh I like what you're saying - I do feel like that in my professional life and my counselling life, I do feel like we're often told "we are a rainbow nation and we've been through a struggle and we must all get together and unify and accept each other's differences" and sometimes we can't – other people frustrate you and the way they see the world is so different from your own view that you do get, I do get upset, it does trigger me emotionally – especially being Jewish and there's a lot of anti-Semitism in the world…" Galia

By avoiding identification with membership of a privileged group, other oppressions such as gender and class are foregrounded, in the above comment Galia foregrounds her religion and her own perceived oppression. Roman (1993) suggests that white people, instead of denying and dismissing their positionalities, need to engage with the voiced experiences of subordinated groups, through the concept she calls "speaking with (rather than speaking for)" (Roman, 1993, cited in Blackwell, 2010).

"In this country difference has to be acknowledged – it is a reality, it is there with us, every day, everywhere, we see it in the news and media, so many conflicts – you know – we see it in a lot of good ways – we see a lot of privileged white people trying to help underprivileged black people, but we cannot say it doesn't exist – we cannot say we are a rainbow nation we all love each other, the end - no – I don't believe that, I think that's a fairy-tale, I thinks that's the reality…" Galia

The inherent paternalism in the discourse of privileged white people that 'help' underprivileged black people is an example of internalized domination that remains uninterrogated due to ignorance of whiteness and what being 'white' means.

Exploring possible reasons why Centre C is 'chosen' by the client, the counsellor suggests that white counsellors are more trustworthy:

> "It's a weird one but is it trust? I'll give you an analogy which is – an accepted *fact* at the moment – is that black people prefer white financial advisors. They feel they're more trustworthy and they will – they will *tell* their financial advisor *that's* why they've come to them and I just *wonder* if that – if – that plays out - it's probably purely subconscious, particularly with the people that we see, but somehow it doesn't seem to matter…" Rachel

Robert, in contrast to the above assumption, that white people are more 'trustworthy', introduces a different discourse on trust when the conversation turns to South Africa's racialized history:

> "So it's a matter of in calculating that into the history so that people can be able to understand that yes, things happened, but this is water past the bridge, we can build something that is beautiful together because we have accepted together to do so" Robert
>
> **"But then, all parties need to invest in it and buy into that knowledge, of taking in that knowledge about our history, so I would think then the training, the training that I spoke of earlier, that I think it's essential that counsellors coming into an environment like this, need to be aware of their own histories through the personal growth part, they need to also be aware of our greater national history and those are uncomfortable conversations to have, it takes courage and that's what I think is needed, some more discomfort and more courage *before* the counselling begins" AR**
>
> "I think what you stated is just quite correct that it gives one a lot of discomfort to talk about these issues and it needs a lot of courage to do so, simply because there has been a lot of mistrust that has been planted and throughout the generations it has been planted into the next generation" Robert

He continues with the implicit trust problematic:

> "It is something that actually you find that if there is mistrust then it means every encounter it's just a perpetration of that mistrust *unless* there are steps which are taken to redress that issue of trust. So that's why you might find that in a counselling room, it is difficult getting somebody from a different background, like these race issues that

> you talk about, you find that sometimes a person is not able to talk freely because of issues like that. So - in terms of training, I'm of the idea also that such issues must be taken into account and how can somebody actually let himself in a counselling situation with somebody who is coming from a background that he can see that there is a lot of asymmetrical - institutions playing around" Robert

Singleton and Curtis (2006) make the point that black people may distrust the motives of white people collectively, without discussing this mistrust with white people they encounter, and white people may struggle to recognize their racialized existence and how their whiteness affords them privilege and opportunity.

Caroline mentions that a friend had asked her "why is your organization so white?" and her reply below illustrates the invisibility of whiteness to white people:

> "…and I said, what do you mean? And she said, well 98% of the people here are *white* and it's not representative of the South African population. And I said, well, you know, we've got satellite branches in [Centre A] and [Centre B] and I didn't - really know how to answer her question" Caroline
>
> **"Was it the first time that you've actually realised?" AR**
>
> "Well, I kind of did realise it but at the same time I didn't think too deeply about it" Caroline

Critical reflection, as Altman (2006) states, is impeded by the fact that on a socioeconomic and political level, we are born into historically capitalist and imperialist structures, making it easy to take preexisting power structures for granted (Altman,2006).

> **"And in some ways if it's avoided or sort of tip-toed around, it sort of re-enacts that inequality outside of that space and the two people are playing into their roles of power and subordination in the counselling space so - and I'm wondering how that actually affects the outcome of the process, if it isn't actively acknowledged - because it's difficult how you do that in a counselling space, you can't be going on about race all the time, but in the training as well, if it can be introduced more vigorously - if white counsellors, without centering whiteness,**

are confronted with their privilege and learn how to work with that instead of around it" AR

"Absolutely, I think it is very important, I think during the training you learn about that you are going to be dealing with very many different people, different backgrounds and everything else, but this is such a *crucial*" Brigette

"So – I mean there's lots of examples, but when it does come out in one way or another, where it feels like I'm not - where it feels safe enough for me and the client to address it in a way that doesn't sound like oh, it's because I'm white or a white madam or anything like that, but that I think the way that I have tried to bring it up has framed it - in a way that they don't feel or that I don't feel that it's becoming a defensive kind of - intervention on my part" AR

"I guess it's quite a difficult thing to handle as well, you need to have skills to be able to handle a situation like that and I think possibly in the training you could - have role plays or just bring it into the training where you have *such* differences in client and counsellor and see how you can figure that out or how you could learn to work with that" Caroline

"Hmm hmm, because there is a relationship there and it comes with all kinds of things, our identities, both of the counsellor and the client and the multiplicities of our identities, but then sometimes one identity gets fore-grounded and becomes the most – the biggest thing and I really believe that it can cause a - stumbling block and really having that connection and that - to feel like - that the client feels heard, I think they could feel not judged, but I don't know if they could always feel heard" AR

"When a white therapist is working with a black client, naming their own 'whiteness' in a nuanced way may allow the inequality of the relationship to be brought into awareness rather than papered over." (Msebele and Brown, 2011, p. 480). Robert makes a point about the positioning of white counsellors in the following comment:

"Yes, there can be instances when the issue of race can play a part like when a person can say, I am black and she is listening to my story and because of my experiences and my culture, how can she be able to relate to what I'm going through and what I need -

because the issue of white people, they are always seen as they have everything else" Robert

"Yes – what I've become increasingly aware of as a counsellor, is that given our country's tumultuous history – is that I've already communicated something about myself before I've spoken a word and - I wonder sometimes if that first impression of me, of being white, middle aged, middle class, a white madam. Does that somehow put some dynamic in place before we've even started?" AR

"Yes and my opinion about that has always been that – I mean there is *nothing* I can do about that side of me - those characteristics that there is nothing you can do about, um – you know my thinking is that is kind of up to what the other person decides to do with that, because really is it our job to change their mind about that perception of us?" Kyle

"Because it's not about us really is it – (small laugh) in any case – but I have wondered how - and there have been times where I've had to raise it in an indirect way by saying things like, I'm wondering if you really believe I understand what you are saying, can I – you know. And things like that; it's been interesting what does then sometimes come up" AR

"That's a very good point, is that, I guess - and this has always been my weakness in my own counselling, is that there is that kind of tendency to skirt around the elephant in the room" Kyle

The above exchange, where Kyle suggests that "…because really is it our job to change their mind about that perception of us?" indicates a common 'white talk' discourse where it is usually left to the black person in a black-white dyad to raise the issue of race (Msebele and Brown, 2011). White people, when failing to acknowledge race and racialization, depend on black people to give them permission to speak of it (ibid).

"What do I say to him, do I say, I'm going to give up my life as it is now to compensate for the fact and recompense the fact that I benefitted now so now you must rather have - it's true that we've had this benefit at the expense of black people who've suffered terribly um – but is it a part of human nature to be able to take *such* a drastic step as to say, I'm giving up my life now, just to make it better (laughter)" Kyle

The psychosocial consequences of living with dominance, privilege, greater self-esteem as if this is a natural social order, is, as Williams puts it, "…an unexamined sense of entitlement to have the world as they want it, an over-inflated sense of self, and to feel insecure, threatened by and fearful of what they might lose" (Williams, The Saturday Star, 2015, p.15).

> "Theoretically it's right, you could say we should all just give it up and go and live in the township, because if that's what you really want to do to – small laugh - make it right then that's the way to make it right – laughs. I don't think any of us have got that kind of um - *strength* to put ourselves up for the rest of our lives living in squalor, it's just not going to happen" Kyle

Steyn (2001) states that when a social identity has been premised on the subordination of others, the normalization of society is "experienced as the confiscation of entitlement, rather than equalization" (p. 89). Steyn (2001) argues that "Whites, generally, do not have insight into their whiteness. This results in a pervasive blindness to the impact of racialization upon societies in general, to how lives are affected by race, and to how their own whiteness is premised upon others being positioned as blacks with all that such a positioning entails" (p.88). The privileges associated with whiteness, when confronted, provoke discomfort, especially when realizing one's unwillingness to give up these privileges. A way of avoiding the feelings of guilt that arise when confronting one's race-based privilege, is to deny that any damage was done in the acquisition of benefit (Altman, 2006) or to blame the victim. Those regarded as inferior have lived the reality of being second-class citizens and experience the psychosocial consequences of anxiety, frustration and living a life battling marginalization and oppression (Williams, The Saturday Star, 2015). One only has to consider the presenting issues described by the counsellors working at Centres A and B to see how a lived experience of grinding poverty and unemployment manifests in debilitating problems such as violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and depression.

> "…in [Centre A] and [Centre B] mostly you will hear the financial issue, unemployment, those are people that you will find out - people are depressed because they are unemployed, people are depressed because they used to work and they are no longer working" Mpho
>
> **"That translates often into gender violence, doesn't it?" AR**

"*Exactly*, yes, so those are the most things that we come across. So I think here this side, unemployment is not that much; I'm not sure, but that side, shew. And you find that's the reason why people are busy using drugs, nyaope. When you come across them they will even tell you, I'm not working, what's the point? They've lost hope, so....." Mpho

"So, it feels like the poverty, the conditions of poverty-with that comes a whole lot of other lifestyle dysfunction and choices" AR

"…I found that abuse under such circumstances has been quite a normal thing sometimes, it ends up being looked at as a normal thing" Robert

"It's just what happens in communities like that, they are impoverished, have limited access to resources, unemployment and of course this violence that is so prevalent that it becomes normal?" AR

"It becomes normal especially you know when I look at women it has become normal for them to - they sometimes feel for them it's normal to go through such kinds of abuse because they are women, because they must listen to men or actually they blame themselves, they actually end up blaming themselves for other things that happened which they are not responsible for, it's just because of the society that they are coming from" Robert

The normalization of violence, abuse and poverty points to internalized ignorance or oppression in accepting the presenting issues they were faced with as 'normal'**.** Steyn (2012) describes this phenomenon as:

> Such ignorance of the relationship between white privilege and black subjugation may have the function of defending the oppressed from painful consciousness and political choice, especially in contexts where extreme disempowerment is pervasive, thus producing subjectivities shaped within conditions of learned helplessness. (p.19)

Introjection is the process whereby the projected qualities of others are internalized so as to believe one's identity as defined by others (Altman, 2006). The narrative of the 'bad' black man is reproduced by the counsellor as an uncontested discourse:

> "So you know it's not easy in the black community, most of men in the black community, they are abusive in a way, because when you say a hundred houses, maybe you can find 80% of the houses, there is an abusing father but people don't talk about it. It's something that - as a wife you feel that shame because you will have anything that your husband who's feeding and doing all the thing and clothing - and when you go out people think ok, perceive you as...." Grace

Steyn (2012) argues that both the oppressor populations and the oppressed need ignorance, for the former as a shield of protection from not knowing the realities of injustices that underpin their privileges and for the perpetuation of privilege to remain unquestioned, and for the oppressed to construct their own systematic ignorance's to manage their position within unequal power relations to maintain body and soul.

The use of pronouns such as 'you', 'we', 'us' instead of 'I' at certain points further serves to employ a hegemonic discourse whereby a view is expressed as universal, at least certainly one the interviewee held as a given "…and it's just how it is, it's human nature, it's human behaviour"

> "…and I obviously want to accept all black people for who they are and not judge them and not stereotype them and I work with a lot of black people who I have *nothing* against but –it's a social and a human part of us that we look for as I say scapegoats sometimes" Galia

An individualist discourse articulated through use of pronouns "I" and "you" is challenged or disrupted through the expression of the collective "we" and as Peck(1994) argues, such a break in chain of meaning , 'the way it is', indicates that a discourse has sedimented to become common sense. Hall (1996) sees identity as the 'suturing' between the discourses which interpellate us into subject positions, and the processes which allow us to be subjects. Interpellation is the concept put forward by Althusser (1971) through which we are 'hailed' into subject positions by 'ideological state apparatuses' (Althusser, 1971, cited in Hall, 1996). The stitching between discourse and subjectivity 'sews' us into the fabric of social life. Identities are performed and in this performance, subjectivity is produced. As Butler (1997) asserts "Subjection signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the

process of becoming a subject" (Butler, 1997, p. 2). In reference to subjectivity not being about lack of personal agency, Butler (1997) argues that power operates not only externally but also from within. We become our subject positions. "Power not only *acts* on a subject but, in a transitive sense, *enacts* the subject into being" (Butler, 1997, p. 13. Italics in the original). Subjects are not interpellated in one way only but ascribed different subject positions in many contingent and competing and contradictory discourses (Rear and Jones, 2013). Identity becomes identification with certain subject positions or master signifiers. These nodal points of identity are given meaning through chains of equivalence that relationally establish identity (Rear and Jones, 2013).

Myths are floating signifiers that refer to society as an objective reality, when a myth constitutes a hegemonic vision of social order it can be said to have attained a level of a social imaginary (Rear and Jones, 2013). The disruption of the individualist, liberalist rainbow nation discourse or at least to introduce a more contextual social reality to contest the mythical truth, is evidenced at those points where I speak of the 'rainbow nation' metaphor. In some instances, as with Galia, it allowed for a temporary dislodging of her performative counsellor self, and with others, for example Robert, it created an opportunity for him to speak with his political voice:

> **"So our South African society - continues to be a fractured and fragmented one, despite an attempt to create post '94, a sort of rainbow nation, national identity where all differences were sort of pushed aside, we are all the same, apartheid's over, we are all equal, but it isn't like that" AR**
>
> "You know this takes us back to the challenges that we have in the counselling room and also within the counselling fraternity because what we see is that even the government institutions themselves, society itself has actually not been able to deal with this, with all the oppression, with everything, I mean all the instances of deprivation and brutality that has occurred in people's lives, society has not been able to create the necessary structures to cater enough and empower these people" Robert
>
> **"Yes, and to allow people to speak of and remember in order to heal those wounds, because I think with what happened in 1994 was that all those opportunities and I know the TRC was an ineffective way of attempting to**

address it in some way, but I feel that white people especially, because they don't have to confront their race because it's almost like it's not even a race, it's white and then everything else, that kind of *denying* of the benefit of that system to white people and how we continue to benefit. There is no confrontation with the participation, because just by being white we participated and it's an uncomfortable feeling for a white person to actually have to go inside and look at that, so there is a tendency to pretend it didn't happen, it's over, it's in the past" AR

"A kind of self denial that it did happen, it's in the past" Robert

"And it's that national conversation that hasn't been had, like you say, and that's a part of why we are where we are now" AR

"Yes, that conversation was never initiated and it's still left to people to deal with everything in their own way that they found fit to deal with it, emotionally..." Robert

5.6 Limitations of the Rogerian approach and lack of referral paths

The limitations of the Person-Centred approach in being non-directional are evidenced in the feelings of helplessness for Grace, in an account of her experience with a client who is being physically abused by her husband:

"Yes, sometimes yes we know that we that we won't give them anything, but in terms of like this, you tell them, ok, I cannot tell you what to do, I cannot decide for you, but it's like sometimes you feel their situation and it needs an intervention. Then when you say, ok, can we try this? No. Can we try that? No. Nothing is happening so you feel...." Grace

"**So you might've, you could've tried something else but you know you did what you are trained to do and you did it with...." AR**

"The best that you can" Grace

"**Yes, that person has what the Rogerian approach says, autonomy and has personal agency and they can make their own choices, but when the person is sitting in front of you so *helpless*, for me it *does* make me feel like I need to try *harder*, or I haven't tried hard enough, and certainly sometimes when I wish I**

could just say sometimes what - like – be more directive, it's frustrating. Especially in cases of spousal abuse" AR

Mpho speaks of her frustration with regard to the difficulty counsellors' experience in referring clients:

"It's a serious problem, it's serious problem, because now we are on the process of we have to redo our data because most referrals that we have, remember we are in [Centre B] and you will find that the referrals that we are having it's here in town and for a other person that don't have money to go there, so it's research that we are busy with because we feel like it's not working, you call this number, it's not working and then where do you go with this, you know, and the other thing I think is going to help is to engage or form a kind of a partnership with other organisations" Mpho

Laura, discussing the issue of the Rogerian training and how to make changes to it in order to facilitate a more congruent and effective counselling service, raises the point of the nature of volunteerism and the avoidance of 'race':

"But then it also comes down to volunteerism really, how one has to look at the concept of volunteerism and volunteers and what they can do and what they can't be challenged on" AR

"It's true, and it also means being able to work with people who say that they want to volunteer, just – ok – let me put it this way – um - when you come into the organization, you are told you don't ask questions, you are told you've got to be people centred, and in the training people respect you so much because they've got so much from the self-growth and they are flipping disciplined, and they don't ask questions, you know? Now - so sometimes you also have to say to them, if you want to become a counsellor on the other side; you have *got* to confront - your inherent racism or sexism or homo sexuality [phobia]. So we try and help people to deal with - a little bit of homosexuality you know, but we just don't talk about race" Laura

‘Counsellor’, ‘race’, ‘difference’, ‘culture’, ‘language and education’ emerged as nodal points in the discourse of how difference was interpreted and articulated. The issue of race in the counselling room was rarely addressed directly and the avoidance of engaging in a race discourse reflects not only the myth of the rainbow nation but also what could be regarded as a white collective social unconscious of a reluctance to confront social inequities that are perpetuated by unearned privilege and structural racism.

CHAPTER 6:

Conclusion

The role played by lay counsellors and NGO's in filling the gap in primary mental health care is undeniably significant. The meaning of difference was articulated in a manner that strategically placed the counsellor in a neutral, non-judgemental position in keeping with the person-centred approach**.** Lay counsellors are in need of enhanced training in the form of a more critical approach in order to effectively provide a much needed service. Young (2000) argues that social justice requires institutions that promote reproduction of and respect for group differences. Much as the organization attempts to do this, more thought and action is required in terms of training counsellors to fulfill a role in actively participating in addressing social injustices, through awareness and disruptive pedagogical processes.

Naturalized individualism operates to obscure historically structured hierarchies that construct the differences that divide us as individuals (Peck, 1994). I propose the inclusion in the counselling model adopted by the organization, of an ideology of difference that recognizes historical and sociopolitical power structures (Wood, 1991, in Peck, 1994) and furthermore, encourages critical counselling through courageous conversation, self-scrutiny and awareness of the subject positions of both counsellor and counsellee, and that promotes activist engagement within the larger society, through recognition of differences, and more importantly, understanding of how and why dominant hegemonic master narratives construct what is different and what is not. Peck (1994) emphasizes how an ideology of difference must include the capacity to make deep human connections:

> The task of rearticulating race, then, involves exploring how and why racist (and anti-racist) ideologies become practically adequate for specific segments of the population, the specific conditions under which political-economic problems become racialized, and the way class issues are reduced to or displaced onto race. This requires a renewed critical engagement with the question of the relation of the universal to the particular that neither glosses over difference nor eschews universality altogether. (Peck, 1994, p. 121)

It was clear that counsellors come into the organization with a genuine desire to 'help', and this need is in keeping with the pro-social nature of volunteerism. Counsellors will benefit from being able to separate the fact they 'care' from what they actually know or don't know or think they know (Singleton and Curtis, 2006), by raising consciousness through courageous conversations. According to Singleton and Curtis (2005), the first step in developing racial consciousness is acknowledging "I don't know what I don't know" (p. 56). This domain of knowledge, along with "I don't know but I think I do" (p.56) are the most limiting in how we lead our lives (Singleton and Curtis, 2005).

The answer to the question of what difference means was approached with caution, and most counsellors answered in somewhat vague and unspecific ways. This can be interpreted as either self-representing as 'good' counsellors, which could speak directly to my position as an 'insider' and the performative quality of being a 'good' counsellor, and/or to the possibility that the question of difference has not been given any thought until it was posed.
In many instances, it took my own self-disclosure or reframing of a naturalized, taken for granted discourse, to free up a space for the counsellor to be reflective and honest. Wheeler (2010) defines an effective counsellor as "one who works with clients to produce a positive outcome, a positive change in the client's perception or experience of themselves or a reduction in adverse symptoms" (p. 66). Ultimately it is the effect on clients that determines the competence of the counsellor, but the responsibility lies on the trainers and the training organizations to be gatekeepers of the counselling process (Wheeler, 2010).

The presenting issues of concern or of note were markedly different between the three centres, with gender-based violence, poverty, drug abuse, xenophobia and HIV/AIDs being more commonly spoken of by counsellors who see clients in the areas where they themselves live and work. Notable was an omission of issues surrounding LGBTI during one recorded interview that was raised only after the recording ended. The reason for this was not made explicitly clear, other than I had not specifically raised the issue and the interviewee had assumed it lay outside the parameters of the differences being explored. Counsellors at Centre C ideally should be prepared to literally 'dislocate' from their familiar counselling environment in order to facilitate an engagement with the reality of the socioeconomic disparities and the resulting psychosocial difficulties experienced in Centres A and B.

The problem of referral pathways, as noted by Schneider and Lehmann (2010) and Lund (2010) further illustrates the challenges faced by the organization's counsellors working in areas characterized by poverty and limited resources.

Lay counsellors are faced with the task of holding, hearing and containing individuals and often, entire communities that present with the result of generations of structural inequality. While all the participants interviewed acknowledged, either directly or indirectly, the diversity of the lived experiences of their clients, there was no evidence of awareness of how our society has been shaped by the past. For counsellors lacking historical perspective, the past has no effect on the present.

Zamudio et al (2008) assert that at least four conceptual tools should be involved in an ethic of inquiry into issues of difference and inequality. The tools proposed by the authors are:

1) organic experiences, that being a lived reality that provides insights into fundamental truths, creating a space to interpret forms of subordination and domination.

2) relational analysis makes the connection between individuals and structures of oppression and helps us to recognize how structures like class, race, gender and sexuality shape peoples experiences. Relational analysis "…makes education an active tool for social transformation not only of the self but also of society" (p. 218).

3) historical analysis allows for connections to be made between the present and the past.

4) power relations and the impact this has on defining difference and determining inequality, when an analysis of power is included in critical thinking, a recognition of its embeddedness in social relationships becomes possible.

Through a disruptive pedagogy, critical thinking tools such as those suggested by Zamudio et al (2008) would provide counsellors with an opportunity to not only confront their own subject positions but also to develop a deeper understanding of the world around them that cannot be taught through knowledge gained in the form of dominant ideologies.

The need for counsellors to engage with a process of reflexivity is hampered by adopting a neutral stance and the failure to name race and confront racialized identities and subject positions in the counselling room. As Esprey (2013) states both counsellor and counsellee

bring into the counselling space their own subjectivities and this includes a racialized identity and in this country any therapeutic dyad is nuanced by the individual socio-political contexts which are brought into the room (Esprey, 2013). The inclusion of a training component that acknowledges and examines difference will equip non-professionals to meet the increasing demand for mental health care services.

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Appendix A

DST-NRF South African National Research Chair in Critical Diversity Studies

Wits Centre for Diversity Studies
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
tel: 011 717 4418
email info.wcds@wits.ac.za

Organizational Consent Agreement

Lifeline Johannesburg agrees that it participates willingly and voluntarily in a research project conducted by Anne Reeves under the auspices of the DST-NRF SARChI Chair in Critical Diversity Studies, which is based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

I understand that members of this organization will be participating in interviews with Anne Reeves as part of this research project.

I understand the rationale and nature of the research and I understand the benefits of participation for this organization and its members. I understand the rationale as being the study of the assumptions and attitudes about diversity and difference in a counselling context. I understand the benefit to the organization through feedback in respect of the results of the research as well as an inclusion of a training component that addresses difference.

I understand that approximately 10 interviews will be conducted with members of this organization.

I understand that the research and the DST-NRF SARChI Chair in Critical Diversity Studies may use the information from these interviews.

I understand that the identities of the participants interviewed will remain confidential and they will be assigned pseudonyms.

I understand that the identity of organization will remain anonymous in all forms of publication which result from this research. The research may not harm the integrity or brand of the organization.

I understand that the interviews will be recorded so that the researcher may more accurately reflect views in the report.

I understand that the transcripts from the interviews will not be shared with other participants.

I understand that I may discontinue the participation of the organization at any stage of the research.

I understand and agree to the above terms and conditions.

Signature (Participant) _____ Date: 11 July 2014

Signature (Researcher) _____ Date: 11 July 2014

DST-NRF South African National Research Chair in Critical Diversity Studies

Wits Centre for Diversity Studies
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg
tel: 011 717 4418
email:info.wicds@wits.ac.za

Organizational Consent Agreement

Consent to access counsellor email address database

Lifeline Johannesburg agrees to allow the researcher, Anne Reeves, access to counsellor database (Norwood, Alexandra and Soweto branches) in order to obtain email addresses for the purposes of requesting participants for a research project conducted by the researcher under the auspices of the DST-NRF SARChI Chair in Critical Diversity Studies, which is based at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Please note that supervisees of the above researcher may not participate in the research.

I understand and agree to the above terms and conditions.

Signature (Organization) _____ Date: 25 Sept 2014

Signature (Researcher) _____ Date: 25 Sept 2014.

Appendix B

DST-NRF South African National Research Chair in Critical Diversity Studies

Wits Centre for Diversity Studies

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

tel: 011 717 4418

Participant Consent Agreement

Interview No._____

Interview Consent Form

I, _____ (name), agree that I am participating willingly and voluntarily in an interview with Anne Reeves on this day _____ (date) at _____ (place).

I understand that these interviews from part of a research project undertaken by Anne Reeves on counselors attitudes towards diversity and difference in an NGO counselling organization for the completion of an MA degree requirement at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I understand the rationale and nature of the research and I understand the benefits of my participation

I understand that I will participate in one interview that will last approximately one hour

I understand that I will be given a pseudonym and that my identity will remain anonymous

I understand that the interview will be recorded to more accurately reflect my views

I understand that portions of this interview may be used in an MA research report, and possibly in further academic outputs

I understand that my interview transcripts will be not be shared with other participants or centre management

I understand that I may discontinue my participation at any stage of the research.

I understand that I have the right to not answer any question I do not wish to answer

I understand and agree to the above terms and conditions.

Signature (Participant) _____

Signature (Researcher) _____

I consent to the interview being recorded for the purposes of accuracy

Signature (Participant) _____

Signature (Researcher) _____

Appendix C

Anne Reeves

Participant Information Sheet

Dear counsellor

My name is Anne Reeves and I am conducting research as part of a Master's degree requirement (University of the Witwatersrand).

I would like to invite potential respondents to participate in the research.

This research aims to explore and understand whether, and in what ways, counsellor attitudes towards difference influence the counselling process.

The objective of the research is to include material in the training programme that creates awareness of difference and diversity and which encourages active engagement with transformative social justice.

Participation will involve an approximately one hour face-to-face tape recorded interview at a centre, and at a time, that is most convenient for you. The interview will be held in a room which ensures privacy during the interview process.

Your identity will be protected throughout the process, including in written notes, recordings and transcripts as well as in the final report. All interview material will be kept in safe, password protected storage and destroyed once the research is completed. Furthermore, your identity will not be shared with centre management at any time.

Participants have a right not to answer any questions they do not wish to and may withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants are required to sign a consent form prior to the interview, which includes consent for the interview to be recorded.

Should you have any questions about the research and/or about participation, please contact me on:

Researcher (Anne Reeves)**:**

Tel: 083 377 8608 Email: anner@icon.co.za

Supervisor (Professor Melissa Steyn):

Tel: 011 717 4199

Regards

Anne

Appendix D

Summary of Site Statistics (April 2013 to March 2014)

Total contacts: **58 894**

Counselling Centre A: Number of counsellors (approx.) 20

Schools Counselling	788
Face-to-Face Counselling	2 627
Peer Education	29 011
Total	**32 426**

Counselling Centre B: Number of counsellors (approx.) 15

Telephone Counselling	490
Face-to-Face Counselling	657
Peer Education	1 400
Total	**2 547**

Counselling Centre C: Number of counsellors (approx.) 50

Telephone Counselling	7 572
Face-to-Face Counselling	3 070
Total	**10 642**

Projects:

Schools	6 479
Police Stations	6 800
Total	**13 279**

Appendix E

Interviewee	Age	Religion	F2F/Telephone	No. of years	Tertiary
Galia	25-30	Jewish	F2F	5	BAHons (Psych)
Steven	45-50	not specified	F2F	5	BAHons (Psych)
Ingrid	25-30	not specified	Telephone	1	BAHons (Psych)
Rachel	50+	Jewish	F2F	6	BAHons (Drama)
Kyle	40-45	Atheist	Telephone	2	BCom
Caroline	45-50	not specified	F2F and Telephone	2	BAHons (Psych)
Grace	35-40	not specified	F2F and Telephone	6	Auxiliary Social
Laura	50+	not specified	F2F and Telephone	10	BAHons
Brigette	50+	not specified	F2F and Telephone	3	BA, Nursing Dip
Mpho	30-35	not specified	F2F and Telephone	6	Current
Robert	45-50	not specified	F2F and Telephone	5	DipEd

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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