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**Video-recording for therapeutic purposes in couple counselling**

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

**Doctor of Philosophy in Human Development and Counselling**

at

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by

**Jim Depree**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
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## **Abstract**

The challenges of producing fair and respectful relationships sometimes takes couples to counselling. Problematic and taken-for-granted, individualistic, adversarial and gendered discursive practices continue to get in the way of fair and respectful relationships, with studies showing that in heterosexual relationships women are often expected to do most of the work required to maintain and repair couple relationships which continue to centre men's experiences. When couples get to counselling, counsellors may also struggle to address individualistic and gendered relational processes and, may reproduce them despite their best intentions. In response, narrative therapists work with clients to externalise and deconstruct discursive practices to make visible the operation of power in relationships and to make available other readings, ways of being and identities, which better position members of a couple to collaborate in order to produce solutions. This study employed narrative therapy co-research and video technology in order to investigate the researcher's own narrative therapy counselling practice with couples. Three couples, all heterosexual, in marriage or marriage-like relationships, were recruited from the researcher's counselling practice. Together the couples and researcher reviewed and co-researched the video records of the counselling meetings. Practices of co-research with video made visible and unfamiliar some previously unseen and taken-for-granted territories of life. Co-research of these territories generated understandings and proposals for action, which the couples then experimented with and reviewed. As well, the couples all began to imagine how their actions might appear on video and to adjust their actions and thinking to better fit with their values. The video records also provided a text for further deconstructive analysis. Within the counselling, re-membering conversations, taking-it-back practices and definitional

ceremonies, were employed and enhanced by using the video in order to support preferred developments and to strengthen the contributions of children, family and communities to the couples' preferred ways of being. This approach was used to investigate: the ways the couples shared and conducted their conversations in counselling; their parenting; an anger problem; and the sharing of property and income. Ongoing analysis of the video records and transcripts developed and extended the theoretical tools available in the moments of the counselling, producing a richer telling of a practice that was effective at the time. This retelling involved thinking with Derrida and deconstruction as justice in order to cast counselling as an hospitable, collaborative process of co-research which has as its focus addressing justice in the complex, relational, gendered, cultural and contextual territories in which couples' relationships are played out. The thesis argues that the positioning of counsellor and couples as co-researchers, using hospitable and deconstructive perspectives, greatly reduced conflict and equipped the counsellor and couples to review and research their own experiences, and to collaborate in order to produce more effective problem solving strategies, which addressed their situations and their hopes for justice.

## Acknowledgements

My mother, Evelyn Depree, filled our houses with books. When we were children she often read poetry and stories to me and my siblings. In later life she worked as a social worker. My father, Fred Depree, flew a spitfire in World War 2. When he returned from the war he studied law and then worked as a lawyer. For them, tertiary education was highly valued.

My sister, Nicky Depree, brought the best of these legacies together. She has worked as a teacher, educator and counsellor. She conducts her work and life hospitably and with a sophisticated analysis of power and gender.

I met my wife, Tania Depree, when I was training in social work. Our relationship, and Tania's support and her challenges to my often taken-for-granted discursive practices has been a rich source of material in my own work, and an inspiration for me to work harder and with greater compassion and appreciation, particularly in the field of couple counselling.

Similarly, our three daughters, Hannah, Alex and Kate, have shaped my life and this work in many ways, not least with their intelligence and alertness to the operation of power, gender and their experiences of making their ways in life and relationships.

With these family legacies it is perhaps entirely predictable that I would be equipped to, and interested in, undertaking a research project which emphasises justice, hospitality and the operation of power and gender in relationships.

At the time I met Tania, I also met Michael White. White's (1984) approach and ability to describe what he was doing in counselling gave me hope that I could follow in his footsteps, both as a kind and respectful man and as a counsellor with a commitment to social justice. Since then, narrative therapy has sustained me, and shaped my life and work. It has protected me from burnout, and it has supported me in forming many working relationships with my clients, colleagues and with those that have participated in training I have provided. These relationships have made my life immeasurable richer.

I have been very fortunate to have some extraordinary women as supervisors in my counselling career. Lynn Jenner, Jane Harkness and Zöe Alford have shaped my practice and supported me through many difficult moments. They have been unfailingly kind, knowledgeable and supportive. They have demonstrated how to do narrative therapy supervision. I have heard it said that you usually get one highly influential school teacher. I think, instead, I have had, and still have Jane and Zöe, as extraordinary teachers in life and work.

Waikato University has been profoundly influential in my counselling career. Gerald Monk, Wendy Drewery, Kathie Crocket and John Winslade extended my knowledge of narrative therapy and improved my practice of it. John helped me to fully apply "the problem is the problem" to myself, a move that has sustained me in the face of many invitations to think that I was the problem or not good enough. Stephen Gaddis's teaching and his PhD gave me hope that I might undertake my own PhD. And The University of Waikato provided a three-year scholarship without which I doubt I would have embarked upon this study.

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I am deeply appreciative of the three couples who participated in this study. My commitment to honour and do justice to their courage and wisdom and to our work together sustained me in this very long journey.

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# **Chapter 1. Introduction**

When I undertook this PhD, not really knowing what I was in for, my interest was in my own practice as a contribution to the couples I see and to the field of couple counselling. I hoped that together, the couples who participated in my research, my supervisors and I might produce something that would help other counsellors in the difficult task of navigating the complex and changing field of couple counselling. I would not have predicted the profound changes researching my own practice as part of a PhD has brought about. I would not have imagined it would produce such uncertainty without self-doubt and ineffectiveness; that it would refine the tools I already possessed, and equip me with new tools to the extent that it has; or that it would so profoundly reposition me as a co-researcher of justice in ways more reliably hospitable, more powerful, less conflictual and more heart-warming than any I had previously encountered since starting my career in Social Work in 1980.

## **A history of this research**

In some ways my counselling career and the development of the practices I describe in this research project are similar to the evolution of the positioning of counsellors and their clients that Gurman (2010) describes in his history of couple counselling.

When I first started doing couple counselling in early 1985 I was a student on a social work placement at a Family Health Counselling Centre. I had just attended my first workshop by White and Epston, but this was before they developed what

came to be known as narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1989), and I had very few tools to call upon in my work with the couples who sought my help. And I was not yet married, nor had I been in a relationship for longer than a year or two. Despite this, I was surprised at how readily the couples took up my suggestions about how to improve their relationships and how helpful they found them. I think my certainty about what the problems were and what the couples needed to do and their willingness to accept such certainty from a student were in part a legacy of the first two phases of couple counselling which positioned a counsellor as knowing “everything” (Gurman, 2010, p. 6) necessary to educate couples and to help them adjust to “culturally dominant marital roles” (p. 5) and positioned their clients as receivers of this expert knowledge.

In 1985 the effects of extraordinary changes in marriage-like relationships had not disturbed this positioning of counsellors and their clients sufficiently for me to question my practice. However, over the intervening 30 years the landscape of couple counselling changed so that there was less acceptance of my authority and more conflict in my couple counselling meetings. Couple counselling had become both the bulk of my work and the most difficult area of my work. Writing this introduction after writing the chapters that follow it, and after the vast bulk of my research is completed, I think that these changes in the numbers of couples seeking counselling and in my difficulties might have been a product of a widespread “deeper questioning of the professional’s claim to extraordinary knowledge in matters of human performance” (Schön, 1991, p. 5), of consumer movements to uphold the rights of counselling clients (Paterson, Health & Disability Commissioner, 2001), of the burden placed on marriage-like relationships to meet couples’ needs for happiness and love (Coontz, 2006), and

of feminism's questioning of taken-for-granted practices of patriarchy in marriage (Delphy & Leonard, 1992), including that a couple should consist solely of a married man and woman. An effect of these influences on couples' relationships with each other and with their counsellors was that the couples who sought my help were often less receptive to my suggestions about what was happening with them and they often saw through and rejected my attempts at what Bird (2004) called "disguised instruction" (p. 353) when I tried to get them to conform to my ideas for a solution to their problems.

At the moment, I trace my change in positioning back to when I was attending a Karl Tomm workshop in 1987. I had been introduced to some of Tomm's unpublished writing through White's earlier writing on anorexia (1988b). In this workshop there was some discussion of the tensions that can be produced when intervening in people's lives. It was then that it first occurred to me that some of these difficulties might be avoided if I took up less of a position of assessing, knowing and intervening and more of a position of researching. I could not find the words for this at the time, and this idea remained largely absent from my work.

When I began my Masters in Counselling at Waikato University in 1999, I picked up some of the traces of this casting of therapy as research. My Masters helped me to refine my theoretical knowledge, and it introduced me to doing research (Depre, 2005). Also my Masters education had provided me with the opportunity to practice my counselling skills and to review my performance on video. I had found this use of video technology helpful to the extent that I had experimented with making some videos in my counselling work with a couple and together we

had attempted something like the same process of video review I had used in my Masters education. It had seemed like a logical progression to take this practice of video-recording further into the area of my practice that I most wanted to improve and to do so by taking the next step up from my Masters. So when I began to develop my proposal for my PhD I was well positioned to take up the suggestion from a colleague's PhD (Gaddis, 2002) that a counsellor might alternate their counselling meetings with couples with research meetings using video, and I was better positioned to find and to adopt the paradigm of research as therapy and therapy as research (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999).

I have structured this thesis to show some of my steps along this path and in particular to show how the processes of counselling co-research and research shaped each other. In this respect my thesis shows something of the evolution of my couple counselling practice. From thinking I knew, to finding that I didn't, and then to developing a hospitable, deconstructive and dialogical practice of narrative therapy and narrative co-research using video, that integrated contemporary research in relevant fields, and which supported the couples and I to safely address justice for them and their families.

## **My research questions**

Perhaps the first noteworthy step in this research process was generating my research questions. My interest in improving my practice of narrative therapy co-research by using video meant that it was a relatively straightforward process to generate the following research questions to address the territories of my research: couples counselling, narrative therapy co-research, taping and research methods.

1. What does therapeutic co-research offer couples counselling?
2. What are the potential effects of using taping in co-research in couples' therapy?
3. How might I as a researcher/practitioner research my own counselling practice?

As my research progressed I considered replacing “couples counselling” with “relationship counselling in order to reflect the significant cultural movements which seek to recognise the many and rich varieties of relationships that people have, that they would not describe as, or limit to a couple relationship, and which they seek counselling about. For this research I chose to stick with couples counselling as this description best describes what potential participants understood they might be getting and how those who participated described themselves. Although the counselling in this study often addressed the participants' families and communities, for them, and I anticipate for readers, the term couples counselling helps identify the basis on which this work was done. In this sense couples counselling is a familiar starting point for what might have been unfamiliar enquiries.

Similarly, I have replaced the term “taping” with “video-recording” in order to reflect that all recordings were made using digital video technology. I had used the generic term “taping” so that participants might choose to have audio records made in order to avoid the greater exposure that video records provide. However, all of the participants chose to have our meetings recording using video technology. With hindsight, I would not offer the option of audio recording only if I was undertaking this research again as the video records were so influential in positioning the couples and me to see and hear ourselves in interaction, as the results chapter show. The video records often literally made visible the subtle

dialogical, verbal and physical interactions that shaped our counselling conversations.

## **An outline of the chapters**

The next three chapters reflect the foci of my research questions. In chapter 2, I give an account of narrative therapy and co-research in particular, and of some of the theories that White drew on as he developed his understanding and practice of narrative therapy. In chapter 3, I discuss the use of therapeutic video and the field of couples counselling. In chapter 4, I outline the territory of my research method.

I came to the theories that I describe in chapter 2 via narrative therapy. I had been interested in White's work since attending his and Epston's workshop in Christchurch in 1985. By making my way through the bibliographies of White's and Epston's (White, 1984, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 2000, 2002, 2002, 2004a, 2007, White & Epston, 1989, 1992) published work I was, over time, introduced to the theorists whose work shaped White's understandings of narrative therapy. Then, through my Masters of Counselling I deepened my understanding of these theorists' works and read more widely. So I set out on this thesis with most of the theoretical tools I describe in chapter 2: White's (2007) narrative maps, Foucault's (1963, 1965, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984b, 2000b, 2005, 2010) writings on power and knowledge, technologies of domination, normalising gazes, care of the self and practices of confession; Derrida's (1976, 1978, 1981, 1982, 1992, 1997, 2000, 2005; Derrida & Moore, 1974) writings on deconstruction and hospitality and Bakhtin's (1981b, 1984, 1986, 1990) writing on dialogism.

These theoretical tools shaped my counselling practice and this doctoral research and, as I describe in chapter 4, my co-research refined my understanding of them and honed my skills in using them. Hence they are represented here both because of their importance in relation to narrative therapy but also because of their utility in the counselling and research process that is the focus of this thesis. When I set out and as I made my way in this research I picked up and experimented with many other theories and tools, some of which were very interesting and which diverted me for hours. However, I found that the fast moving complexity and to-and-fro of couple counselling required that I travel relatively lightly and the theoretical tools I describe in chapter 2 were those I most often reached for, were most useful, and that I could afford to carry. Perhaps, as I become more familiar with them and they represent less of a cognitive load for me, then I might employ the practices they offer in a more fluid and dextrous manner.

And yet describing these theories as *tools*, as Foucault (1994, p. 523) did in relation to his own writing, does not capture their overarching influence in my understandings of the territories of counselling and their utility in helping me read the landscape and to ethically and safely find my way through it. If I was to extend the tool analogy I might describe these tools as binoculars, microscopes, compasses and survival kits.

As I made my way through this research I came to use these theoretical tools and write about them under the organising principle provided by deconstruction.

Derrida (1992) wrote of deconstruction as “generally practiced in two ways or styles” (p. 21) which are most often grafted one on to the other: “One takes on the demonstrative and apparently ahistorical allure of logico-formal paradoxes. The

other, more historical or more anamnestic, seems to proceed through readings of texts, meticulous interpretations and genealogies” (Derrida, 1992, p. 21). In the first style of deconstruction words are examined for their traces of other readings, other readings that are subjugated and the uncovering of which might offer more just accounts. For example, in the statement “I’m the one who walked out so I’m not entitled to half the property”, I might begin a deconstruction by deferring my conclusions and attending to the subordinate stories implied in this sentence, which might be heard in the context of couple counselling; “I’m the one” suggests there is at least another “one” whose story has not been told, and that “the one” speaking has sole responsibility for the *walking out* and its consequences.

“Walked out”, implies leaving something behind at some leisure and moving to something else. And for many readers, walking out is associated with stories that position the walker as abandoning something, someone or a moral principle in a way that disentitles the walker and entitles the stayer(s). These readings come from the second style of deconstruction, which calls upon the stories that are available to a reader of the texts that people construct in order to make sense of and to communicate their experiences, and which provide lenses for them to interpret what might be happening.

Applying the second style of deconstruction I might consider the gender of the speaker, a mother, and that I do not often hear this statement made by men who leave their partners and their children. I might also consider that “walking out” in this context often implies a blameworthy abandonment of something important. I cannot, and do not intend to, exhaust the deconstructive possibilities here but rather to indicate that, in order to support this second style of deconstruction, I intend to call upon Foucault’s (2000a) analyses of “the different ways in our

culture that human beings develop knowledge about themselves” (p. 224) and how this knowledge of what it is to be human makes people subject to that knowledge about themselves, and provides a means by which people are subjugated using that knowledge (Foucault, 1982).

Similarly, I will call upon Bakhtin’s (1981b, 1986) dialogism to support my deconstruction of the relational-responsive context and as an antidote to some taken-for-granted individualistic understandings. So, for example while deconstructive therapy alerts me to the possibility of the something(s) that has(have) been walked out on, dialogism reminds me to enquire about to whom and what, walking was a response. In this example, the speaker’s use of “walked out” suggests that she feels that she did not continue upholding some values in relation to people and/or things, that are important to her, and/or some people who she is important to, like her children. A deconstructive enquiry using questions suggested by these traces and genealogies might lead to the speaker rewriting her account along the lines of, “I have been driven out of my family by my partner’s violence. My children and I will be better served by me being with them more and by claiming my entitlements in law”. This account gives a more dialogical perspective of the relationships between parents and children.

Both Bakhtin (1981b, 1986) and Derrida (1992) remind me that while this account may have rescued subjugated stories, it is not sufficient to simply reverse this binary and install this mother’s story as the truth. I cannot take the position that I have enough of a story to conclude that I have arrived at a just outcome. I might consider that I have deconstructed this situation sufficiently that the parties involved and affected are represented and those who are seeking my help might be

better positioned to consider how their accounts and conclusions might address the question of justice for them and for others for the moment and with the information available at the time. This deconstructive approach overarches this thesis, and I apply deconstructive theory to the claims that I make in it.

This example also represents the ethical stance I take in this thesis: to employ narrative therapy and the theory that informs and supports it, to be guided by the ethical code of my professional association (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2009) and the regulations of the University of Waikato (2008), in order that my participants and I address justice in a safe and hospitable manner and that I address the question of what is just for me and for those who have supported me in this work.

In chapter 3 I address some of the literature relating to the territories of video technology and couple counselling. In that chapter I also describe how I came to understand that I was ill-equipped to use video records and how I found the theoretical tool of material feminism, which allowed me to treat the video record as an artefact of a particular form of counselling conversation, a form of protected text, and a material-discursive reality which could support collaborative, deconstructive enquiries.

In chapter 4 I outline my research method and my methods of analysis and their interrelationship with narrative therapy, co-research and the theories I described in the preceding two chapters. I cast my couple counselling and co-research as therapeutic, hospitable, deconstructive and dialogical practices which were enhanced by research practices and which also enhanced my research.

The following eight chapters present my findings. For the most part these chapters follow the development of my practice chronologically in order to show how my practice developed in response to practices of co-research using video. Chapter 12 is an exception to this approach. This chapter precedes my conclusions, because although the events it describes took place approximately a third of the way through my counselling and co-research meetings, my analysis of the meetings it describes profoundly affected my post-meetings analysis and conclusions. I have also located this chapter at the end of my findings chapters in order to signal that I did not know or employ all these deconstructive strategies at the time I was meeting with the participants.

Chapter 5 shows how I drew on the ethics of narrative counselling, on the New Zealand Association of Counsellors' code of ethics (2009), on the University of Waikato's regulations (2008) which govern the ethical conduct of those researching human subjects, and Derrida's (1976, 1981, 1992, 1997, 2005; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000) concepts of hospitality and deconstruction as a practice of justice in order to recruit my participants from my counselling practice and to conduct my counselling co-research and research with them safely, hospitably and in ways that we might consider did our situations and our hopes justice.

Chapter 6 shows how, despite my readings on the uses of therapeutic video, I was, like many others before me, drawn into familiar individualistic, truth based and critical perspectives by a view of the video as representing the objective truth about a couples' conversational sharing. In that chapter I document some of the ill effects of my enthusiasm for the truths that I perceived the video record had

disclosed. This enthusiasm for what I took to be the truth of the matter led me into counting the words spoken by the first couple I saw as a way of encouraging them to share their speaking time during conversations in the counselling room. I show how material-feminist theory helped me to think of video records, as these participants described them, as “objective”, “incredibly valuable”, “irrefutable” and also partial texts, which were discursively produced and open to many, often unjust and problematic, readings.

In chapter 7 I show how my co-research with the second couple in my research produced a more collaborative, hospitable and deconstructive approach to their conversation sharing. I describe how, by acting together as co-researchers, the couple helped us to attend to their cultural understandings of their interactions as calls and responses (Durie, 2001). I describe how their familiarity with what Shotter (2000), following Wittgenstein, Bakhtin and Voloshinov, called “relational-responsive” understandings (Shotter, 2000, p. 102) of their interactions and dialogue supported me in adding a dialogical focus to my deconstructive and hospitable research, and supported them in sharing their conversation and in resisting constructing the problem according to familiar discourses which “illuminate” an individual and obscure the operation of power (Guilfoyle, 2014, p. 36).

In chapter 8 I address a feature of the use of therapeutic video; its power to produce realisations and confessions when used as a technology for examining, categorising and punishing those who are its subjects. In particular, I contrast the effects when such confessions are treated hospitably, deconstructed and the

confessor redeemed and when those confessions are treated inhospitably, judged and punished, or when the video is used to “out” the other.

In chapters 9 and 10 I show how, as I became more comfortable with using video as a technology to aid hospitable co-research, and as our narrative therapy and co-research produced preferred developments in the couples’ lives, I used the video record and its gaze to amplify these developments and to connect the couples to audiences to these developments. In the first of these chapters I describe the contributions that two of the couples’ children, family or whānau, and their communities made to the developments in their parents’ relationships and lives and in family life. And I show how we used experiences of video technology to deconstruct these developments and to support positive identity conclusions in order to identify how these developments were produced and to embed this know-how in the couples’ values, identities and social context.

In chapters 10 and 11, I describe how I brought together these threads in order to address the so-called problem of “Tony’s anger management”. In the first of these two chapters I show how the couples and I used the video record to co-research the problem of Tony’s anger and to position Tony and his partner Miranda as both co-researchers and researchers. In the last of these two chapters I show how our use of the video record enhanced the narrative therapy practices of recruiting audiences, “taking it back practices” (White, 1997a, p. 132) and re-membering conversations (White, 2007, p. 129), and provided a means to safely address “Tony’s anger” and promote “teamwork” and “fun” in a family that had been dominated by Tony’s angry actions.

In the final of these findings chapters I address the issue of justice and the law in relation to couples' property and income. While this, the last chapter of my findings, and the events it describes, refer to the last counselling and research meetings I had with Dave and Lolita, it was this work and our difficulties trying to *do* justice to their situation that prompted me to search for and discover Derrida's (1992) writing on the law and deconstruction as justice. This discovery has had profound effects on my work and on the analyses I have conducted of these video records in the six years since the couples participated in this research.

In chapter 13, I return to my research questions, and I attempt to arrive at some conclusions, albeit lightly held, that I consider at this time do some justice to the extraordinary, moving and life-changing experiences that have gone into this PhD. And I try to convey some of my delight in this lengthy process of discovering and taking up the position of a hospitable, deconstructive, and dialogical, narrative therapy co-researcher.

## Chapter 2. Narrative therapy and theory

I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area . . . I don't write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.

(Foucault, 1994, pp. 523–524)

In this chapter I describe the theoretical tools that inform narrative therapy and the tools that have proved most useful to me in my work with the couples who participated in my research. I describe five aspects of narrative therapy theory: stories and meaning making, narratives and the text analogy, narratives and identity, externalising narratives and the practice of co-research. Woven into this description of narrative therapy theory are two principal theories that inform it: the work of Foucault (1963, 1965, 1977, 1978, 1982, 1984b) regarding power and knowledge, and in particular, technologies of domination, and the normalising gaze, which White's (1988b) externalising conversations were a response to; and Derrida's (1981) concept of deconstruction, which White (1991) drew on as he added to his own toolbox.

My co-research with the couples who participated in this study and with the other clients whom I worked with over the course of this PhD also contributed to me extending my knowledge of these theoretical tools, refining my use of them and adding more to my own toolbox. These additional tools include Foucault's work on care of the self (1987, 2000a, 2000b, 2005, 2010), and on practices of confession (1978); and some of Derrida's (1976, 1978, 1982, 1997) deconstructive tools that White did not explicitly pick up, particularly those that relate to deconstruction as a practice of, and means to, justice (Derrida, 1992, 1997). My co-research with one couple also brought forward the utility of Māori

models of “relational subjectivity” (Drewery, 2005, p. 308) and hospitable psychology (Durie, 2001) which, in turn, led me to taking up dialogical theory (Bakhtin, 1981b, 1984, 1986, 1990), and the principle of hospitality, and I describe these tools towards the end of this chapter.

## **Narrative therapy: The professional context of this study**

In the late 1980s White (1988c) in conjunction with Epston (White & Epston, 1989) co-founded what came to be known as narrative therapy. Narrative therapy got its name from the three roles stories played in the development of narrative therapy theory. The first of these roles is the significance of stories in the process of meaning making, the second role relates to use of the structure of a good story as a framework for the therapeutic process of counselling, and the third role relates to the process of storying in the social production of identity (White, 1988).

### *Narrative: Stories and meaning making*

The first strand in White’s (1988c) use of the story metaphor came from the, at the time, ground-breaking work of Gregory Bateson (1972, 1980). White (1988c) was interested in Bateson’s (1980) challenge to the taken-for-granted application of some explanations from the hard sciences to living systems and in particular Bateson’s (1980) “stochastic account of the evolutionary process” (White, 1988c, p. 8). A stochastic sequence is said to occur “if a sequence of events combines a random component with a selective process so that only certain outcomes of the random are allowed to endure” (Bateson, 1980, p. 253). According to Bateson (1980) “all receipt of information is necessarily the receipt of news of *difference*,

and all perception of difference is limited by threshold. Differences that are too slight or too slowly presented are not perceivable” (p. 32). Bateson (1980) famously illustrated the importance of this idea with the “quasi-scientific fable” (p. 109) of a frog in a saucepan which dies because it does not detect the gradual changes in the water temperature from cold to boiling as the pan is slowly heated. Applying this idea that something must be sufficiently different in order that it might be noticed and endure in a story to the story of the mother who “walked out”, which I employed to illustrate aspects of deconstruction in the previous chapter, I might understand that I noticed that this story reproduced taken-for-granted ideas about women leaving their relationships with partners and children. I noticed these were taken-for-granted ideas as I had other different stories to draw upon that might alert me to the possibility that this mother was driven out of her preferred situation while simultaneously positioned to take responsibility for her situation by discourses that position women as primarily responsible for taking care of familial relationships.

When I first heard this story more than 15 years ago, I saw it as my job to get that mother to realise that her story was mistaken and that *in fact*, the story that positioned her as *walking out* was inaccurate and unjust. In deconstructive terms, I wanted to reverse the binary of walked out/driven out. This reversal did not allow that mother to take the position that deconstructive enquiry affords, that she might have been both driven out and have walked away from her children and that none of these positions sufficiently addresses justice for her, her partner and their children. In opening up other readings of accounts, deconstruction challenges taken-for-granted ideas and the possibility that we might perceive and arrive at a singular reading of an event.

Prior to taking up Derrida's concept of deconstruction, White (1988c) took up Bateson's (1980) idea that "there is no objective experience" (p. 33) in order that he might make room for other readings of experience and for the generation of alternative stories. Bateson argued that we know the world through our senses and our interpretation of this information via our stories about what it is that we are perceiving. Based on his reading of Bateson's (1972, 1980) work, White (1988c) concluded that "all new events in the world of the living should be considered a response to information or 'news of difference', to distinctions provided by new descriptions; not as a reaction to forces, impacts and drives" (p. 8). Bateson's work on what came to be known as the "interpretative method" (White & Epston, 1989, p. 13) drew White's attention to the importance of the attribution of meaning to events in determining one's response to those events.

As I foreshadowed with my brief discussion of deconstruction and material feminism in the previous chapter, I place "under erasure" White's reversal of the binary where forces and drives were displaced from their dominant position in accounting for human behaviour, and "news of difference" installed in that position. Later in this chapter, in my fuller discussion of deconstruction I address this approach, and in the following chapter I offer the new concept that deconstruction indicates might be present and that material feminism has to offer: that it might be that new events in the world of the living be considered responses to material forces, impacts and drives *and* to news of difference.

As a therapist White's interest was in deconstructing people's stories in order to make available "alternative stories", or as he came to call them "subordinate storylines" (White, 2005, p. 10). White advocated listening for "traces of

subordinate storylines...so that they can become known, so that they can emerge from the shadows of dominant stories, so that they can become more visible” (Winslade & Hedtke, 2008, p. 74). White believed that these stories might “contain [clients’] hopes and dreams, the things they cherish and hold dear, and the expressions of what they value” (Winslade & Hedtke, 2008, p. 74) and ultimately be more helpful to them. White came to favour the term “subordinate” in order to convey that these stories were “not subordinate by chance” (Winslade & Hedtke, 2008, p. 74) but rather subordinated by dominant knowledges and by the operation of power.

White (1988c) developed what he called “relative influence questioning” (p. 8) as “specific micro practices” to “establish the conditions for new distinctions to be drawn” (p. 9), distinctions that might provide alternative and more helpful interpretations and actions. White (1988c) took up the term “unique outcome” (p. 8) from Goffman (1961, p. 119) for distinctions drawn around small or seemingly insignificant events that “contradict aspects of the problem saturated description” of people’s lives (White, 1988c, p. 8). White (1988c) considered that these contradictory events, which had not been assigned meaning, were potential sites for the development of alternative storylines. These alternative storylines could potentially contradict the meaning and effects of problematic storylines.

Hence a therapist’s task was to “assist people to render significant some of these neglected aspects of lived experience” (White, 2007, p. 219). A therapist would then assist people to place these significant aspects within the context of some pattern of events in order to derive an “unique account” (White, 1988c, p. 9) and by ascribing significance and meaning to this unique account, people might derive

“unique redescriptions” of “self, others, and relationships” (White, 1988c, p. 9) which would in turn “provoke new responses” (p. 9). White developed approaches that called upon this literary metaphor to support the development and performance of these alternative stories, which were founded on exceptions to the problem and its influence. These included “re-authoring conversations”, which “help people to include some of the more neglected but potentially significant events and experiences that are ‘out of phase’ with their dominant storylines” (White, 2007, p. 61); “scaffolding conversations” (White, 2007, p. 289), which assist people to “incrementally and progressively distance [themselves] from the known and familiar and [move] more toward what might be possible for them to know and to do” (White, 2007, p. 263); “re-membering conversations” (White, 1997a, p. 22, 2007, p. 129) and therapeutic “definitional ceremonies” and documents (White, 2007, p. 165; White & Epston, 1989), which assisted people to reengage with relationships which supported the storying and performance of their preferred identities and ways of being; and perhaps most famously, “externalising conversations” (White, 1988b, p. 3, 2007, p. 9).

Prior to calling on the narrative metaphor White (1984, 1985) had been concerned at the effects of diagnosing problems in ways that internalised them and in doing so obscured the conditions that might be producing those problems, deemphasised persons’ hard-won knowledge of the problem and isolated the person with the problem from the support of those who cared for them. He first coined the term “sneaky poo” (White, 1984, p. 153) to support a family to have more influence over and knowledge about what had been named as their child’s encopresis, and to resist prevailing sexist psychodynamic explanations which diagnosed the child’s mother’s “inadequacy and negative intent” as “the root cause” (White,

1984, pp. 150–151) of her son’s problem. White (1985) was also concerned that children’s problems, such as nightmares, may be the effects of abuse or other circumstances, and that in such circumstances naming the problem as the child’s sneaky poo or their fears without addressing the conditions that produce these responses would be unjust. In order to address these kinds of potential injustices, White (1988b) developed an externalising approach to problems which involved both countering internalising diagnoses by separating persons from problems, and also an analysis of how the problem came to be named and the effects of this naming. For this analysis White and his colleague Epston, (White, 1987, 1988b, 1988c; White & Epston, 1989) turned to the work of Foucault (1963, 1965, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1984b).

Since 1980 White (1987) had been developing an approach to schizophrenia which took into account the history, cultural origins and consequences of this classification, and in particular the way that this classification constituted a diagnosed person’s identity and shaped the course of their life. In this approach White (1987) drew on Foucault’s (1963) analysis of how the cultural practice of the scientific classification of persons objectified people and rendered them docile, and on Gergen and Gergen’s (1984) investigation of the effects of narrative in producing accounts of others and self and in producing meaning and direction in one’s life.

### *Narrative therapy and the “text analogy”*

White’s (1988c) “second description” (p. 10) of narrative therapy drew on “the tradition of interpretive explanation in the social sciences” (p. 10). In particular White (1988c) took up Geertz’s (1983) call to social scientists to stop mimicking physicists in an attempt to “harden” (p. 21) their science, but rather to get on with

the interpretive work of discovering “order in collective life” using analogies drawn from cultural performance, “theatre, painting, grammar, literature, law, play” (p. 22). White’s (1988c) interest was in Geertz’s (1983) reference to literary and text analogies and in Jerome Bruner’s (1986) “discussion of the narrative mode of thought” (White, 1988c, p. 10) as a foundation for narrative therapy, “a therapy of literary merit” (White, 1988c, p. 8; White & Epston, 1989, p. 14).

Bruner (1986) proposed:

the story must construct two landscapes simultaneously. One is the landscape of action, where the constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal situation, instrument, something corresponding to a “story grammar”. The other landscape is the landscape of consciousness: what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think or feel. (p. 14)

According to this “story grammar”, when people seek help regarding problems they tell stories about these problems using the language and stories they have available to make sense of and to describe what is happening. These stories unfold in the landscapes of action and consciousness. A counsellor or therapist likewise uses the language and stories he or she has available to make sense of and respond to his or her clients’ stories.

When applied to narrative therapy, the concepts of landscape of action and landscape of consciousness provide a frame to assist the therapist in this “literary” process (White, 1988). A therapist can locate clients’ utterances on these landscapes. From this location a therapist can assist the clients to make connections between these utterances and other actions, intentions, thoughts, feelings and knowledge in order to produce a story with a start, development and end. White (2007) suggested this process constructs “moving” (p. 99) stories

about the people's lives, both in the emotional sense of catharsis and in that by gaining a greater appreciation of the way events have unfolded in the significant storylines of their lives, and the meaning of this, they are "moved" to new understandings and actions, many of which will contradict the existing dominant storylines and limiting conclusions which have as their focus conceptions of personal deficit.

Bateson's (1972, 1980) rejection of the possibility of objective knowledge served as a reminder to White (2001, 2007) that the stories that people told did "not simply neutrally represent pure reality" (Winslade, 2003, p. 7) and that language and stories had a crucial role in the understanding and naming of experience and in helping us to decide what is happening and how to go on in our lives:

Problems and their solutions do not spring from the soil of simple observation.... we come to the field of observation bearing a lifetime of cultural experience. Most important, we not only bear languages that furnish the rationale for our looking, but also the vocabularies of description and explanation of what is observed. Thus we confront life situations with codes in hand, forestructures of understanding which themselves suggest how we are to sort the problematic from the precious. (McNamee & Gergen, 1992, p. 1)

On the basis that knowledge was an artefact of culture, White (2001, 2007) challenged the notion that people's accounts of their problems were evidence of their unique internal dysfunction. He concluded that the stories people call upon to make sense of their lives are not "made-up 'out of the blue'" (White, 1991, p. 28) but are produced from the stock of stories and by the communities of tellers of stories they have available to make sense of their predicaments and their identity. These social stories, or discourses are the

“set[s] of ideas embodied as structuring statements that underlie and give meaning to social practices, personal experience, and organizations or institutions. Discourses often include taken-for-granted assumptions that allow us to know how to ‘go on’ in social situations of all kinds. They are linguistic in nature (provided that language is taken to include nonverbal as well as verbal practices)”. (Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997, p. 302)

White (2007) came to replace Bruner’s (1986) “landscape of consciousness” (p. 14) with the term “landscape of identity” (White, 2007, p. 82) after concluding that the meanings of consciousness associated with conceptions of the unconscious or decision making obscured the operation of discourses in the production of knowledge, power and identity, and in order to emphasise “the irreducible fact that any renegotiation of the stories of people’s lives is also a renegotiation of identity” (White, 2007, p. 82). I prefer to retain both terms in order to better facilitate small deconstructive steps which explore the intra-action between what people commonly understand as their consciousness and the dialogical production of identity.

### *Stories and identity*

In taking up this third strand of the story metaphor, identity, White (1988b, 1988c, 2007; White & Epston, 1989) drew on the work of Myerhoff (1982; 1986). White (1988b) was interested in Myerhoff’s (1986) study of “definitional ceremonies” (p. 267) and “the conception that identity is founded upon an ‘association of life’ rather than on a core self” (White, 2007, p. 129). This association of life was composed of the people influential in the construction of the person’s identity through the telling and witnessing of their performances of stories concerning their identity (Myerhoff, 1982, 1986). From this perspective, White (2007) concluded that identity is understood to be largely “a public and

social achievement, not a private and individual achievement” (p. 182), which is “shaped by historical and cultural forces rather than by the forces of human nature” (p. 182) and “the outcome of deriving a sense of authenticity through social processes that acknowledge one’s preferred claims about one’s identity and history” (p. 182).

For the moment I wish to signal that drawing on a deconstructive approach and on Foucault’s (Foucault, 1987, 2000a, 2010) later work concerning technologies of the self, I will argue for the utility of deconstructing, without destroying, both individual, private, and physiological selves, and dialogical, public, social selves and what material feminists like Barad (2007), might call their “intra-action” (location 2582). In this approach I want also to align myself with Foucault’s questioning of his own emphasis on the technologies of domination and with his shift to addressing “the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self” (2000a, p. 225).

Given his emphasis on the social production of identity, White (1997a, 2007) sought to reproduce Meyerhoff’s (1982; 1986) understandings of social processes for therapeutic purposes by recruiting an audience and supporters to developments in people’s lives to counter “invisibility and marginality”, and provide opportunities to be “seen in one’s own terms and, garnering witnesses to one’s worth, vitality and being” (Myerhoff, 1986, p. 267). White (2007) proposed that these social process supported the survival of people’s personal narratives, which were often in conflict with the dominant socially constructed norms and power relations in their situations.

However, this proposal again raised the question of how one might distinguish a personal narrative or one's internal conscience from external dominant norms (see Butler, 1997), and who should decide which stories are the "not the problem" stories. For his analysis of the operation of normative power and knowledge, White (1988b, 1988c, 2007; White & Epston, 1989) continued to draw on the work of Foucault (1965; 1980b; 1989).

## **Foucault**

White (1987) had been working with people who had been hospitalised and diagnosed with schizophrenia and Foucault's (1963, 1965, 1977) analysis of the operation of power and knowledge in psychiatric and penal institutions was readily applicable to this work. Foucault (2000a) had produced "a history of the different ways in our culture that human beings develop knowledge about themselves" (p. 224) which included an investigation of the sciences of economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine and penology" (p. 224), not to accept this knowledge at face value, but to "analyse these so-called sciences as truth games related to specific techniques that human being use to understand themselves" (p. 224). Foucault (1982) was interested in how knowledge of what it is to be human makes people subject to that knowledge about themselves, and provides a means by which people are subjugated using that knowledge.

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings

suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault, 1982, p. 781)

Foucault proposed “three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects” (Foucault, 1982, p. 777). The first of these modes was “the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences” (Foucault, 1982, p. 777). The second mode objectified the subject through “dividing practices” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778), which often employed scientific categorisations to separate the mad from sane, and the sick from the healthy in order to govern them. Scientific classifications enabled the construction of knowledge in ways that meant people could be recognized as objects and subjects of scientific knowledge and classified according to specific normalising procedures. In this process, the knowledge that produces the classification justifies the actions taken against those groups, such as confinement, isolation and control. Foucault’s third mode of enquiry investigated “the way a human being turns himself (sic) into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778) through conscience and self-knowledge.

Central to these modes of objectification was the operation of discourse. In knowing about madness or other such categorisations, the rational subject could “constitute himself in his own eyes as an object of science, he grasped himself within his language and gave himself, in himself and by himself, a discursive existence” (Foucault, 1963, p. 243). In Foucault’s (1963, 1982) work, “discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern” (Weedon, 1997, p. 105). In order to understand how people were produced as subjects Foucault (2010) sought to “identify the discursive practices which were able to constitute the matrices of possible

knowledge, and study the rules, the game of true and false, and, more generally, the forms of veridiction in these discursive practices” (p. 4)

Foucault (2000a) suggested four major types of specific and constantly interacting “technologies” of “practical reason” (pp. 224–225):

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. (Foucault, 2000a, p. 225)

The first two of these technologies were used in the study of sciences and linguistics, while the latter two “technologies of domination and self” (Foucault, 2000a, p. 225) were of most interest to Foucault (2000a) and he called “the encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self...governmentality.” (p. 225).

### *Technologies of domination*

Initially, Foucault (1963, 1965) was most interested in technologies of domination, and the efficient use of power by institutions in order to discipline and render their subjects docile.

Discipline... is a type of power...a technology...that may be taken over either by specialised institutions (the penitentiaries or houses of correction of the 19th century), or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals). (Foucault, 1984a, p. 206)

These forms of discipline were characterised by “procedures of partitioning and verticality” and “compact hierarchical networks” (Foucault, 1984a, p. 209) in order to neutralise the counter power that might arise if those persons under surveillance established “horizontal conjunctions” (Foucault, 1984a, p. 209) in opposition to the hierarchical imposition of power. Also to avoid counter power these disciplinary practices brought into play “anonymous instruments of power” such as “hierarchical surveillance, continuous registration, perpetual assessment and classification” to “insidiously” objectify those on whom it is applied in order to form a body of knowledge about these individuals, without exciting the kinds of resistance that an ostentatious deployment of sovereignty might produce (Foucault, 1984a, p. 209).

### *Normalising gaze*

The success of disciplinary power derived from its use of these simple insidious instruments: hierarchal observation, normalizing judgment, and “the examination” (Foucault, 1984, p. 188). Through these instruments subjects could be coerced “by means of observation” (Foucault, 1984, p. 188) while at the same time that this operation of power made the subjects of observation more visible, the operation of this power was made less visible.

The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both a source of light illuminating everything and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre toward which all gazes would be turned. (Foucault, 1984, pp. 191–192)

An effect of this gaze was that individuals were recruited into supervising themselves as if they were under constant surveillance which required their

conformity to what was considered scientific knowledge. This normalising gaze operated not only on those being supervised but also on those doing the supervising.

Hierarchized, continuous, and functional surveillance... distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field. This enables the disciplinary power to be both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely “discreet” for it functions permanently and largely in silence. (Foucault, 1984, p. 192)

This form of disciplinary power was very efficient as it individualizes and produces “uninterrupted” “calculated gazes” (Foucault, 1984, p. 193) which position individuals as their own, and each other’s supervisors according to specified norms.

The art of punishing, and the regime of disciplinary power... brings five different distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation, and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected, or as an optimum toward which one must move. It measures in qualitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the “nature” of individuals. It introduces, through this “value-giving” measure, the constraint of conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal... In short, it *normalizes*. (Foucault, 1984, p. 195)

The assessment of individuals according to specified norms through examinations combined these “mechanisms of normalizing judgment” (Foucault, 1984, p. 196) with the techniques of an observing hierarchy in order to classify, judge and to

punish (Foucault, 1984, p. 197). Through the examination individuals were made “cases” who could be documented and operated upon: “A case which at one and the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power” (Foucault, 1984, p. 203).

### *Care of the self*

In the later part of his career and life, Foucault (2000a) wondered if he had “insisted too much on the technology of domination and power” (p. 225) and his interest shifted to “the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self” (p. 225) in which “one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (Foucault, 1987, p. 2).

Foucault (1987) began his investigation of practices of self-formation by comparing Greco-Roman and Christian practices of the care of the self. He found that for the ancient Greeks and Romans, care of the self required self-knowledge, both in the sense of knowing oneself but also in the practice of ethics by equipping oneself with the “truths” (p. 5), both about oneself and the world, and from these truths deriving “regulations” (p. 5) that one can follow to lead an ethical life. For the Greco-Romans this care of self was concerned with liberty. In the Greek tradition the goal of care of self is “self-possession, self-sovereignty, self-mastery” (Besley, 2005, p. 373). The Greek writing concerning this practice of care of the self had as its focus a male elite, who had a responsibility to govern their city, their wives and their households well. In this tradition the “care of myself must therefore be such that it also provides me with the art (the *tekhne*, the know-how) which will enable me to govern others well” (Foucault, 2005, p. 51),

to do them and myself justice. Consequently, the act of taking care of oneself, which involved “looking toward the divine [which is reflected in the self] in which the source of wisdom is found” (Foucault, 2005, p. 72) was to be concerned with justice. Foucault traced a movement in which taking care of oneself shifted from being the responsibility of the elite in order to govern others to a responsibility of those “being governed” (Foucault, 2005, p. 44). Like a form of normalising gaze, taking care of oneself became “a general and unconditional principle, a requirement addressed to everyone, all the time, and without any condition of status” (Foucault, 2005, p. 83).

### ***The problem of self recognition***

Foucault observed that in relation to Platonic thought:

The problem for the subject or for the individual soul is to turn its gaze on itself in order to recognise itself in what it is and recognising itself in what it is, to recall the truths to which it is related and on which it could have reflected. (1987, p. 5)

In order to accomplish this recognition and knowledge the soul might look at itself in “a similar element, a mirror” (2000a, p. 231). Foucault documented some technologies for the disclosure of self, such as writing letters to friends, dialogue, and consulting one’s memory in order to facilitate the examination of self and conscience in terms of intentions achieved or not achieved (Foucault, 2000a). In these respects, video seems to offer a record that viewers, both counsellors and clients, might use in order to recognise and to evaluate the relationships between their conscience and intentions and a view of their interactions not previously seen.

A problem with this process of consulting oneself, authorities or friends regarding what is true and right is the similarity of these reflections risks reproducing those knowledges that have been authorised by dominant culture. To draw on an anthropological perspective, if no “outsider” critique is available then there are greater risks of perpetuating colonization (Martinez, 1996, p. 89). For example, I might consult myself as to whether my actions are aggressive, and compare my actions to the norm of male aggression in my culture and then conclude that my partner’s experience of my actions as aggressive is incorrect and constitutes oversensitivity on her part. I might then feel justified in requiring her to modify her experience based on my understanding of the truth of the matter, and in so doing oppose the kinds of “horizontal conjunctions” (Foucault, 1984, p. 209) that might support a collaborative and equal relationship. Martinez (1996) offers a counter practice to this form of mono-cultural self consultation and self-reflection in his proposal that a “decolonised reflexivity requires risky border crossings of cultural ideological and subjective positions” (p. 89), “dialogue”, “multivocality” (p. 88), and an awareness of the discourses at play in producing the selves involved in an encounter.

### ***Hierarchical aspects of the practice of care of self***

In this conception of care of the self an individual puts his or her understanding of the truth at the centre and pinnacle of knowledge. Foucault’s (1987, 2000a) investigations of the Senecan and monastic traditions of care of the self show that the philosophers of the time were aware that such a process of self consultation carried “a grave danger of going wrong” (Foucault, 2005, p. 51). They considered this danger to be mitigated by the presumption that by consulting oneself correctly one had access to the divine in oneself and hence the truth, and by the practice of

consulting and listening to “a master...a guide, a counsellor, a friend – someone who will tell you the truth” (Foucault, 1987, p. 7), a person who “cares about the subject’s care for himself” (Foucault, 2005, p. 59).

As I show in chapter 6, this powerful and familiar positioning that a “counsellor” might take up in order to tell his or her clients the truth about themselves or what they were doing was one I found difficult to resist. With the theoretical tools provided by deconstruction and material feminism, and with an ethic of hospitality, I found I could better position myself as more of a host who did not know much about his guests and who could care for them better and help them address questions of justice.

Feminism also offers an outsider critique to what are often taken-for-granted discursive practices and hierarchical positioning, such as produced between master and disciple, and between men, women, and children. In relation to counselling, Hare-Mustin (1994) suggested, that in order to disrupt the reproduction of such familiar practices a counsellor must introduce other discourses to the “mirrored room” (p. 19) of therapy.

When a group of people talk and relate among themselves in familiar ways, much of their talk reflects and reinstates dominant discourses. Moreover, because dominant discourses are so familiar, they are taken-for-granted and even recede from view. It is hard to question them. They are part of the identity of most members of any society, and they influence attitudes and behaviours. (Hare-Mustin, 1994, pp. 19–20)

These Foucauldian (1984), anthropological and feminist critiques point to a danger that our familiarity with video records as depicting *the* truth might function to position its subjects to read, reflect, reproduce and reinstate taken-for-granted

discursive practices, while at the same time not notice this positioning. I address the truth status of video records later in this chapter using deconstruction and in the next chapter by calling upon material feminism, and the work of Barad (2007) in particular.

Before leaving my discussion of Foucault's (1978, 2000a) work I wish to briefly discuss two more of his theoretical tools that I have found useful in addressing the use of video therapy: the positioning of therapy as an examination which requires the subject to discipline him or herself and to confess to what is wrong with him or her, according to the dominant norms of the time and place, and the expectations of the examiner.

### *Therapy as examination*

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgment. It is a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them (Foucault, 1984, p. 197).

In a project where the participants in my research, including myself are made subjects who are permanently and repeatedly visible, Foucault's (1984) words seem to have particular relevance. Foucault's (1984) proposal that visibility "maintains the disciplined individual in his (sic) subjugation" (p. 199) served as a warning to me to be wary of employing visual metaphors which reproduce the familiar assumption that what is being seen or recorded is identical, that is reflects or mirrors, what is happening. "The physical phenomenon of reflection is a common metaphor for thinking – a little reflection shows this to be the case" (Barad, 2007 location 709 of 10050). In the following chapter I will employ

material feminist theory in order that I might address the effects of the inseparable intra-action between video and discourse.

Foucault also drew attention to the effects of Christian traditions of confession in positioning persons under perpetual self-surveillance and to discipline themselves and to make those failures and their acknowledgement of them visible in order that others might judge them and support them in their disciplining of themselves according to prescribed norms.

Each person has the duty to know who he is, that is, to try to know what is happening inside him, to acknowledge faults, to recognise temptations, to locate desires; and everyone is obliged to disclose these things either to God or to others in the community and, hence, to bear public or private witness against oneself. (Foucault, 2000a, p. 242)

It is significant that in this process that the individual takes a position against themselves and is reliant on those hearing his or her confession to limit the “self-destruction” (Foucault, 2000a, p. 245) produced by the sinner revealing his or her “true sinful being” (Foucault, 2000a, p. 244).

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but that authority requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (Foucault, 1978, pp. 61–62)

Foucault (1978) suggested that the confession had become “one of the West’s most highly valued techniques for producing truth” and had “spread its effects far and wide” (p. 59) and had come to include confessing to oneself, one’s doctor and other professionals.

My purpose for understanding counselling and this research as an examination is to remind me of the discursive practices that might be operating when a client confesses to wrongdoing. It reminds me to address two aspects of such confessions: firstly, that confessions will reflect the context and discursive practices available to the participants in video examination, and therefore that such self-disclosure, no matter how honest, will be a particular reading of their situation, and not the last word on it. Secondly, the confessor will have an expectation that his or her counsellor will offer some form of judgement, exoneration, redemption, unburdening, liberation or salvation, and if a counsellor does not address these expectations, this omission may do harm to the person confessing, and harm their relationship with the person who hears their confession.

Much of my work with the couples who participated in this research and of this thesis has been to position this “perfect eye” of the video in ways that diffracts its gaze so that it works both as a technology that supports the care of the self and other, and as a technology which makes visible the operation of disciplinary and normalising gazes, in order that they might be deconstructed for the purpose of addressing the question of justice for their situations and their hopes. In this approach, judgement, including of confessions, is founded on hospitable, deconstructive and dialogical co-research.

## **Externalising practices**

The narrative therapy practice of externalising problems was conceived as a counter tactic to the “cultural practices of objectification of people” (White, 2007, p. 26) produced when problems are considered to reflect a deficit or dysfunction within the person subject to them. “In the process of externalizing problems, cultural practices of objectification are utilised against cultural practices of objectification. The problem itself is externalized so that the person is not the problem. Instead the problem is the problem” (White, 1987, p. 52). Externalising conversations encourage people “to objectify, and at times to personify, the problems that they experience as oppressive” (White, 1988b, p. 3). In this process the problem becomes a separate entity from the person or relationship who was considered to embody the problem (White, 1988b).

Drawing on Foucault’s (1963, 1980) analysis, White (2007) argued for this separation of the problem from the person on the grounds that “if the person is the problem there is very little that can be done outside of taking action that is self destructive” (p. 26). White (2007) was concerned that if people understand their experience of problems in their lives are a reflection of the truth about their nature and character then they are likely to discipline body and soul to achieve a solution and in so doing overlook the conditions producing the problems, for example, the abuse that might be contributing to nightmares (White, 1985) or soiling (White, 1984).

Externalizing the problem allowed people to “unravel some of the negative conclusions they have usually reached about their identity under the influence of the problem” and in so doing “to reveal the history of the ‘politics’ of the

problems that bring people to therapy” (White, 2007, p. 26). Foucault’s (2000a) “history of the different ways in our culture that human beings develop knowledge about themselves” (p. 224) provided White (2007) with a means to understand how power relations operating through common discourses that people had been subject to had shaped their negative conclusions about their life and their identity. This unravelling deprived these conclusions of a truth status and called them into question. As an outcome, people found that their lives were no longer tied to these negative conclusions and they were in a position to choose to go along with, or not chose to go along with, the definition and tactics of a problem.

### *Positioning*

Although White (1991, 2007) did not explicitly draw on the positioning theory developed by Davies and Harré (1990, 1999), Drewery and Winslade (1997) explicitly introduced positioning theory into narrative therapy. Position is inherent in the notions of maps and territories (White, 2007), externalising (White, 1988b) and in deconstruction – “Positions” is the title of Derrida’s (1981) book that White (1991) initially drew on for his understanding of deconstruction. In externalising conversations persons are invited to take positions, and to engage in a process of mapping, evaluating and justifying those positions (White, 2002). They may be called to take a position and be positioned in relation to their self and others and according to the operation of power and knowledge in their life. Positioning theory provides a tool for understanding how persons can “receive”, “give”, “resist”, “change” or misunderstand “position calls” (Drewery, 2005, p. 316).

Positioning theory facilitates an exploration of people’s moves to make their actions determinate while recognizing people can exercise some personal choice,

or agency, in relation to the positions being co-produced in their conversations (Davies & Harré, 1999). This interaction between being positioned and positioning oneself and others suggests that:

Persons cannot be agentive on their own, but only in relationship with others. Thus to be positioned agentively is to be an actor in a web of relationship with others who are also engaged in coproducing the conditions of their lives. Such agency does not therefore afford us the freedom to do what we like. (Drewery, 2005, p. 315)

According to positioning theory, conversational interactions are understood in terms of three basic features; the moral positions of the participants and the rights, obligations and duties they have to say certain things; the history and sequence of what is being said; and the power of what is said to influence what happens next (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a). Harré and van Langenhove (1999b) proposed a classification of “first order” and “second order” (p. 20) positioning, which I have not taken up as any analysis that seeks to establish the first act of positioning faces the difficulty that any utterance carries some history of previous conversations, and may be the last act of positioning from the previous conversational episode rather than the first order of positioning (Bakhtin, 1986). My own use of positioning draws on more dialogic interpretations that emphasise the co-production of positioning and to avoid familiar and potentially problematic notions of monological and linear causality. This dialogic interpretation of positioning theory has useful overlaps with both deconstruction and dialogism that make it suited to the relational work of couple counselling.

Based on these understandings of truth, scientific knowledge and power relations and their real effects, narrative therapists argue that counselling must be an ethical activity in which counsellors are obliged to deconstruct the operation of power

and knowledge and orient themselves to uphold notions of justice and fairness and be accountable and transparent in their work (Bird, 2000; K. Crocket, 2001; White, 1994; Winslade, Crocket, & Monk, 1997).

## **Narrative therapy and Deconstruction**

To this end White (1991) supplemented the tools that Foucault (1977, 1978, 1980, 1988) had provided with his own version of Derrida's (1981) "deconstructive method" (White, 1991, p. 27). White (1991) came to deconstruction through his reading of Bourdieu (1988) and he used a form of deconstruction as a tool to expose the workings of knowledge and power in the discursive practices of self and of relationship that shaped people's lives in order that they might be in a "position" (White, 1991, p. 27) to choose to live by other "modes of life and thought" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xi).

### *Deconstruction*

White (1991) acknowledged that he was using "the term deconstruction in a way that may not be in accord with its strict Derridean sense" (p. 27). White (1991) proposed that the objectification of the problems for which persons seek therapy constituted a "deconstruction of the stories that persons live by" (p. 29). He suggested this externalisation provided a "counter language" (White, 1991, p. 29) to taken-for-granted "internalising conversations" (p. 29) and aided the deconstruction of practices of knowledge and power.

To support the production of this counter-language White (2000) drew on Derrida's "deconstructive method of reading texts" (White, 2000, p. 37) in order to bring forward what was "absent but implicit" (White, 2000, p. 37) in the

histories that people were recounting, and which might constitute a “unique outcome” (White, 1991, p. 29), an exception to the dominant and problematic story and a “gateway” (p. 30) to alternative and preferred stories.

Central to this reading of the absent but implicit were Derrida’s (1976) ideas regarding the metaphysical and rhetorical search for the “origin of sense” (p. 65). In this search the absolute origin cannot be found, rather what we find is traces of it, although this trace is also never the “originary trace” (Derrida, 1976, p. 61). Spivak (1976) illustrated this never ending process with empirical examples such as “answering a child’s question or consulting the dictionary” where one answer leads to another question or one word relies on another for its meaning “and so on indefinitely” (p. xvii). Derrida (1976) expressed this difference and continual deferring of meaning with the term “différance” (p. 65), in which the misspelt “a” is also unheard and only visible when written, in order to indicate “the unheard difference between the appearing and the appearance, (between the ‘world’ and ‘lived experience’)” (p. 65), and between experience and language. In this way the term *différance* represents an aspect of deconstruction, we cannot know with certainty of what we speak, and at that same time we must proceed as if this disorder and impossibility did not exist (Derrida, 1982). To address this tension Derrida (1976) proposed that we must put our knowledge “under erasure [*sous rature*]” (p. 60). The gesture of *sous rature* [under erasure] “implies ‘both this and that’ as well as ‘neither this nor that’ undoing the opposition and the hierarchy between the legible and the erased” (Spivak, 1976, p. 320) and allowing the speaking of and questioning of what is known and the production of new concepts. As Spivak (1976) says when speaking of Derrida’s deconstruction of texts, “Derrida, then, is asking us to change certain habits of mind: the authority of

the text is provisional, the origin is a trace; contradicting logic, we must learn to use and erase our language at the same time” (p. xviii).

Derrida’s (1981) “general strategy of deconstruction” also involved a “phase of overturning” (p. 41) binaries. Derrida (1981) considered a binary to be a “violent hierarchy” as one of the “two terms governs the other...or has the upper hand” (p. 41). In this respect, deconstruction has similarities with Foucault’s analysis of power relations through “the antagonism of strategies” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778).

To find out what our society means by sanity, perhaps we should investigate what is happening in the field of insanity. And what we mean by legality in the field of illegality. And, in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations. (Foucault, 1982, p. 778)

Derrida suggested that this repeated process of doubling deconstructive inversions of binaries dislodges the binary and produces the “irruptive emergence of a ‘new concept’, a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime” (Derrida, 1981, p. 42). In this sense White’s (1987) externalising conversations about schizophrenia that included the means by which so called schizophrenics were produced might be understood as a new concept not part of the regime of classifying individuals according to the so-called scientific truth of their nature.

As I noted in my introduction, Derrida (1992) wrote of deconstruction as “generally practiced in two ways or styles” (p. 21) which are most often grafted one on to the other: “One takes on the demonstrative and apparently ahistorical allure of logico-formal paradoxes. The other, more historical or more an

anamnesic, seems to proceed through readings of texts, meticulous interpretations and genealogies” (Derrida, 1992, p. 21).

“The task [of deconstruction]... is to dismantle the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work in [the text], not in order to reject or discard them, but to reconstitute them in another way” (Derrida & Moore, 1974, p. 13), to put these original and reconstituted accounts under erasure, and to defer conclusions about them, in order to co-produce what might be considered a just account at that moment by the parties involved.

### *Deconstruction and justice*

For Derrida (1992), “deconstruction is justice” (p. 15).

Deconstruction, while seeming not to “address” the problem of justice, has done nothing but address it, if only *obliquely*, unable to do so directly. *Obliquely*, as at this very moment, in which I'm preparing to demonstrate that one cannot speak *directly* about justice, thematize or objectivize justice, say “this is just” and even less “I am just,” without immediately betraying justice, if not law (*droit*). (Derrida, 1992, p. 10)

From a deconstructive perspective, there is always a gap between experience and language so that just decisions are both arrived at and differed, acted upon and under erasure. So while “a just decision is always required immediately...it cannot furnish itself with infinite information and unlimited knowledge” (Derrida, 1992, p. 26) and so a just decision always involves “différance” (Derrida, 1992, p. 8). And as deconstruction seeks “constantly to maintain an interrogation of the origin, grounds and limits of our conceptual, theoretical or normative apparatus surrounding justice” (Derrida, 1992, p. 20) each decision regarding justice “requires an absolutely unique interpretation, which no existing, coded rule can or

ought to guarantee” (Derrida, 1992, p. 23). When a decision is made regarding what is just, this decision may reflect taken-for-granted understandings, familiar frames of intelligibility and coherent stories, which could be overturned by other perspectives or new information. As I showed in my introduction, my initial temptation was to invert the binary that had that mother describing herself as having walked out of her marriage and family and to instate what I took to be the story that did her and other women justice; that she was driven out by her partner’s violence. Derrida (1992) reminds me to continue past this binary and past my familiar, albeit well intentioned, interpretations and to, with her, deconstruct her unique situation and address what she might consider does her, her children and her partner justice.

A deconstructive approach offers possibilities for justice that might otherwise be obscured by the simple, familiar and narratively appealing practice of overturning binaries. Using the tool of deconstruction as Derrida (1976, 1978, 1981, 1992, 1997) described it makes it possible to interrogate, and reinscribe a fundamental binary inherent to narrative therapy: “It is not the person who is, or the relationship that is, the problem. Rather it is the problem that is the problem” (White, 1988b, p. 4), and even the binary of internal and external. A deconstructive approach suggests we might consider that there may be times when it is helpful and better addresses justice to think that the other person is the problem or that the relationship is the problem. For example, someone wanting to leave a violent relationship may find this easier if they consider that the other person is the problem, or that their relationship is the problem and must be separated from. At the same time, if that person wants to form another relationship it may be more useful for them to think of the specific practices, both those they

and their former partner employed, that made their previous relationship problematic, in order that they might shape different outcomes or recognise warning signs. To better understand this relational deconstructive territory I took up the tool of dialogism. And to address the binary of internal and external I turned to material feminism.

## **Dialogism**

The founder of dialogism, Bakhtin (1981b, 1984, 1986, 1990) proposed that language is contextual, relational and multi-vocal and that meaning is co-produced. This dialogical nature of interaction means there is no original cause or final conclusion that can be split off from its context: “There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends to the boundless past and the boundless future)” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 170). While this proposal has similarities with Derrida’s (1976, 1992) deconstructive notions of trace and justice, Bakhtin’s (1984) insistence on multivocality and dialogue, that “a single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing, that “two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence” (p. 252), provides an emphasis that is well suited to couples work.

Bakhtin (1986) suggested that when we select the words we utter we take their meaning not just from the dictionary but usually from “*other utterances*, and mainly from utterances that are kindred to ours in genre, that is, in theme, composition, or style” (p. 87), and most importantly for my purposes, that our speech is shaped by our experience of and anticipation of the other’s understanding of it and their response to it:

When speaking I always take into account the apperceptive background of the addressee's perception of my speech: the extent to which he is familiar with the situation, whether he has special knowledge of the given cultural area of communication, his views and convictions, his prejudices (from my viewpoint), his sympathies and antipathies—because all this will determine his active responsive understanding of my utterance. (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 95–96).

A dialogic understanding offers an alternative to the kinds of linear causality often produced by couples and in couple counselling, where one person is, or one person's actions are, positioned as the cause of a couple's difficulties or the solution to those difficulties. A dialogical understanding offers couples and counsellors some tools for investigating how the couple might have produced their difficulties and how they might have a voice in their preferred and ongoing solutions. As in positioning theory, dialogism emphasises the options that a listener has in responding to utterances and in shaping the next utterance; when a listener perceives and understands meaning from an utterance he or she not only “agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68) he or she also shapes the speaker's emphasis on certain elements such as what is repeated, expressed mildly or harshly, contentiously or in a conciliatory tone (Bakhtin, 1986). Hence a response, and any utterance is itself a response and not the first word, “creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response” (Bakhtin, 1981b, p. 282), which is to say in dialogue.

Bakhtin (1986) argued strongly for a distinction between dialogue and explanation. He proposed that dialogue involves two consciousnesses and the possibility of some things outside what is known and familiar to one party:

With *explanation* there is only one consciousness, one subject; with *comprehension* there are two consciousnesses and two subjects. There can be no dialogic relationship with an object, and therefore explanation has no dialogic aspects (except formal, rhetorical ones). Understanding is always dialogic to some degree. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 111)

While I find Bakhtin's (1986, 1986) work a helpful reminder to be cautious about thinking I might know how best to care for the other without dialogue with them, as I explain in the next chapter, I call on material feminism (Barad, 2007) to suggest that there can be a kind of dialogic relationship with objects, such as with the video technology in my research, albeit a dialogic relationship that involves two agencies rather than two consciousnesses. Bakhtin's (1984) proposition that "the truth is not born and does not reside in the head of an individual person; it is born of the dialogical intercourse *between people* in the collective search for truth" (p. 90) adds a useful protection against a common temptation to step out of dialogue and into singular explanations of what the video really means and into making truth claims, which are univocal conclusions and are likely to favour one party over the other. In a sense, dialogue, including a form of interaction with the material records produced by video technology, can constitute a kind of outsider critique, an "antagonism of strategies" (Foucault, 1982, p. 778) produced by differences in gender, culture and experiences of life, in which the presence and voice of the other, in person or externalised via video technology, offers a form of diffraction of the self, "*from outside*, in the other" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 100) which has the potential to disrupt the mirroring of taken-for-granted views.

Dialogism's emphasis on contextual multi-vocality also serves as another caution against a practice of care of the other produced by consulting like-minded others:

In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully, because there will be cultures that see and understand even more). A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

In order to avoid monological and mono-cultural narratives which colonise their subjects, dialogism suggests a multi-voiced conception "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 6).

Thus a dialogical perspective offers an antagonism, another difference, to the linear coherence and causality often produced by narrative. Like deconstruction, dialogism recognises that meaning is always deferred and there are always differences, tensions and inconsistencies, an ongoing tension between what Bakhtin (1981a) described as the "centripetal forces of language" which "serve to unify the verbal-ideological world" (p. 270) and the opposing "centrifugal forces of language" which work towards decentralisation and disunification" (p. 272). Narratives have beginnings, developments and endings, plots, characters with identities, "relations of cause and effect, and intelligible conclusions" (de Peuter, 1998, p. 40). Narrative therapy relies on therapists being in a position to facilitate the identification of subordinate stories in order that their clients may be better positioned to act agentively in relation to these stories. Likewise, a dialogical

positioning supports me to resist the temptation to instate monological, monovocal or mono-cultural solutions.

Hence dialogism, along with deconstruction and Foucault's analysis of the operation of power and knowledge, offer some possibilities for justice in the notoriously difficult field of couple counselling in that this toolkit of theory alerts me to some effects of the kinds of truth claims and individualistic monologues which may be less problematic when a counsellor is supporting one person to give voice to his or her stories. When there are two people seeking to be understood and give voice to multiple stories, then dialogism reminds me take care to listen for and make room for the co-production of multi-storied dialogical understandings. In narrative therapy, the practice of co-research is one means by which dialogical understandings are produced collaboratively.

## **Co-research**

David Epston (1999) developed the practice which he called "co-research" as an alternative to what he saw as the "family-blaming and family suspicious" (p. 139) theory and practice of Family Therapy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Faced with the suffering of children, Epston (1999) found himself "running out of empathy" (p.140). He found he could not adequately imagine the extent of the suffering of the children and their families he was working to help. When expert knowledge had proved ineffective in enhancing his understanding or alleviating these children's suffering Epston (1999) chose to orient himself around a metaphor of co-research:

both because of its beguiling familiarity and because it radically departed from conventional clinical practice. It brought together the very

respectable notion of research with the rather odd idea of the co-production of knowledge by sufferers and therapist. (Epston, 1999, pp. 141–142)

Co-research employed externalizing conversations in which “the problem was a problem for everyone” - including the therapist – in order to produce knowledge “that all parties to it could make good use of” (Epston, 1999, p. 142). This more democratic collaboration in the production of knowledge of use to all parties required a counsellor to identify and take responsibility for the real effects of the counsellor’s work on the lives and relationships of clients (White, 2007). This responsibility required a co-researcher to attend to the societal context and production of problems (White, 2007), to include in the co-research an investigation of the everyday practices of power which are produced in the therapy room (White, 2007) and to be accountable to the clients for the process and outcomes of counselling (White & McLean, 1994). This practice of accountability included a counsellor inviting his or her clients to give feedback about what they were finding helpful or unhelpful (White, 1997a), and extended to clients’ critiquing a counsellor’s questions (White, 1991).

The emphasis co-research places on collaboration prompted me explore how my participants might be better positioned to participate in such collaboration and to shape the counselling conversation. In the next chapter I outline a material-feminist position that addresses how we might treat the video record as a material-discursive artefact of our counselling conversations, and I address how we might employ this record and the form of gaze produced in the intra-action between its material and the discursive lens through which we read the record in our work in order to address justice in regard to the participants’ situations and their hopes. In

chapter 4 I describe the method I used to support the positioning of my participants and myself as co-researchers, and in chapter 5 I elaborate on how I cast co-research as a hospitable practice in order to support the participants in voicing and deconstructing their experience.

## **Chapter 3. Video and couple counselling**

In this chapter I begin by presenting a brief history of couple counselling. In this account I emphasise the traditions that I have drawn upon in order to position myself as an hospitable co-researcher. I then address the material objectivity and representativeness of video technology, and its uses as a form of feedback to improve performance and to enhance accountability. I then consider how, in conjunction with feminism and consumer rights movements and clinical research practices, video technology has been employed in couple counselling, and how it might contribute to the positioning of counsellors and their clients. I then introduce material feminist theory and in particular the work of Barad (2007, 2008, 2012). This work is central to this thesis and I explain how I came to position it in this way. I then conclude this chapter by discussing the implications of Barad's theorising for interpreting and employing popular literature and academic research in the field of couple counselling.

### **From marriage counselling to couple counselling**

In my introduction, I referred to the increasing difficulty I have had in doing couple counselling since I began working with couples in the mid 1980s. Some of these difficulties can be ascribed to the significant cultural changes which “have had an enormous impact on marriage and the expectations and experiences of those who marry or enter other long-term committed relationships” (Gurman, 2010, p. 2; see also Coontz, 2006). These changes have included shifts in our understandings of the purposes and nature of marriage and the positions of men and women in those marriage-like relationships. The primacy of marriage as a patriarchal, political, financial or child rearing arrangement which was expected to

last until one of the parties died, has been questioned (Delphy & Leonard, 1992). This has led to growing expectations that marriage and marriage-like relationships should provide equality for both partners and constitute “the primary source of adult intimacy, support, and companionship and a facilitative context for personal growth” (Gurman, 2010, p. 2) for both members of a couple, irrespective of their sex or whether they were living together (Coontz, 2006; Delphy & Leonard, 1992; Gurman, 2010).

These changes to marriage and marriage-like relationships are indicated in declining rates of marriage, delayed marriage, increasing rates of divorce, increasing numbers of married couples who have previously divorced, legal recognition of civil unions between same sex partners, and increasing ethnic diversity in society and within marriages (Drewery & Bird, 2004; Khawaja, n.d.; Statistics New Zealand, 2001, 2013). Within these marriage-like relationships the roles of women and men have also undergone significant changes with increasing numbers of married women in the paid work force, decreases in the gap between how much women and men are paid, “less societal tolerance of violence against women ...[and] more control by individuals over reproductive decision making” (Crawford, 2004, p. 65; see also, Gurman, 2010). To reflect this decline in the centrality of marriage and to respect the rights to self-determination of those in intimate partnerships I use the terms that those who constitute a relationship refer to in describing their relationship and I have as my starting point the term couple counselling because it also includes those who are married.

An effect of these expectations that couples should live happily together or separate while minimising the ill effects of such separations on the parties,

including their children, is that relationship difficulties have become a frequent, if not the most frequent, reason that people seek mental health services (Gurman, 2010). Couple counselling has also become a means by which the partners can address difficulties one or both of them might be experiencing (Snyder & Whisman, 2003). Typically, the reasons couples seek counselling involve “interpersonal difficulties, especially communication problems and lack of emotional affection... the desire to improve the relationship for the sake of the children ...and [to improve] positive feelings for their spouse or relationship” (Doss, Simpson, & Christensen, 2004, p. 611) and include financial problems and anger problems (Doss et al., 2004; Gurman, 2010).

These changes in the expectations and character of marriage have been accompanied by changes in clients’ and counsellors’ expectations regarding clients’ rights as consumers of counselling services (Paterson, Health & Disability Commissioner, 2001) and by a questioning of the knowledge and authority of counsellors and other professionals (Schön, 1991). Couple therapy has been shaped by, and drawn on, the cultural movements that have shaped marriage-like relationships, such as feminism’s challenges to patriarchal practices (Goldner, 1988, 1998, Hare-Mustin, 1978, 1994; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994), and by individualistic counselling models such as psychodynamic theory, humanistic theory, behavioural, cognitive and social learning theory and by more recent relational counselling approaches which draw on systems theory, “multiculturalism, and postmodernism” (Gurman, 2010, p. 3).

Gurman (2010) suggested that couple counselling has undergone four overlapping phases of development. The first of these phases, which Gurman (2010) describes

as a period of “atheoretical” development “lasted from approximately 1930 to 1963” (p. 5), which was largely focussed on working with individuals in order to assist their “adjustment to culturally dominant marital roles” (p. 5). The second phase, which lasted from 1931-1966 involved a shift away from the dominant psychoanalytic practice of excluding relatives of the person being treated and towards the practice of working with both partners individually and together, although the “treatment focus remained largely on the partners as individuals, not on their jointly constructed dyadic system, and on the patient-therapist transference” (Gurman, 2010, p. 6). Whereas the first phase may have been characterised as “the know-nothing phase” (Gurman, 2010, p. 5), Gurman (2010) called this second period “the therapist-knows-everything phase” (p. 6). This phase saw the rise of family therapy to the extent that a third phase, lasting from 1963 to 1985, incorporated family therapy practices (Gurman, 2010). This phase saw the development of specific techniques and rules to help couples address their difficulties, particularly by managing their communication. These techniques, many of which are present to some extent in the approach that I describe, include:

taking turns expressing one’s views, on a focused topic, followed by the listener’s summarization of what he or she has heard; an emphasis on behavioural specificity in making relational requests; a prohibition against mind reading; the use of “the floor” by the speaker; and the termination of negative interactions to prevent escalation, followed by calmer resumption of the discussion. (Gurman, 2010, p. 7)

In this period, the influence of Jay Haley (1987) contributed to a move to “see family dynamics as products of a ‘system’ rather than as features of persons” (Gurman, 2010, p. 7) and to a focus on “power and control” (Gurman, 2010, p. 7) in the marriage relationship and on what was happening now rather than what had happened in the past. Gurman (2010) characterised this period of family therapy

as “the therapist-thinks-s/he-knows-everything-but-won’t tell-the-couple-anything phase” (p. 8).

Also in this period, Virginia Satir (1983) focussed on both the individual and the couple relationship. Satir (1983) attempted to help individuals to improve their self-esteem and to develop their abilities to relate to their partners. In this process a counsellor was positioned as an “encouraging, nurturing healer” (Gurman, 2010, p. 9). Unlike approaches which saw couples as resistant to change, Satir (1983) believed that the couple relationship could produce restorative change.

Gurman (2010) described couple therapy’s “fourth and current phase”, which he suggests began in 1986, as one of “refinement, extension, diversification, and integration” (p. 10) and characterised by its differentiation from family therapy. This phase was marked by a shift away from changing the other towards changing oneself, particularly one’s ability to regulate one’s own emotions, and to accepting the other. This phase included a development of Satir’s (1983) approach to focussing on emotions, known as emotionally focussed couple therapy (Johnson, 2003). Johnson combined this focus with a repositioning of a counsellor as a scientist-practitioner who integrated clinical research and clinical practice.

This phase also saw the “bringing together [of] both conceptual and technical elements from seemingly incompatible traditions to enhance the salience of common mechanisms of therapeutic change - and improve clinical effectiveness” and couple therapy being employed to address individuals’ mental ill health (Gurman, 2010, p. 11). This fourth phase also saw the incorporation of feminism, multiculturalism and postmodern theory. In particular feminism transformed the

landscape of couple therapy by attending to the often taken-for-granted operation of gender and power, both in the couples' relationships and in the relationship between counsellors and their clients (Goldner, 1988, 1998, Hare-Mustin, 1978, 1994; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994). Similarly, multiculturalism challenged some of the norms and the positions that some counsellors had taken-for-granted in relation to these norms (Waldegrave, Tamasese, Tuhaka, & Campbell, 2003). An effect of these challenges was that, faced with such uncertainty and awareness of variance in the discursive practices that shaped couples' lives, many counsellors adopted a more collaborative and less directive approach to couple counselling (Gurman, 2010). Likewise, postmodernism "pushed therapists to recognize the multiplicity of ways in which it is possible to be 'a couple'" (Gurman, 2010, p. 12).

Gurman (2010) referred to this fourth phase as "the we-don't-know-as-much-as-we-thought-we-did, but-we-are-learning-a-lot phase" (p. 12). As I made my way through the reviewing and writing up of my findings, I found it useful to think of myself as being in this fourth phase. I could think of myself as part of a movement of learning about and integrating "conceptual and technical elements from seemingly incompatible traditions" (Gurman, 2010, p. 11), with my primary focus being using video technology as a means to integrate concepts and practices from counselling and research, and using deconstructive theory in order to be cautious about what I think I might know.

In many ways, technology, particularly video technology, has provided the material records which have supported these significant developments in counselling approaches. Researchers have long found the records provided by

video technology can aid and extend analysis by recording complex and fluid verbal and non-verbal data which might otherwise be unobserved or forgotten (Becker, 1974).

In the following sections I address the objectivity and the representativeness of the video record and its operation as a feedback mechanism, and as a means to hold counsellors to account for their practices. I then look at how counsellors and clients have positioned themselves and been positioned in relation to video technology.

### **Video records: “objective”, permanent and rich data**

Practical photography was commercially available from 1839 and from this point photography has often been considered a “virtually undistorted reproduction of the situation” (Mayadas & Duehn, 1977, p. 38; see also, Winston, 2003) which had been recorded, and one which could “lie as to the meaning of the thing...[but] never as to its existence” (Barthes, 1981, p. 87). The participants in video and audio recordings in individual counselling (Berger, 1970b), small groups, (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Berger, 1970b); couple counselling (Alger & Hogan, 1970), family therapy (Ray & Saxon, 1992), and in settings ranging from medical ward rounds (Carroll, Iedema, & Kerridge, 2008) to private practice psychiatric contexts (Berger, 1970b), readily supported this view that video records were more accurate, comprehensive and reliable than memory and other records.

Audio-visual records also depicted previously unseen as well as unattended to relational territories. We cannot see our bodies from an outsider’s position when we are interacting with others, and we cannot see how our bodies might appear to others from the external viewpoint that they see us. Audio-visual technology

could record a view of these territories, including vistas of the interactions between counsellors and their clients.

Audio-visual technology not only made vistas (as distinct from panoramic views) of these new territories visible, it also made it possible for viewers to review the records of these interactions multiple times, from different positions, as participant and/or observer, and from different spaces and times, and without having to respond. And from each of the places, times and positions, the observer/participants could stop, replay, fast forward and rewind the video record in order to conduct “repeated ‘finer-grained analysis’ of ‘micro pauses and barely audible overlaps, intakes of breath and facial expressions, gestures and other bodily movements’ which can all have significant dialogical and thereby psychological meanings” (Shotter & Billig, 1998, p. 17).

### *Representativeness of the video records*

If video is so readily accepted as accurately reproducing the situation it records, this raises the question, what is the situation that has been depicted? If the actions that are being depicted are excerpts of a counselling conversation that may be selected by the counsellor, how representative are these conversations of couples’ situations outside of the counselling with video?

A number of studies have shown that those being videoed often alter their presentation in response to being videoed (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Bailey & Sowder, 1970; Padgett, 1983). And as Epston (1989) showed with his approach to children’s temper tantrums, being positioned to imagine what they will sound and look like on video could be sufficient to prompt the children to alter their actions.

In Epston's (1989) largely pre-narrative therapy and strategic approach, children were advised that if their unacceptable expressions of anger continued then they would be video or audio taped and this record of their "temper tantrum" might be played to the guests at a "temper tantrum party" (1989, p. 21). In most instances the children imagining how a recording of their actions would look to the partygoers stopped the children from having a so-called tantrum.

While some authors suggest that clients usually "forget" they are being recorded once the therapeutic process is underway (McNaughton, 2009; Payne, 2000), and that consequently the effect on clients' actions of being recorded is reduced, the notion that what is recorded represents *the truth about* them seems unsustainable. As Pink (2007) suggests, an analysis of video records should take account of their inherent partiality and the "collaborations and strategies of self representation that were part of their making" (p. 103).

Any claims that video technologies produce a reproduction of the situation of a couple's life and relationship are further undermined by the partial nature of the video records that are most frequently shown to couples by their therapists. The constraints of busy and sometimes unpredictable work settings and the objective of maintaining clients' interest and engagement (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Alger & Hogan, 1970; Berger, 1970a; Carroll et al., 2008; Daitzman, 1977; Moore, Chernell, & West, 1970), often leads clinicians to select ten to twenty minutes of video from an hour long session for review with their clients. Consequently, a video excerpt of a counselling may represent "an arbitrary punctuation in the flow of interaction" (Ray & Saxon, 1992, p. 65) and it may not be representative of the

session, and the session may not be representative of the participants' lives or of the problems they are experiencing.

And yet an acknowledgment of partiality in itself does not seem to undermine the power of the audio-visual recordings to move those who view and hear them.

There is some evidence of positive effects when clinicians dramatized their video records so that in effect those records were less accurate than they might otherwise have been, (for example, Berger, 1970a; Moore et al., 1970), when those dramatizations coincided with their participants' views of themselves. These benefits included improvements in participants' behaviour, awareness, and self-care (Bailey & Sowder, 1970). However, when the participants' did not agree with the filmmaker's representation of them (Kimball & Cundick, 1977) the consequences could be extremely distressing for those depicted. Alkire and Brunse (1974) reported suicide and marriage break up for clients and significant decreases in positive self-perception for the female partners in their study of couple counselling with male patients in psychiatric care. In their study, members of the male psychiatric patients' therapeutic group role-played the issues they identified and these role-plays were shown to the couple. Kimball and Cundick (1977) speculated that these distressing outcomes were most likely to occur when the role-played representations clashed with the clients' views of themselves to the extent that they saw the role play actors as presenting negative caricatures of them.

I was deeply troubled by these questions regarding the objectivity and representativeness of the video record. Some time after I completed my interviews with my participants I found I could address these issues by calling on material

feminist perspectives. However, before giving an account of a material feminist perspective, I address some other effects of having an audio-visual record of counselling.

### *Feedback*

Self-observation and coaching using video has long been used in performing arts and sports to improve performances (Albright & Malloy, 1999). Similar positive effects were found where video records were used in counselling to provide “accurate feedback” (Alger & Hogan, 1970, p. 162) which enabled those depicted to improve their behaviour. Some researchers have suggested that by providing new and reliable information from which couples can form more accurate judgements of themselves and how they appear to their partners, video has been particularly useful in the field of couple counselling, where it has been said to improve clients’ self-observation and self-perception (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Padgett, 1983) – provided they have a shared understanding from which to interpret (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Rhoades & Stocker, 2006).

Some researchers noted that when people saw themselves on film or video they might experience a rapid and profound reorientation towards what had been taken-for-granted. MacDougall (2006) theorised that film provided a transformative experience by powerfully engaging those filmed “so directly with the world” without their usual “protection of conceptual thought” (MacDougall, 2006, p. 8) that this experience might disrupt some taken-for-granted habits of thought and action. Many users of therapeutic video referred to a powerful effect of video records in evoking “fast access” (Alger & Hogan, 1970, p. 163; Berger, 1970b) to viewers’ vivid and often pictorial memories (Bailey & Sowder, 1970) and to

“voluminous emotionally charged material”(Zelenko & Benham, 2000, p. 195).

Lock and Strong (2010) suggested these kinds of experiences produced a change of position rather than simply a change in cognition and that this repositioning had the potential to produce “an almost obvious solution” (Lock & Strong, 2010, p. 38) which might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

However, while video might produce profound change, some researchers also documented an effect where video records confirmed viewers’ presuppositions. Albright and Malloy (1999) explained this confirmation by suggesting a tendency for people to judge themselves and others “from the perspective of one’s own world view, which is mistaken for reality itself” (p. 726). In this process, taken-for-granted ideas may be reinforced (Pink, 2007) irrespective of the intentions of the filmmaker or the “truthfulness” and “objectivity” of the record (Martinez, 1996, p. 72). This effect is often seen where the same video documentary is considered biased in favour of the opposing view by both sides of an argument (Myers, 1993). Albright and Malloy (1999) noted that viewers of video records of themselves interacting with others tend to attribute others’ difficulties to personality rather than the situation, and their own difficulties to the situation rather than their personality. In couple relationships this tendency to attribute difficulties to others’ personality may contribute to the finding that longer length of marriage has been associated with reduced “*empathic accuracy*” (Thomas, Fletcher, & Lange, 1997, p. 839) as spouses’ conclusions about each other become “ossified and they are more likely to assume they know what their partners are thinking” (Thomas et al., 1997, p. 847). Couples’ perceptions of their relationships and of each other were also shaped by the prevailing gendered discursive practices, as Rhoades and Stocker (2006) described when they found

that “wives tend to rate their husbands as more aggressive than husbands rate themselves” (p. 507).

## **Accountability and video records**

In making visible the interaction between clinicians and their clients, video technology not only provided an alternative to the forms of documentation traditionally provided by clinicians, these video records also exposed clinicians to scrutiny (Berger, 1970a; Daitzman, 1977). Alger and Hogan (1970) suggested this video surveillance made it “very difficult for the therapist to remain distant and make pronouncements about people in the form of interpretations” (p. 167) and easier for clients to contest a therapist’s interpretations and contribute to the therapeutic process “on more equal terms” (p. 167). Pink (2007) suggested this form of video exposure might operate as a “democratising technology” (p. 27) as by appearing in a therapeutic video with clients, a therapist communicated that, like them, she or he is making visible his or her “human attributes”, such as his or her “genuine desire to help” and “failings” (Alger & Hogan, 1970, p. 167). That video records were permanent and relatively objective also meant that they were available for scrutiny by audiences other than counsellors and their clients and counsellors’ supervisors.

### *Video technology, feminism, and consumers’ and patients’ rights*

For decades feminist family therapists (Goldner, 1988, 1998, Hare-Mustin, 1978, 1994; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994) in particular had been drawing attention to gendered practices so taken-for-granted as to be practically invisible. Audio-visual records made it possible for researchers and supervisors to position themselves with the time and space to analyse audio-visual records and transcripts of these often taken-for-granted practices, which in the flow of counselling conversations

might otherwise go unnoticed (ChenFeng & Galick, 2015). Researchers using audio-visual records, and the transcripts produced using them, were in a position to notice that “even some ... experienced feminist-oriented therapists inadvertently reinforced dominant ideas about gender at times” (ChenFeng & Galick, 2015, p. 43).

Common findings made visible by video technology included that therapists reinforced gendered practices which positioned women as responsible for the couple relationship, the well-being of their male partners, and for change (Crawford, 2004; Knudson-Martin, 2013). An effect of this gendered attribution of responsibility was that therapists often disproportionately blamed women for problems in couple relationships while men were often credited for positive developments (Stabb, 1997). Audio-visual technology also made it possible for researchers to substantiate that the common gendered conversational practices in which men dominate mixed gender conversations (Ayim, 1997) were also common in couple counselling, where therapists were found to have interrupted their women clients more than their male clients (Werner-Wilson, Price, Zimmerman, & Murphy, 1997). These results and their own research allowed ChenFeng and Galick (2015) to identify three very common gender discourses which they could be alert to in the complex and fast moving practice of couples therapy: “men should be the authority...women should be responsible for relationships [and]...women should protect men from shame” (p. 43).

These findings, which were produced using close analyses of video records, made it possible for ChenFeng and Galick (2015) to develop strategies to address these and other common gendered discursive practices. These strategies included

suspending judgments and deferring assessments of what was happening, at least until both parties had been heard, and focussing on how the parties relate to each other, particularly how they speak with each other and “avoiding privileging of male ways of being, such as trying to get clients to be more logical, rational, less emotional, and less dependent on others” (ChenFeng & Galick, 2015, p. 49).

These permanent, apparently objective records also allowed supervisors, and supporters of those videoed, to hold therapists accountable to the law and codes of ethics (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Barnes, Taylor-Brown, & Wiener, 1997; Berger, 1970a; ChenFeng & Galick, 2015; Daitzman, 1977; Zelenko & Benham, 2000).

These laws and codes of ethics were also shaped by consumer rights movements.

In New Zealand major reforms in the development of patients’ rights were associated with the 1987-88 Cervical Cancer Inquiry (Cartwright, 1988), which was prompted by a magazine article written by feminists Coney and Bunkle (1987). The 1990s saw acts of parliament which extended and affirmed the rights of citizens (*New Zealand Bill of Rights Act*, 1990), consumers, including consumers of health services (*Consumer Guarantees Act*, 1993), and provided codes of conduct (*Health Information Privacy Code*, 1994) and means by which abuses of the rights this legislation and these codes conferred might be addressed (Paterson, Health & Disability Commissioner, 2001).

These consumer rights movements produced an upsurge in complaints from consumers of health services (Paterson, Health & Disability Commissioner, 2001) and worldwide there was a growing interest in researching the experience of consumers in order to improve the processes and outcomes of therapy (Duncan, Miller, & Hubble, 1999; Howard, Moras, Brill, Martinovich, & Lutz, 1996; Howe,

1996; Lutz et al., 2006; Manthei, 2006; Miller, Duncan, Brown, Sorrell, & Chalk, 2006; Rennie, 1994).

### *Practice based evidence*

For Miller and his colleagues (Duncan et al., 1999; Miller et al., 2006), an outcome of this trend to focus on what actually worked in therapy was the accumulation of evidence from “hundreds of studies” (Miller et al., 2006, p. 17) that showed little, no, or contradictory evidence, that particular models of therapy produced specific benefits and outcomes different to those produced by other models. Miller and his colleagues’ (2006) findings challenged the often taken-for-granted assumptions that adherence to treatment manuals or that training in psychotherapy automatically produced improvements in the quality or outcomes of therapy. These data led Miller and his colleagues to reject the idea that research could identify “prescriptive treatments for specified conditions” (p. 16) and in so doing establish the kinds of “evidence-based practices” (p. 16) that had been so effective in medicine. Miller and his colleagues (2006) proposed “practice-based evidence”:

Instead of assuming that identifying and utilizing the “right” process leads to favourable results, these efforts use outcome - specifically, client feedback- to both inform and construct treatment as well as inspire innovation. Put another way, rather than evidence-based practice, therapists tailor services to the individual client via practice-based evidence. (p. 17)

This reliance on client feedback also came with some provisos. Other researchers (Howe, 1996; Manthei, 2006; Rennie, 1994) and authors (Durie, 2001; Payne, 2000; West, 2002) were pointing to some of the difficulties clients had in speaking about their negative experiences of counselling. Manthei (2006) and

Rennie (1994) both found that clients might not voice negative experiences of counselling out of concern for the counsellor or for fear that the counsellor might be offended, not understand or be unsympathetic, or they might put aside their own concerns in deference to their counsellors' agenda (Payne, 2000). Durie (2001) suggested that clients were particularly reluctant to voice negative experiences when their counsellor was of a different culture. Researchers focussing on the multicultural competence of counsellors also found that the extent of clients' engagements with their counsellors was influenced by clients' perceptions of whether their counsellors were culturally competent. These findings further call into question the idea that clients' feedback constitutes a form of honest truth that exists outside discursive practices and which needs no deconstruction.

## **Positioning of counsellors and their clients in relation to video technology**

When Freud (2003) published *The psychopathology of everyday life* in 1901, audio and audio-visual technologies were regarded as “a technological breakthrough with the kind of significance for psychiatry that the microscope has had for biology” (Alger & Hogan, 1970, p. 161). An effect of Freud's influence and of this view of the objectivity and purpose of video was that some clinicians and researchers employed video technology to examine the psychopathology beneath the surface of patients' lives, and as a means to confront patients with truths about their inner selves and hidden pathologies (Bailey & Sowder, 1970; Berger, 1970; Daitzman, 1977).

MacDougall (2006), an ethnographic filmmaker and film scholar, has suggested that most of the effort of filmmakers goes into this process of “putting the viewer into a particular relation to a subject” (2006, p. 6). Clinicians who call on video technology as “a way of pointing out, of describing, of judging” (MacDougall, 2006, p. 3) tend to select and present footage for “maximum impact” (Alkire & Brunse, 1974, p. 209). In family therapy, clinicians have used changes in volume, background music and repeated playback of particular statements at different speeds to emphasise and dramatize an event in order to make what a clinician considered to be a necessary point (Daitzman, 1977).

Viewing therapeutic video of oneself could be an overwhelming (Alger & Hogan, 1970; Bailey & Sowder, 1970; Berger, 1970; Carroll et al., 2008; Daitzman, 1977) and frightening experience for clients (Bailey & Sowder, 1970; Berger, 1970; Kimball & Cundick, 1977; Padgett, 1983). Berger (1970) reported that for one of his patients the prospect of the video revealing “the *real me*”, which she is “hiding”, “absolutely terrifies” her (pp. 122–123). Another of Berger’s (1970) patients pointed to the operation of the video as a form of normalising gaze when she said, “to be observed means failure. It means to look stupid, inept” (p. 125).

### *Normalising gaze*

My ethical responsibility to do no harm as a counsellor and researcher requires that I address how audio-visual recording might produce such distress. My understanding of Foucault’s (2000a) history and analysis of technologies of power suggested that Berger’s (1970) clients’ utterances might be understood as responses to the operation of video as “technologies of domination and self” (Foucault, 2000a, p. 225). Foucault’s (2000a) analysis suggests that video records,

which are themselves a “technology of production” (p. 225), might be operating as practices of therapeutic examination (Foucault, 1984). Foucault (1984) documented how “the examination” (p. 197) operates to objectivise and reveal certain truths about persons in order that they might be classified, placed under surveillance and incited to comply with what is considered normal.

And like their clients, therapists’ exposure to video-recording might have negative normalising effects. This effect could be intensified when the therapists were also students. Students in general may be vulnerable to the normalising gazes of academia (Martinez, 1996). When a student’s performance is also videoed and reviewed, this can intensify the gaze while raising expectations of a student’s performance (Gossman & Miller, 2012). When a student is also a therapist and researcher then he or she may be subject to normalising gazes regarding the correct performance of counselling models and literally subject to the kind of examinations Foucault (1984) described in order to pass and be categorised as a good counsellor and graduate as a researcher.

This is not to say that all transformative experiences involving video were shocking, nor that all shocking experiences were problematic. Some people who were videoed for therapeutic purposes reported pleasant surprise at their “good qualities and strengths” (Bailey & Sowder, 1970, p. 129), gratitude at knowing how they appear to others (Satir, 1983), and more compassion for themselves (Berger, 1970). Interestingly more positive outcomes were associated with clients’ strong reactions to seeing themselves on video, whether this reaction was positive or negative (Alger & Hogan, 1970; Daitzman, 1977).

### *Collaborative approaches which preserve clients' sovereignty*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when people were invited to explain the meanings they attached to their video excerpts (Ray & Saxon, 1992) or when the therapeutic video was produced collaboratively, this often contributed significantly to positive outcomes and reduced distress (Gaddis, 2002, 2004; Padgett, 1983), even in distressing situations where the possibility of positive outcomes was limited and when those videoed were exposed to negative identity conclusions (Barnes et al., 1997). In Barnes, Taylor-Brown and Wiener's (1997) work with mothers facing death from Aids, Barnes and her colleagues supported these mothers to make videotapes to leave to their children. Despite these mothers' stigmatising histories of drug use and crime, their videotapes positioned them as "against society's view of them as inadequate mothers" (p. 29) and provided them with a moving "opportunity to reassure their children that they would always be caring for them, even after death" (p. 29).

Furthermore, when viewers of therapeutic videos retained authority over the meaning of their video then they were more likely to "own" (Berger, 1970, p. 25), remember and act upon their insights than if someone pointed out the so called correct interpretation (Alger & Hogan, 1970). This form of collaboration with those videoed which preserved their sovereignty may partly account for clients' greater engagement in therapy (Alger & Hogan, 1970; Berger, 1970; Daitzman, 1977; Moore et al., 1970; Zelenko & Benham, 2000) and the finding that therapeutic video reduced clients' feelings of being blamed and criticised by therapists (Alger & Hogan, 1970; Bailey & Sowder, 1970) even when they were under close scrutiny by courts and protection agencies (see Zelenko & Benham,

2000) or, like the participants in Barnes, Taylor-Brown and Wiener's (1997) study, subject to stigmatising judgements by other parties.

## **Material feminism**

When I began my research using video, I found that I did not want to let go of an understanding of video as providing an objective record which represented something of value. I did not want to give up the power of video records to hold me and my participants accountable to law, ethical standards and to provide a reliable foundation on which my participants, my supervisors and I could base our collaborative deconstructive co-research. At the same time, I did not want to abandon those postmodern and poststructuralist ideas that had showed the dangers of treating such records as if they represented *the* truth about their *subjects*. Nor, as I mentioned earlier, did I want to rely solely on the *honest* opinions of my clients, which might well reproduce dominant gendered practices. After a great deal of philosophical reading, and in the tradition of deconstructive enquiry, after repeated "inversions", and "repeated "dislodging" (Derrida, 1981, p. 42) of these binaries, not/objective and not/representative, I took up material feminism as a concept that allowed me to claim a form of objectivity and representativeness for the video record that could not be separated from discursive practices.

When I first reviewed some of the literature on therapeutic video I did not suspect just how difficult and important making sense of this technology and interpreting the findings of the researchers and clinicians who used it would be to my research and to my practice of couple counselling. As it turned out, as soon as my first couple and I began co-researching the video record of our first counselling

conversation it became worryingly clear that we were reproducing some problematic and taken-for-granted discursive practices.

Seemingly, like the “experienced feminist-oriented therapists” ChenFeng and Galick (2015, p. 43) had referred to, I had “inadvertently reinforced” (p. 43) some dominant modernist and gendered practices. I had enthusiastically taken up some of the familiar positions I had thought I would easily avoid, including using the video records to *point out* and to *show* one couple some things that I thought were *really* going on in our counselling conversations, while I overlooked other gendered practices.

My participants referred to these audio-visual records as “objective” and “irrefutable” and yet we all drew and redrew different lines between what we saw as irrefutable material and objective facts, and our interpretations. It seemed to me that to abandon the idea of some form of objectivity would be to position me as relatively powerless to recognise and address some seemingly objective facts that the audio-visual technology captured. I was concerned that, without making some sort of claim for the objectivity of the video record, my participants and I might not notice or agree on evidence, such as that our recorded conversational time was not being shared equally.

When I viewed and then transcribed my first video of my counselling with my participants, I was struck by how much more a male partner spoke than his female partner. It seemed inconceivable to me that these records of the words we all spoke while being recorded on video might be considered as subjective or as unreliable as our remembered accounts of how much and what we spoke. It

seemed to me that to take the position that video records were equivalent to remembered accounts did not reflect the weight observers of video records gave those records. Denying some form of objectivity to these records also seemed to me to undermine the validity and utility of findings and approaches which, like ChenFeng and Gallick's (2015), disturbed taken-for-granted modernist and gendered discursive practices.

While I wanted to claim some sort of objectivity for these video records, an objectivity my participants seemed to readily recognise, I noticed how they, and many of those who participated in the video research I reported on above, might claim those bare facts as proving interpretations that were not supported by the objective records. It seemed to me that it was necessary to make some sort of cut between what might be considered objective and what was contestable. And it occurred to me that Derrida (1976) had referred to something like this form of objectivity when he asserted that language provides "an indispensable guardrail" (p. 158) that opens multiple readings while protecting the text from any sort of reading that a reader may want to produce. I found that Barad's (2007, 2008) analysis of the visual record provided by sonograms offered the kind of guardrail I could apply to my audio-visual records and which allowed me to make a cut between what might be discursively understood as objective and the discursive practices we employed to make sense of and act on this material evidence.

Barad (2007) argued:

there is something fundamental about the nature of measurement interactions such that, given a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties become determinate, while others are specifically excluded. Which properties become determinate is not governed by the desires or

will of the experimenter but rather by the specificity of the experimental apparatus. Thus there is still an important sense in which experiments can be said to be objective. (locations 515-517)

Barad (2007) demonstrated this understating of objectivity in her discussion of theories of light that explain the behaviour of light as both wave-like and particle-like. These seemingly incompatible theories can be reconciled provided that these measurements are not said to express the observer-independent nature of light, but rather they are considered to be the effects of measuring light using particular apparatuses. Some measuring apparatuses produce results that show light behaving as if it were made up of particles, whereas, when other apparatuses are used, these produce measurements that show light behaving as if it were waves. It is impossible to observe wave and particle behaviour simultaneously “because mutually exclusive experimental arrangements are required” (Barad, 2007 location 2439) in order to observe these phenomena. Hence, the results of these measuring apparatuses can be said to be objective where objective means “an unambiguous and reproducible account of marks on bodies” (Barad, 2007, location 6317):

measured value is neither attributable to an observation-independent object, nor is it a property created by the act of measurement (which would belie any sensible meaning of the word “measurement”). My reading is that the measured properties refer to phenomena, remembering that the crucial identifying feature of phenomena is that they include “all relevant features of the experimental arrangement (Bohr)”. (Barad, 2007 location 2432)

As Barad (2007) stresses, “since individually determinate entities do not exist, measurements do not entail an interaction between separate entities; rather, determinate entities emerge from their intra-action” (location 2582). Barad (2007)

introduces the term “intra-action” (location 2582) in order to recognise the entanglement of “object” and “measuring agencies” (location 2582) and to indicate that “the object and the measuring agencies emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-action that produces them” (location 2582). The term “intra-action” also conveys that none of this measuring and meaning-making can take place outside of the universe we inhabit, nor outside discursive practices: “our ability to understand the world hinges on our taking account of the fact that our knowledge-making practices are social-material enactments that contribute to, and are a part of, the phenomena we describe” (Barad, 2007 location 653).

It follows then that a crucial feature of understanding the measured properties of phenomena (rather than observation-independent objects) is understanding all relevant features of the experimental arrangement so that we can determine how the results were produced and what these results might make visible and what they might obscure. An understanding of the experimental apparatus that produced evidence of light behaving like a particle helps us to understand how that apparatus excluded the evidence of light behaving like a wave. An understanding of the larger experimental arrangement helps us see how discursive practices shaped those apparatuses and the reconfiguring, reading and speaking of the results.

Applying these understandings to my audio-visual records I can argue that these records are “objective” in that they are not dependant on the will of an observer, are unambiguous and reproducible accounts of the marks left by the video record of particular experimental arrangements, where those arrangements include my participants and I conducting counselling and co-research conversations at

particular times and in a particular place and from particular positions. Therefore, these records are not objective evidence of the nature of the couples' relationships or of my counselling practices outside of the meetings depicted. Crucial to this reinstatement of a form of objectivity is the idea that what is being represented in these audio-visual recordings is not an observer-independent reality: "images or representations are not snapshots or depictions of what awaits us but rather condensations or traces of multiple practices of engagement" (Barad, 2007 location 1181).

For example, as I show in chapter 6, when I used the audio-visual record to count the words my participations and I spoke in our first counselling conversation, my measured data supported the conclusion that the male partner spoke the most in that meeting, but not the conclusion that he spoke "too much". The conclusion that he spoke "too much" involves discursive practises of evaluation concerning the purposes of that conversation, how the couple and I were positioned to speak or not to speak throughout the recorded excerpt, and the effects of this distribution of speaking.

In order to disrupt the familiar assumption that what we see and hear reflects, reproduces, is the same as, or mirrors the recorded objects, Barad (2007) calls upon Haraway's (2004) use of the metaphor of "diffraction" (p. 70):

Diffraction does not produce "the same" displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, or reproduction...[the metaphor of reflection or refraction] invites the illusion of essential, fixed position, while [the metaphor of diffraction]... trains us to more subtle vision. (Haraway, 2004, p. 70)

In the context of my study diffraction serves as a metaphor that attempts to disrupt and make visible the effects of dominant discourses that invite us to *see*, or at least not to question, video records as depicting the reality of the lives of those videoed and a reality independent of discursive practices. Furthermore, the notion that video records produce multiple diffractions helps me to shift my focus from whether such records are representative of the nature of the couples' relationships and lives and instead helps me to focus on how helpful these diffractions are to deconstructive enquiries which address questions of justice.

Barad's (2007) analysis also offers a way of understanding and employing video records as part of a wider experimental apparatus. By altering this wider experimental apparatus, I can produce multiple and diffracted views of the phenomena of my participants' and my counselling and co-research conversations from different spaces and times. If I think of video records as objective measurements produced by an apparatus that includes the discursive production of the observed behaviours, then when I alter my position in this apparatus I am producing a different diffraction of what occurred, in a similar way to changes in the experimental apparatuses measuring the behaviour of light produced wave or particle like effects. And, as in the case of measuring light, I am not revealing the true nature of my participants' lives and relationships.

An understanding of the video records as part of a wider experimental apparatus supports me to attend to the changes in scale and perspective that the objective audio-visual records make possible. Reviewing my audio-visual recordings, I can appreciate that they are not life-size reproductions of my counselling with my participants. They do not capture all that is relevant about the recorded behaviour

in a way that is analogous to the way that a single apparatus cannot measure both the particle-like and wave-like behaviour of light. As I describe in the next chapter, this understanding helped me to appreciate that by considering the audio-visual records of our counselling conversations in different spaces and times and using different discursive practices, I was effectively using different experimental apparatuses which obscured some things and foregrounded, and reconfigured others. By regarding my thoughts about my research not so much as reflections but more as diffractions brought about by changes in my experiential apparatus, I was encouraged to attend to the different viewpoints and perspectives I got on my research when I was thinking about my research in front of my computer, talking with my supervisors, or when I was out walking, for example. I came to employ our audio-visual records in order to disrupt, deconstruct and reconfigure some of my readings of the text of my counselling work with my participants, and to be suspicious of my assumptions about the approach I was taking with them.

## **Integration: popular literature and research findings**

In his brief history of the evolution of couple counselling, Gurman (2010) characterised this current period of couple counselling as a phase of “refinement, extension, diversification, and integration” (p. 10). This phase included a repositioning of counsellors as a scientist-practitioners who integrated clinical research and clinical practice (Johnson, 2003) and who drew on feminism, multiculturalism and postmodern theory.

Perhaps the most influential of researchers of couple counselling are John and Julie Gottman (Gottman, 1994, 2011; Gottman, Gottman, & DeClaire, 2006; Gottman & Silver, 1999). The Gottmans, often in conjunction with PhD students,

research couple counselling in their and Robert Levenson's "laboratory" (Gottman, 2011, p. 9) and they have produced literature both for couples (Gottman et al., 2006; Gottman & Silver, 1999) and for clinicians (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995; Gottman, 1994, 2011; Levenson & Gottman, 1983). They have generated a wealth of knowledge that is based, in part, on the objective records produced by audio-visual and other technologies. A material feminist approach allows me to draw on these findings without according them the status of truths.

For example, John Gottman (2011), calling on decades of careful analysis of video records of couples' interactions, suggested that a person "flooded" (p. 131) with emotion experiences "an inability to avoid becoming defensive" (p. 131) and "an inability to avoid repeating oneself" (p. 131). Gottman (2011) supported his assertion with video evidence and evidence of "physiological arousal" (p. 130) and with a 51 item questionnaire designed to identify the participants' experience of these moments. Gottman (2011) documented approaches to responding to emotional flooding which involved both relational approaches - where the other member of the couple reassured the person feeling defensive - and individual strategies, where the individual took time out in order to calm him or herself.

A reading of Gottman's (2011) findings, drawing on Barad's (2007) analysis, suggests that his attribution of his material findings to an *individual's* *inabilities* is a product of particular material-discursive practices and not objective in the same way that the records of words spoken and changes in heart rates are. By drawing on Barad's (2007) theorizing of "the social and the natural together" (location 621) I am better positioned to deconstruct what might be producing the

physiological traces of discursive practices of engagement in the conversation, and to question the reading that attributes these traces to individual inabilities. Deconstructive enquiries employing Barad's (2007) analysis make it possible to reconcile particle-like material-discursive individual physiological data, such as individuals' heart rates and brain scans, with material-discursive wave-like socio-cultural analyses. Such an approach in effect overturns the binary that White (1988c) referred to and which I described in the previous chapter, where he suggested that it is the attribution of meaning to events that determines one's response to those events and not "a reaction to forces, impacts and drives" (p. 8).

This reconciliation makes it possible to apply the theoretical tools I described in the previous chapter in order to deconstruct and draw on the work of others who have attempted to reconcile measurements of individuals' physiological and emotional responses and interpersonal and socio-cultural understandings which deemphasize the pre-eminence of the autonomous, independent and self-sufficient individual in the field of couple counselling (Fishbane, 2011; Fishbane & Wells, 2015). I can also address and draw on the research of those who have documented the changing discursive practices of couple relationships in purposes, time and place (Coontz, 2006; Delphy & Leonard, 1992) and address and draw on the popular literature that is relatively unsupported by objective data, or which uses scientific language in ways that are unscientific, and which I previously considered unworthy of further investigation.

### *Popular literature not well grounded in research*

Some of the most popular self-help books for couples - The Five Love Languages: How to express heartfelt commitment to your mate (Chapman, 2010); Men are

from Mars, Women are from Venus: The classic guide to understanding the opposite sex (Gray, 2012) and Getting the love you want: A guide for couples (Hendrix, 2008) - have proved so enduringly popular, that updated and/or 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary editions have been produced. These books have maintained their popularity despite their continued application of “one-size-fits-almost-all” (Talbot, 2012, p. 66) and often patriarchal approach (Crawford, 2004) when the shape of marriage-like relationships has undergone significant changes. Despite these movements towards more equal marriage-like relationships these and other self-help books have maintained their popularity when “even a cursory reading of self-help media shows that many of these works are superficial, lacking in research support, and prone to exaggerated claims of effectiveness” (Crawford, 2004, p. 65). Furthermore they often perpetuate patriarchal discursive practices by advising women more than men to accommodate and subordinate themselves “in order to be more natural” (Crawford, 2004, p. 64). Gray’s (2012) book in particular has been critiqued for creating “binary societal scripts (such as men are from one planet and women from another) [that] seldom capture the full range of experience” (Knudson-Martin, Wells, & Samman, 2015, p. 3). Gray (2012) has been criticised for having no legitimate qualifications (Crawford, 2004). As Crawford (2004) points out, Gray (2012) offers a possible reason as to why the popularity of his books has not been reduced despite these critiques and the prevalence of challenges to patriarchal practices when he claims to be talking about the differences between “*healthy* men and women” (p. xxviii), as if his conclusions are biological facts and so independent of social and political changes.

The popularity of these sorts of apparently common sense self-help narratives, along with feminist researchers findings (ChenFeng & Galick, 2015; Crawford, 2004; Knudson-Martin, 2013; Stabb, 1997; Werner-Wilson et al., 1997) that counsellors often reproduce patriarchal discursive practices, are reminders to me that, as I will show, I am not immune to taking up familiar seemingly common sense narratives and persisting with them despite their lack of supporting evidence and their embedded gendered presumptions.

Crawford (2004), drawing on Foucault's (1982) notion of resistance, which suggests that repressive discourses contain the seeds of counter-discourses, suggests that "at least some of the appeal of these self-help materials may be that they afford opportunities for women (and men) to examine the balance of power in heterosexual relationships" (p. 66):

self-help psychology affords multiple readings, some of which subvert the ideology that women and men are fundamentally different in relationship needs and that it is women's responsibility to manage the resulting dissatisfactions. Just as the rhetoric of Mars and Venus can function to legitimize claims of difference, it can also be enlisted as a source of resistance. By opening up a place in the discourse of gender for articulating and contesting heterosexual inequality, these texts and others like them may undermine their own ideology. (Crawford, 2004, p. 76)

Crawford's (2004) conclusions serve as a useful reminder to avoid taking up binary positions that exclude particular domains of knowledge, such as popular literature or neuroscience, which position such knowledge as a threat to current counselling approaches. As a practitioner employing a deconstructive approach I can remind myself that the purpose of deconstruction is to address justice, and that when I perform this process in collaboration with those who seek my help, then

together we will address what is helpful and just for them. In the coming chapters I will show how practices of collaborative, deconstructive enquiry relieved me of the burden of knowing what is best for those who sought my help while at the same time improving the process and outcomes for them.

The approach I outline in this thesis is my attempt to integrate these many complex approaches in a way that positions a counsellor to address the complexities and variance of couples' situations, relationships and values, and which supports him or her to do so both in the to-and-fro of counselling practice, in supervision, and when contemplating and reviewing those moments in different places and times and in the light of relevant research.

In the next chapter, I outline the method that I employed in order that I might make the most of my understandings of the audio-visual record as part of a wider experimental apparatus. In this experimental apparatus my participants and I positioned and repositioned ourselves and each other in order to produce multiple diffractions that disrupted what we might have otherwise taken-for-granted or overlooked and in order to address justice.

## Chapter 4. Research Method

*Ultimately, research and therapy might even have the same goal: a more just and peaceful world, brought about by persons in community, striving to work ethically* (K. Crocket, Drewery, McKenzie, Smith, & Winslade, 2004, p. 66)

I begin this chapter by outlining how Stephen Gaddis (2002, 2004) opened space for this research. On the basis of this space, rather than step back from Narrative practice into a more modernist traditional approach, I have stepped forward into a form of practitioner research that stays philosophically consistent with the practice of narrative therapy. I outline these steps and briefly comment on them, before examining the relationship between research and therapy, the benefits and risks of a counsellor researching his or her practice, and I conclude with a brief description of the methods of analysis I employed.

### Research and Therapy

The study that inspired me to combine therapy and research in my own practice was fellow Narrative Therapist, Stephen Gaddis' (2002) PhD. Reflecting on his PhD two years later, Gaddis (2004) imagined a "re-positioning of traditional research" (p. 37). What caught my eye about this repositioning was Gaddis's (2004) consideration of the possibility and benefits of "a sole therapist taking turns with clients so that she is a therapist one week and a researcher the next" (p. 47).

In generating data for his investigation of couples therapy, Gaddis (2002) met with couples who were clients of colleagues. Gaddis and the couples reviewed

video records of these couple counselling sessions with their therapists. The purpose of these meetings was, as Gaddis (2002) explained to his participants, “for their [the couple’s] therapy team to learn more about therapy by learning from their clients’ honest experiences” (p. 67) of therapy. These meetings with Gaddis and the couples were followed by meetings in which the couples and their therapists were offered speaking and listening positions using a reflecting team format. Gaddis (2002) used a combination of Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) and Grounded Theory in order to “generate results that were as close to the clients’ descriptions as possible” (p. 66) and which captured what the couples found “important and unimportant, helpful and unhelpful, useful and not useful” (2002, p. 67). Gaddis then communicated to both the couples and to their therapists his analysis of what the couples gave meaning to, in order that they and the wider community of therapists could learn from the couples’ experiences of therapy.

Whereas Gaddis (2002) left untroubled the idea that a research process might produce “honest” expressions of experiences, I am more interested in what deconstructive and material feminist approaches offer. In particular, I am interested in Butler’s (1997) argument that one’s conscience is discursively produced and hence honest expressions according to one’s conscience cannot be treated as independent of dominant problematic discursive practices, and in Barad’s (2007) analysis which suggests that different positions in the experimental apparatus offer different diffractions and not an observer-discourse-independent reality. Hence while honesty is important it does not equate to objectivity or necessarily represent a more accurate *reflection* or conclusion. Hence, for example, a couple might report (as they did in my research), and a

counsellor might agree (as I did) that they honestly thought that their conversational time had been shared equally when the video records indicated that the male partner had spoken less than he usually did but still much more than his female partner.

Despite these differences in the foci of our approaches I was very taken with Gaddis' (2004) suggestion that a sole therapist might be a therapist one week and a researcher the next in order to improve his or her counselling and research practice for the benefit of his or her clients. It seemed to me that as a sole practitioner I might extend this approach to therapy and research by including my participants and my supervisors in the wider experimental apparatus in order to produce diffractions which might help us deconstruct our discursive practices in order to *do justice* to our situations and our hopes. Although Derrida (1992) uses the expression "to 'address' the problem of justice" (p. 10) in order to convey that doing justice is not a process that is completed, when speaking with my clients I use the term "do justice" because it is both familiar enough for them to apply to our purposes and unfamiliar enough as a purpose of counselling that they seem to appreciate that to do justice to their situations and hopes is an ongoing and collaborative process.

### **Steps to my practice of counselling and research.**

I made Gaddis' (2004) suggestion of alternating therapist and researcher roles the foundation of my method of data generation. Although as I will explain, as this practice developed, what I had called "research" meetings evolved to focus on addressing the couples' relationship interests using video of the previous counselling meeting. The recordings of these meetings were then transcribed and

were used as the primary material for this study. To this foundation of alternating narrative therapy and narrative co-research using video, I added a debrief meeting that occurred once we had completed up to five each of the counselling and co-research meetings using video. This final videoed debrief provided the participants with the opportunity to reflect on this counselling and research phase and on their experience of participating in this research project. For example, in the debrief meeting we reflected on what had contributed to their decision to participate in my research. This debrief meeting was the last point of involvement for the couples in the research, although I did continue to see two of the couples in counselling, and the first couple had a second debrief meeting that I undertook having sought the permission of the University of Waikato School of Education Ethics committee, through an extension of my original application.

This research process is shown as a flow chart in figure 1. This flow chart also formed part of the material given to potential participants.

## Flow chart of meetings

All meetings involve one couple and Jim

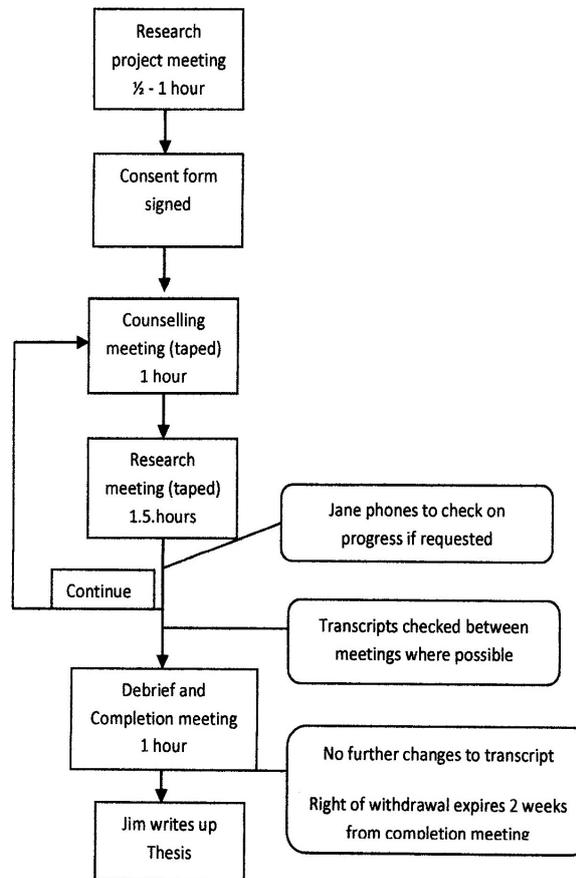


Figure 1: Flow Chart of Meetings

As the flow chart indicates, I thought it might be possible to complete transcripts so that the participants could read these between meetings, however, when the second couple joined my research, just after the first couple's third counselling meeting, I decided that completing transcripts for the couples to review at their research meetings would be very difficult and not likely to be feasible in everyday counselling practice. From this point, with the couples' permissions, I limited our reviews to the video record so as to produce a method of counselling and research

practice using video that would be sustainable in my everyday counselling practice.

The right hand side of this flow chart shows two of the safeguards I put in place for participants. The first of these safeguards was a response to the findings that I outlined in the previous chapter which pointed to the difficulties clients and participants might find in telling their counsellor if they were finding counselling unhelpful (Durie, 2001; Howe, 1996; Manthei, 2006; Payne, 2000; Rennie, 1994; West, 2002). The second safeguard provided the participants with the opportunity to review their transcripts and to remove any material they did not want to be part of my research.

In order to address some of these difficulties that participants might have in feeling obliged to participate in my study, as much as possible I positioned them so that they would have to initiate conversations if they wanted to participate rather than decline invitations to participate. I then provided means by which they could convey negative information to me indirectly and without initiating this contact on the basis of a concern. The participants could indicate on their research consent forms (Appendix A.3) if they wanted my clinical supervisor, Jane Harkness, to phone them after the first research meeting, which was the recorded counselling meeting referred to in figure 1. This mechanism was designed to put participants in control of the degree of contact they would have with Jane and in order to provide a mechanism by which support would be available without this having to be, in the first instance, a response to a concern being raised. Also if there were concerns these could be raised with someone who was less likely to experience or be perceived as experiencing as negative effects from such a

conversation as I might. Participants were also provided with Jane's contact details so that they could contact her directly if they were experiencing difficulties that they did not wish to talk with me about. In order to clarify Jane's role in such conversations as a supporter of my participants, the information provided to participants stated that her role was to support their decisions and to talk to me on their behalf if they so wished. While none of the participants took up this option, the literature concerning the reliability of client feedback, and the constraints on the reliability of client feedback (Durie, 2001; Howe, 1996; Manthei, 2006; Payne, 2000; Rennie, 1994; West, 2002), suggests that I cannot assume that the reason the couples did not contact Jane was that they did not experience difficulties.

In order to better position my clients to make informed decisions about whether to participate in my research, I recruited them from my couples counselling practice only after they had experienced at least one counselling meeting with me. My research design allowed potential research participants to have an experience of me using the same narrative therapy approach that they would experience if they chose to join my research and to be better positioned to imagine how participating in research might be with the added component of video recording and video review. As I report in the next chapter, all the participants identified this opportunity to experience counselling with me as crucial to their decisions to join my research, and all of the couples used six meetings funded through the family courts before joining my research, and one couple had significantly more meetings with me prior to joining.

Figure 2 shows the processes that occurred prior to the couples consenting to participate in my research.

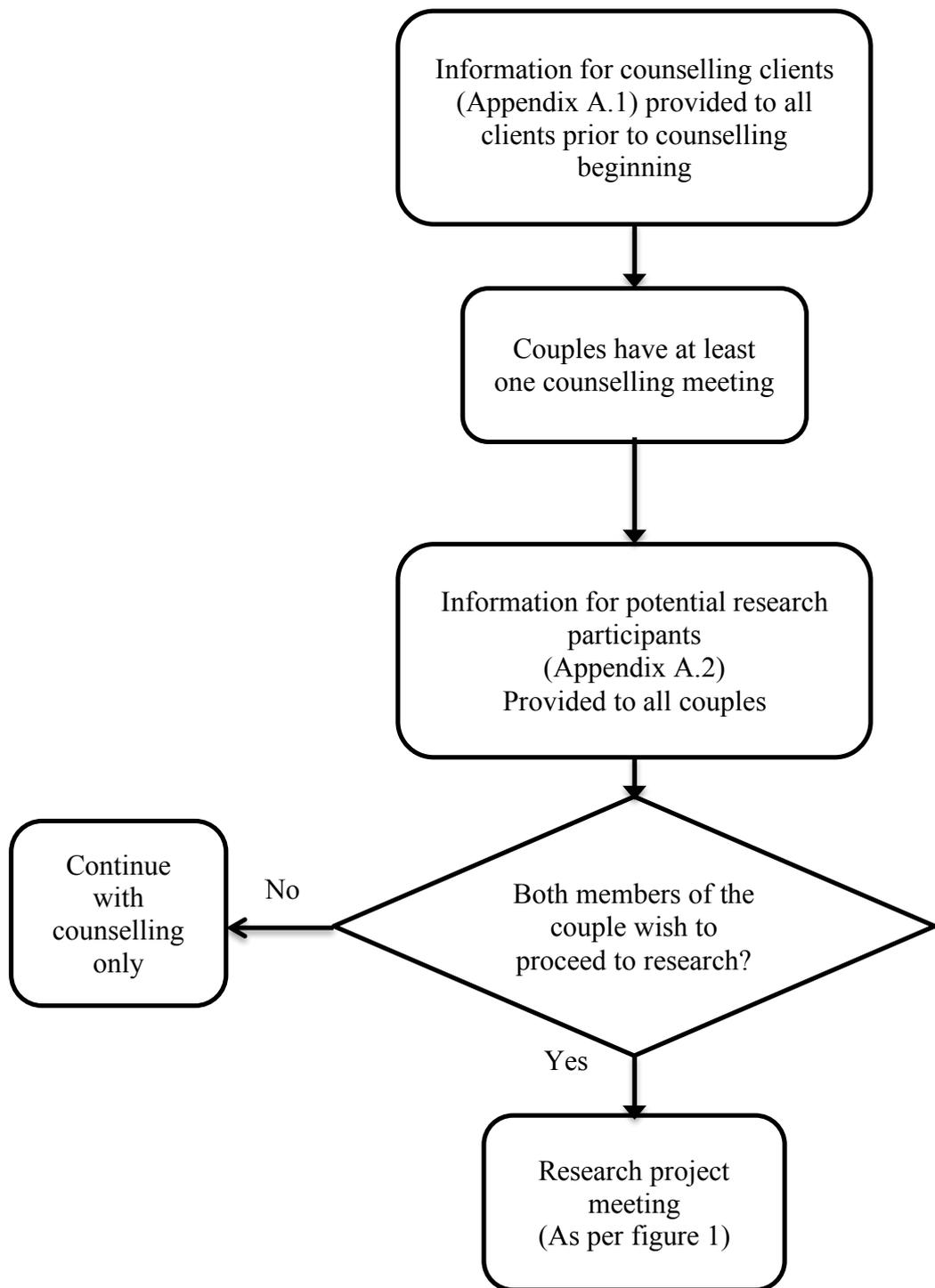


Figure 2: Pre research process

I advised all couples in my counselling practice that participation in my research was an option for all the couples I saw in my practice and I assured them that as I

needed only three couples for my research I hoped that no couples would feel under any pressure to participate. I explained that I would not be asking any couples to participate, and instead, in order to avoid placing potential participants in the position of having to actively decline an invitation to participate in my research, they had to actively seek participation. When I received approval to proceed to the data generation phase of this research, prior to the beginning of a counselling meeting I briefly explained my research to all of the couples whom I had seen more than once. The time taken to do this was not taken from the counselling hours allocated to them. I advised them that I would not raise the matter of my research again. It would be up to them to request further information before proceeding to the consent process. If potential participants indicated an interest in joining my research I provided them with an information pack, which included information for potential participants, a research consent form, a document outlining the questions I might ask them as part of the research, and a suspension or withdrawal from research form (Appendix A). Again, in order to progress to the next stage, the pre-research meeting, potential participants had to actively indicate their wish to do so. The first three couples who consented to participate in my research and who did not withdraw from it were the subjects of this study.

The pre-research meeting provided an opportunity for potential participants to discuss the research process and ask questions. Again, I discouraged potential participants from giving their consent at this meeting and I advised them that I would not raise the matter again, and that if they wished to participate in my research then they could post the consent form back to me. The information pack also stated that they could withdraw from the research at any time up until two

weeks after the debrief meeting (Appendix A5). If they decided to withdraw from the research they could do so by post and with the help of my clinical supervisor, Jane Harkness, and without having to discuss their reasons with me. That one couple withdrew from my research and continued counselling indicates that it was possible for a couple to withdraw from my research and still feel comfortable enough to continue counselling with me. However, I do not want to argue that this couple's withdrawal from my research and apparent comfort with continuing with counselling means that all the couples felt entirely free to withdraw.

Figure 3 shows the research processes in play once the couples had consented to participate.

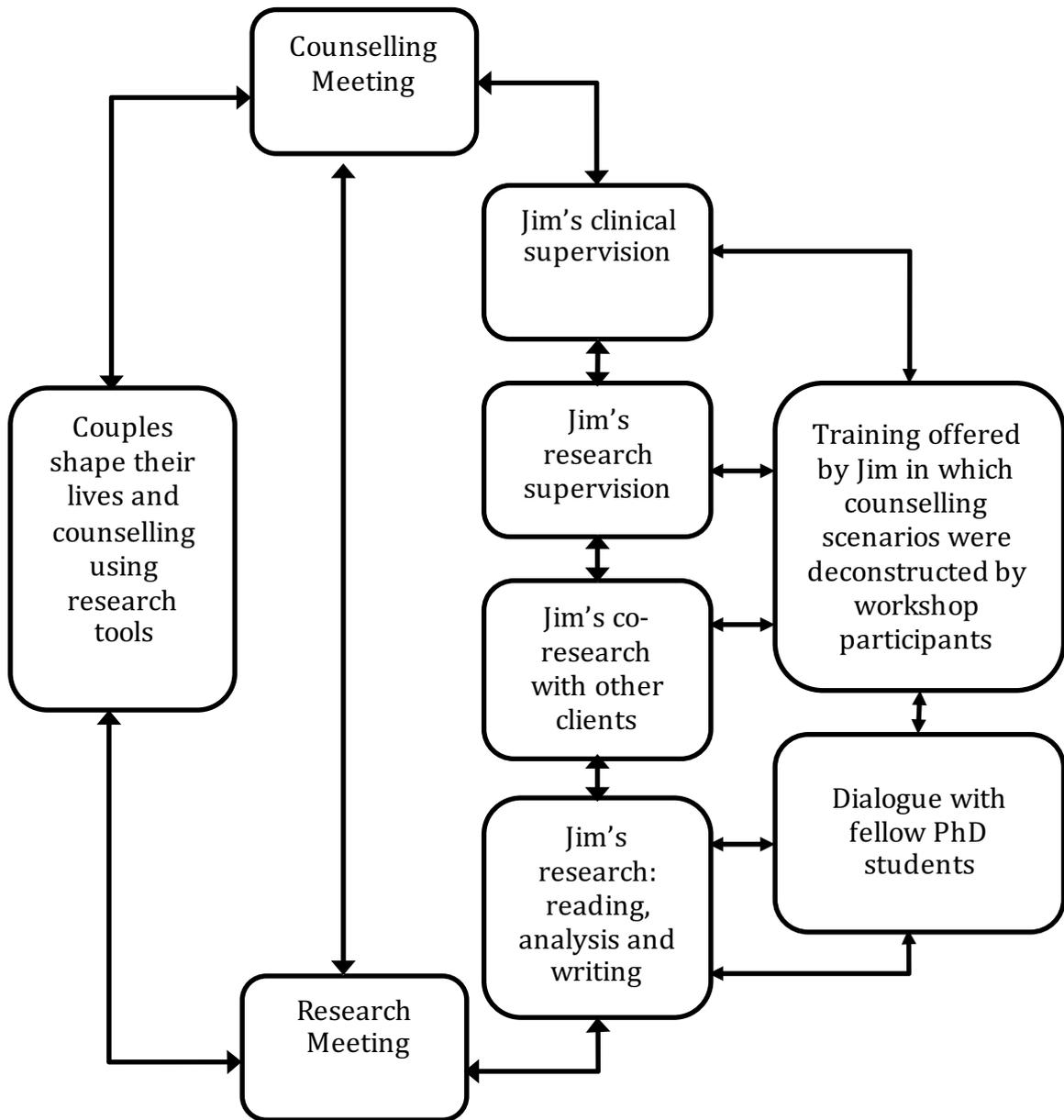


Figure 3: The reflexive research process

The left hand flow of figure 3 shows the couples/participants as researchers. I explicitly invited participants to take up the position that Gaddis (2002) had suggested; that they consider themselves “research consultants” (p. 124). I gave these invitations to be research consultants both in my written information to the participants (Appendix A.1) and in my meetings with them when I invited them to

take notes during our meetings, welcomed the use of their notes in our research meetings, and invited them to select parts of the video record that they wanted to review and make comment on. In this respect I was also following, K Crocket, Drewery, McKenzie, Smith and Winslade's (2004) suggestion that participants be accorded "agentive status in the research conversation as commentators, or even theorists through inviting them to make comment on the data" (p. 64).

The right hand flow of figure 3 shows the interaction between my meetings with my clinical and research supervisors, my meetings with other clients, and my research activities.

As I will show, having video records of my work with the couples in my research to review, including in supervision, which was also videoed and available for review, was influential both in producing my research analyses and shaping my counselling practice. The video record also increased my accountability to my participants as they could, and did, review and shape my counselling and research practice, as did my clinical and research supervisors.

After my research meetings with the participants concluded I continued to shape my analysis through review of the video records, supervision, reading and writing and presenting my findings, as shown on the far right of figure 3. This included presenting at the annual week-long meetings for my supervisors' PhD candidates and the workshops I facilitated at New Zealand Association of Counsellors conferences, and at couple counselling workshops that colleagues requested. These events provided opportunities for the participants to shape my counselling and research practices.

The timeline in Appendix C shows the counselling, research and debrief meetings my participants and I had from the first counselling meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to the final debrief on 12 May 2009.

## **(Co-)Research and therapy**

The wider counselling community have long been interested in the relationship between the practice of research and the practice of counselling (Etherington, 2001; Gale, 1992; Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Lees, 2001; McLeod, 1999, 2003; Skinner, 1998; West, 2002). What White (1995) called “primary research” (p. 78), the research and co-research performed by counsellors and their clients, is a longstanding and particular interest in narrative practice (Epston, 1999; White, 1997a). By using the post structural philosophy that sits with Narrative practice I have taken Gaddis’s work a step further and into the familiar narrative therapy territory of consulting with my own clients.

### *User friendly research tools: Video and co-research*

Video records are a vital research tool that researchers have used for decades in order to ground their analysis in accurate data, and it seemed appropriate to me that a robust practice of co-research would adopt this foundational research technology. Also, it seemed to me that by positioning both the couple and me as co-researchers we might together take up the exploratory ethic of research in order to achieve their purposes. I hoped that an ongoing collaborative practice of deconstructive co-research, where conclusions are deferred or held “under erasure” (Derrida, 1976, p. 60), might position us to adopt a more exploratory research ethic, which, as Anderson (2004) argued, seeks to avoid collecting data

in order to prove one's hypothesis. In this respect, I was interested in locating my research in traditions which foreground the production of knowledge and practices that challenge oppression and injustice, as Polkinghorne (1997) argued for psychology, and that Lees (2001) pointed out in the context of practitioner research in counselling.

I anticipated that the close fit between these research ethics and purposes and narrative therapy's ethics of co-research and accountability to clients might make it easier for me and the couples to seamlessly transition between narrative counselling using co-research and narrative co-research using video. Whereas Gaddis (2002) had used Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR), Grounded Theory and a reflecting team format in order to assist his participants to produce an account of their experiences, my interest was in positioning myself and my participants as co-researchers who could all use the same methods of narrative co-research throughout this counselling and re-view phase of the research. In this respect, I was drawing on a tradition of qualitative case research which "attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3), and that uses methods and produces analyses that are more comprehensible and user friendly to counsellors and their clients (Lees, 2001). I hoped that the process of co-research I would be facilitating would become sufficiently familiar to the couples that they would be in a position to not only shape the process and outcomes of our meetings, but also that they might take up this tool and apply it to their lives outside our meetings.

In my findings I describe in detail how the couples/participants took up these co-research and research practices and how I worked to safely position the

participants as fellow co-researchers of what was just and helpful for them as determined by them using deconstructive co-research and video. Some of the participants found this repositioning of them as researchers of externalised problems and their influence over those problems so useful that they not only accepted my invitations to take notes in our meeting, they also took *research* notes as they went about their lives outside our meetings. Crucially, positioning the participants as narrative therapy co-researchers helped us to focus our deconstructive analysis on addressing how their and my actions related to our values and preferred actions, and to move away from using the video as a technology of examination through which we might measure our failures to adhere to taken-for-granted and unquestioned norms.

This process was supported by the narrative therapy practice of externalising problems (White, 1988b), and the familiarity with this positioning that the couple had gained from their experience of narrative therapy co-research. I hoped that this familiarity with externalising practices would help us to treat the video record as a reliable externalisation of my and the couples' interactions and that our co-research of the records of these interactions might help us avoid some of the conflicts and distress that I described in chapter 3. These distressing conflicts often occurred when video records were used in couple counselling to produce microscopic evidence of individuals' pathologies (Alkire & Brunse, 1974).

### **Counsellors as researchers: benefits and risks.**

As I was planning to research my own practice my research participants would also be my counselling clients. In the next part of this chapter I describe the strategies I put in place to address these dual, multiple and overlapping

relationships by following in the footsteps of other researchers, adhering to research regulations (University of Waikato, 2008) and counselling codes of ethics (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2009) and the ethics and philosophical positions of narrative therapy (e.g. White, 1988a, 1994, 2007).

Dual, multiple and overlapping roles occur when “there are two (or more) distinct kinds of relationship with the same person” (Tomm, 1993a, p. 48). In my research method there are a number of such relationships. My clients were also my research participants, and my doctoral supervisors oversaw my performances as a candidate and as a practitioner researcher. Codes of Ethics (e.g. New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2009) and ethical problem solving approaches (e.g. Bond, 2000) often advise counsellors to be careful about or avoid dual relationships if possible as the potential for misunderstanding and harm to participants increases with the incompatibility of expectations and roles and the divergence of obligations between counsellor/researcher and clients/participants (Cheek, 2000; Kitchener, 1988). Hart and Crawford-Wright (1999) suggested that this role conflict might to some extent explain the low rate of practitioner research.

At the same time, others (K. Crocket, 2011; Tomm, 1993a; Zur, 2000) have argued that there are considerable benefits possible from dual or multiple relationships in counselling, provided that these relationships are not sexual, are entered into with informed and ongoing consent, that the clients can withdraw from them at any time and that the risks of exploitation are identified and guarded against. Similar arguments have been made that research carried out safely, sensitively and ethically by counsellors with their own clients can enhance the

therapeutic experience of clients (K. Crocket et al., 2004; Drury, 2006; Etherington, 2001; Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Skinner, 1998).

Drury (2006) and Skinner (1998) have suggested that trained counsellors might be able to collect sensitive and useful data that would not be so accessible to other researchers. Others have suggested that having collected this data, counsellors would be well positioned to deal with their participants' and their own experience of the material should this cause distress (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999; Hodgetts & Wright, 2007).

However the very skills that counsellors employ to put their clients at ease to speak about the intimate details of their lives can also pose a risk to research participants who may reveal more to readers of the counsellor's research than they intended (Hart & Crawford-Wright, 1999). Qualitative research produces a dilemma of how to bring people's stories to life through the presentation of rich detail (Geertz, 1973), without breaching confidentiality (West, 2002). I was concerned that the combination of my counselling skills and my fledgling researcher skills might well have clients/participants disclosing more in the moment of counselling than they would like published in my PhD.

I tried to address this problem by inviting the participants to choose pseudonyms and to remove, although not alter, sections of transcripts, which they did not want to be part of the research – one of the participants exercised this right. However, these measures do not alter the fact that however participants and researchers change their details, the participants will recognise their stories and themselves

(West, 2002) and may be affected by a researcher's interpretations of what happened in their meetings.

I hoped to address this concern in part through the narrative therapy practices of co-researching and externalising problems in order to co-produce accounts which the participants felt did them justice, and by focussing primarily on co-researching exceptions to problems in order to produce accounts which were honouring of the participants. I also offered to meet with the participants at no charge in order to address their concerns if they found themselves affected when my research was published.

### *Honest expressions of experiences*

While accountability and collaboration are features of narrative therapy and co-research in particular, and formal ongoing client feedback to a counsellor about the outcomes and process of counselling has been shown to improve those outcomes and processes for clients (Drury, 2006; Miller et al., 2006), such processes do not guarantee that clients will be well placed to provide honest and accurate feedback to counsellors.

As noted earlier, even if clients and research participants are in a position to be honest about their experiences without fear of the consequences, their honest expressions of their experiences and their experiences themselves will be produced and understood according to the gendered discursive practices and positions in play in particular contexts. And while clients may well be constrained by fear of negative consequences, or a sense of obligation to be helpful and polite (Manthei, 2006), the consequences and obligations may well be more onerous for research participants. Counselling clients already report greater anxiety when

being recorded (Howe, 1996), and this aspect is exacerbated in research when the recordings are going to have a wider audience than their counsellor and may be watched by audiences with quite different sensibilities to those prevalent at the time of the video's making (West, 2002). Furthermore, the participants and counsellor may well have changed to the extent that these videos may no longer depict their current practices.

### *Accountability*

At the same time, having a video record, and transcripts taken from this record, affords some objectivity in the sense outlined in the previous chapter, which supports accountability and provides some protection for all the participants. I was, like my participants, subject to video analysis by them and by my supervisors. And while therapists are often conscious of responding to the voices of others not in the counselling room, such as other family members, clinical supervisors, colleagues, and authors whose work informs their practice legally and ethically, in addition:

researchers are more likely to be conscious of entering into conversation with previous researchers, responding to what has previously been written in a research domain, anticipating what supervisors, editors and peer reviewers might already be poised to comment on and conscious of a wide audience of potential readers looking over their shoulders. (K. Crocket et al., 2004, p. 65)

Our ethic of co-research may have contributed to my participants appreciating that I had been, like them, prepared to place myself under scrutiny, for their benefit as well as my own. As one couple indicated, they viewed me as a fellow co-researcher “huddled round the video” (p.141) as we worked together to produce

knowledge that was helpful to them. The couple whom I produced transcripts for also saw the work that went into transcribing their words as evidence of the value I gave to them and what they said.

### *Changes in my counsellor/researcher positioning*

My accountability to the participants and potential audiences was very much on my mind not only in my meetings with my participants but also when I concluded my counselling work with them and began to produce my partial and tentative account of what I had learned and wanted to offer to the community of practitioners and researchers. And these practices of accountability continued to shape my counselling and research practice as in my meetings with my research supervisors we reviewed and analysed the video records and transcripts and shaped my written attempts to make sense of my research. I also made either video or audio records of these meetings with my research supervisors and I reviewed these records in order to shape my practice.

Co-researching my research and therapy practices from different positions on this wider experimental apparatus that included my supervisors and my work with other clients, shaped not only my therapy practice and theory, it also continued to shape my research method. Firstly, as I began my research I got so caught up in imagining what my research supervisors, who were also skilled clinicians, would think of what I was doing when they subjected my video records and transcripts to sophisticated and fine-grained analysis, that I often slipped out of close collaboration with my participants/couples and into trying to do what I imagined my research supervisors might favour. Furthermore, by trying to do a good job of

being a PhD researcher and a counsellor, I ended up doing neither as well as I would have liked.

My research supervisors and I addressed this last point by making a clearer distinction between my practice of counselling co-research using video and my analysis of this work. I moved to position myself as a narrative therapist using video to support therapeutic co-research and when this counselling and co-research with video phase and debrief had finished, I then reviewed the video records in order to produce an analysis that might contribute to the field of couple counselling. Most of this analysis was produced after all contact with the couples had ceased. While this distinction between researcher and narrative therapy co-researcher was not always so clear in practice, this reconceptualization helped me to enter more fully into co-research practices without feeling so subject to examination by a wider and critical research audience.

Similarly, as I entered more into an ethic of co-research, I saw that I had retained aspects of my initial training as a social worker that I had assumed that I had left behind. Close examination of my work showed that I was continuing to call upon the textbook assessment and intervention models (e.g. Siporin, 1975) that were dominant when I first studied to attain a social work qualification in 1984 and that I had been steeped in in the decades since. This modernist model at times led me to take up the position of assessing what was *really going on* and offering “disguised instruction” (Bird, 2004, p. 353). This approach was so taken-for-granted and familiar as to be invisible to me until my research supervisors helped me to recognise it by analysing the video records and my writing. This recognition

led me to search for theory that would give me better protection against the pull of the familiar idea that the video was an unmediated reality.

Eventually my search for theory that would serve me better in these situations and my colleague Brian Morris' presentation on deconstruction (personal communication, June 18, 2013) at our annual gathering of PhD students, helped me to understanding and using deconstruction as a practice of justice (Derrida, 1992). This deconstructive approach led to a significant and profound shift in my positioning with my clients and participants. I recognised that I had been using narrative therapy ideas with the purpose of overturning the problem in favour of *the correct solution* as imagined by me. My new understanding of deconstruction supported me to better defer my old habits of jumping to conclusions based on familiar binaries such as the problem and its solution, and by using deconstructive co-research in order that my clients, my research participants and I might together address questions of justice.

Similarly, material-feminism (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007) offered a way out my struggle with what weight to give the video record, which was clearly more reliable, impartial and authoritative than our memories, without falling into some kind of binary where it was understood as *the* reality, or where it was considered to be no more objective than our opinions. Material feminism's (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007) conceptualisation of the material-discursive provided, for me, what Derrida might have described as a "new concept", produced by repeatedly overturning the binary of objective and subjective. The material feminist notion of objectivity which casts video records as unambiguous and reproducible artefacts of particular experimental

arrangements that are not dependant on the will of an observer (Barad, 2007), helped me to understand how the video records protected us from unresolved disagreements about what happened in the “landscape of action” (White, 2007, p. 78). At the same time this understanding of the objectivity of the video records supported deconstructive co-research of the meanings attached to that material. This process of material discursive deconstruction made possible so called self-reflections that might otherwise have passed unobserved and not storied.

Finally, our co-research with video and my experiments with my analyses, helped me notice that I was operating according to some individualistic ideas, which I thought I had eschewed, and that in order to address the often subtle ways that the participants/couples and I responded to each other and shaped our interactions I needed more relational theoretical tools. I found some of these tools in Bakhtin’s (1981b, 1986) dialogism and Shotter and Billig’s (1998) “relational-responsive understandings” (p. 102), which also drew on Bakhtin’s (1986) work.

These theories, which I described in chapters 2 and 3, have this prominence as a result of years of reflexive processes of co-research, practitioner research and research that have demonstrated the utility of those theoretical tools in supporting a just, respectful and collaborative counselling practice. In this sense my research method has been an attempt to build on Johnson’s (2003) hopes for a revolution in couple therapy when practitioners as scientists investigate “the moment-to-moment magic that is therapy” and “see research as a powerful resource and are inspired by research investigations to do more efficient and effective therapy” (p. 379) and on Hart and Crawford’s (1999) envisioning of “research as therapy and therapy as research”.

## **Methods of analysis**

My research purposes evolved to: firstly, to produce a practice of deconstructive, dialogical narrative therapy co-research and research using video, which my participants and I would say is doing them justice; and secondly, to produce an analysis of this counselling and co-research practice using video, which might produce practical tools for use in the gendered, rapid and often volatile politics of couple counselling, and offer a method by which counsellors could research their own practices.

I have continued to use the same theoretical tools in my research analysis as I used in my counselling, and which I described in chapters 2 and 3, in order to promote findings that my participants would understand and experience as respectful to them and see as consistent with their experience of counselling. I hoped that this would also make me more accountable to them, particularly if, as they all indicated they would like to do, they read my PhD. I also hoped that these methods would be sufficiently familiar to practitioners who might read my research to generate information for use in practice (Johnson, 2003; Lees, 2001; Winslade, 2003).

For the purposes of clarity and utility in my research method I have organised these theoretical tools under the umbrella of discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis treats the social world as a text, or rather as a system of texts which can be systematically 'read' by the researcher to lay open the psychological processes that lie within them, processes that the discipline of psychology usually attributes to a machinery inside the individual's head. (Parker, 1994, p. 92)

I have drawn on critical linguistic discourse analysis to emphasize the political and contextual nature of these social processes which Foucault (1963, 1965, 1969, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1997, 2002) drew attention to in his analyses of discourse. Critical linguistic discourse analysis is

concerned with inflecting Foucault's analysis of discourse with a political concern with the effects of discourse; for example, the way that people are positioned into roles through discursive structures, the way that certain peoples' knowledge is disqualified or is not taken seriously in contrast to authorised knowledge, and so on. (Mills, 2004, p. 133)

In choosing to supplement discourse analysis with positioning theory I am following Winslade (2003) in suggesting that the application of "discursive positioning" (p. 93) allows the analysis of subtle positioning within discursive practices. Positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999a) offers the concept of *position* as referring to fluid and dynamic patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting as an alternative to the more static concept of role (Davies & Harré, 1990; Tan & Moghaddam, 1995). Hence the concept of discursive positioning seemed to me to be well suited to an analysis of the complex and fluid positioning that is often a characteristic of couple counselling, which takes place in the context of changing gendered discursive practices concerning marriage, or marriage-like relationships.

Similarly, deconstructive research emphasises the importance of uncovering the taken-for-granted, unspoken and hence often invisible assumptions and discourses that shape the text. Deconstructive approaches emphasize the importance of deferring any conclusions and then placing them under erasure in order to preserve other possible readings, and in order to be doing justice (Derrida, 1992, p. 10) to the participants' situations and hopes. In the same sense that Derrida

(1976) argued that language provided a “guardrail” (p. 158) that “protected” (p. 158) a text from being understood to “say almost anything” (p. 158) its reader wanted it to, I have called upon material feminism (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007) in order to treat the video record and transcripts produced from it, as *protected* texts, which shape and restrict the available discursive readings.

My selection of a research method was both a practical and ethical act (K. Crocket, 2001; McLeod, 1999). I have attempted to follow a tradition of research that prioritises the “moral and political” (Kvale, 1996, p. 73) to ensure that the methods used serve the participants’ goals and acknowledge and promote an ongoing examination of bias and limitations (Dankoski, 2000; Kvale, 1996) and which draw upon emancipatory and deconstructive traditions in order to “work against discourses of domination” (A. R. Crocket, 2010, p. 96). In particular, I want to avoid the presumption that might cast my findings at this time as the truth about my participants and their situations. In chapters 6 to 12 I will show how I employed these research tools to analyse my practice of therapeutic co-research in couple counselling using video.

## **Chapter 5. Safe co-research with video**

In this chapter I outline how I cast my counselling as a practice of hospitable deconstructive co-research. As our co-research with video began I was struck by how this technology made clear some assumptions I had taken-for-granted about my positioning with my participants. In this chapter I focus on a particular set of assumptions, which tended to produce conflict between the members of the couples, and perhaps might have produced more conflict with me if they had not been under video surveillance and if co-research had not given them opportunities to address those of my actions, which with hindsight, I considered unjust and inhospitable. In particular, I noticed that I was employing White's (2007) suggestion that therapists adopt the position of investigative reporters with their clients to expose the truth regarding corruption and abuses of power in a way that installed me as the judge of what was the truth and that, albeit often benignly, entitled me to pursue that truth in ways that I would say were inhospitable to my participants.

### **Hospitality**

Hospitality may seem like a very ordinary and familiar idea, unworthy of inclusion amongst such esoteric theory, but I include it here because I found myself making exceptions to deconstructive practices and to hospitality when I took up a very familiar position which involved my hot pursuit of justice, as if justice could be discovered unilaterally and arrived at without due care of relationships.

Derrida (2005) spoke of two necessary and conflicting “figures of hospitality” (p. 6), the first, “a welcome without reserve and without calculation, an exposure without limit to whoever arrives” and the second “to protect a ‘home’, without doubt, by guaranteeing property and what is ‘proper’ to itself against the unlimited arrival of the other” (p. 6). In living with this tension between hosting another and protecting oneself and what is proper a host must calculate the risks to her or himself “without closing the door on the incalculable, that is, on the future and the foreigner” (Derrida, 2005, p. 6). In a counselling context this is to suggest that the rules for protection, the ground-rules for conduct in a counselling meeting and the codes of ethics that govern counsellors’ actions, must strive to keep open the door on the possibility that, despite one’s certainty, one cannot know the other or the truth, and that to think that one does so is to disrespect the other and to risk suppressing the production of new knowledge that might serve their purposes. Hospitality then serves as “an intentional experience which proceeds beyond knowledge toward the other as absolute stranger, as unknown, where I know that I know nothing of him” (Derrida, 2000, p. 8), and a counter to some taken-for-granted unilateral practices, in which one does what one assumes is best for the other without dialogue.

An ethic of hospitality “consists in doing everything to address the other, to accord him, even to ask him his name, while keeping this question from becoming a ‘condition’, a police inquisition, a blacklist or a simple border control” (Derrida, 2005, p. 7). In this sense hospitality is also a form of deconstruction in that it requires a host to defer judgment on the differences of the stranger and to work with him or her to address questions of justice. The metaphor of hospitality to strangers “does not presume that we necessarily know what will count as care in

any particular meeting of strangers” (Drewery, 2005, p. 309) but requires a host, a counsellor, to offer a form of hospitality that provides a stranger with opportunities to voice their experience and to shape the experiences of host and guest. In this process, as in co-research, the host is “hostage” (see Derrida, 2000, p. 9) to the guests’ purposes, within the ethical boundaries provided by codes of ethics. Derrida (2000) drew on Levinas’ (2004) proposal that being hostage to the other is an ethical responsibility through which “there can be pity, compassion, pardon and proximity in the world” (p. 117).

## **Beginning co-research with video: some host responsibilities.**

I designed my research so that potential participants would have experienced working with me prior to being invited to participate in this research. While this prior experience did not include using video according to the methodology of my research project, I hoped the couples would be familiar enough with my practices of narrative co-research to predict that it would be safe to participate in my study. Key aspects of this safety were that co-research centres the purposes and hopes of clients, and provides them with ongoing opportunities to comment on and shape counselling (Epston, 1999; White, 1995).

Because this co-research began prior to our first recordings I do not have transcripts that demonstrate how I introduced the couples to the idea and practice of co-research. However, this introduction to counselling is a crucial aspect of my practice, and one which clients often say contributes to them feeling safe and welcome. In the absence of transcripts showing this introductory work I will refer

to the pamphlets I provide to all clients prior to our first meeting, including each of the couples in my study, and to an account of narrative co-research with couples (Depree, 2011). Next, I present information from my final meetings with the three couples who participated in this research, when they reflected on what went into their decisions to participate in my study.

### *An invitation*

When White (1988b, p. 4) developed “externalising” as an approach to therapy he suggested that the practice of externalizing a problem encouraged persons to objectify problems and to separate from understandings that these problems were evidence of their character flaws. This externalising paved the way for clients and counsellors to cooperate and unite against the problem. The practice of co-research (Epston, 1999; White, 1995) supplemented externalising conversations by positioning counsellors and clients to work together to expose a problem’s tactics and to develop solutions that suited the clients (White, 2007). An integral part of this collaboration was that these conversations were themselves the subject of co-research. This second layer of co-research was intended to provide clients with ongoing opportunities to shape the counselling so that it was centred on their experiences of how safe and respectful they were finding the process, as well as how helpful it was in relation to their hopes. This co-research of the therapeutic process included White (1991) inviting his clients to critique his performance, including the questions he asked them.

In centring clients’ interests and experiences White was explicitly positioning himself to engage in “counter practices” (1988b, p. 16) to those “modes of enquiry” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778) produced by so called “expert knowledge”

(White, 1988b, p. 10) and which allowed counsellors to use scientific practices to classify persons according to their personal deficiencies. In the following chapters I show how these practices of co-research allowed the couples and I to review our work on video and to note some ill effects of some of our presuppositions about practices of care, and our positioning around video as an exposing technology and a form of proof. I argue that these profound developments in my practice were products of practices of hospitable and deconstructive co-research.

Derrida (1997, 2000, 2005) often referred to the importance of addressing the other in his or her language and while he was referring to the difficulty a guest might have in responding in a language other than their first language, I have tried to apply something of Derrida's (1997, 2000, 2005) approach to hospitality by addressing clients using what I imagined might be welcoming and conversational language that is familiar to them and which separates them from the problem.

Accordingly, my introductory pamphlet (see appendix A.1), which all clients received prior to their first meeting, began with a paraphrase of White's famous externalisation of "the problem" (1988b, p. 4):

I believe problems are the problem, not people, and not their relationships.  
I believe problems come about as a result of a combination of  
circumstances and people's sensitivity and loyalty to ways of thinking  
about and dealing with those circumstances which don't work for them.

This opening statement was intended to address clients' fears that their personal failings will be exposed. It offers the view that the problems clients are experiencing may be understood as produced by "circumstances" and approaches

to those circumstances that do not produce the kinds of results they might expect to achieve given their level of commitment to those solutions.

For many years the phrase “the problem is the problem, not people, and not their relationships” has been identified by many of my clients as the reason they choose me as their counsellor. However, as I noted in chapter 5, in the light of a deconstructive analysis, constructing the problem in these binary terms is to begin with a conclusion that may be inhospitable to those people who are wanting to separate from their partners and for whom the suggestion that their “violent partner” or “abusive relationship” is not a problem may be experienced as another unjust conclusion imposed by others who consider themselves expert in the persons’ problems and seemingly do not understand or do not wish to understand their situations and their experiences. In the light of this analysis I now emphasise descriptions of counselling as an hospitable process in which we collaborate in order to do justice to clients’ situations and hopes.

In the introductory pamphlet I gave to clients and potential participants in 2008, I described some practices of hospitality that attempt to anticipate and address my clients’ concerns about what will happen in our meetings. First, I described my ethical intent to work collaboratively and respectfully with clients in order to achieve their solutions:

It is important to me that we work together in a respectful way to find solutions that suit you. An essential part of this is creating the conditions where you can participate fully.

Again, I make clear that counselling will be a “two-way” (White, 1995, p. 131) process rather than an imposition of expert knowledge. I then provided some specific information about how this collaboration is achieved:

One of the ways I work is by asking questions. Please tell me if my questions seem to be on the right track, or if they are missing the point, or if you are in any way uncomfortable with anything I say. If there are any questions I ask and you think “Why is he asking that?” you are most welcome to ask me. I am happy to explain and if you decide you would prefer not to answer, that’s fine. If you choose not to answer a question I don’t see that as a bad sign, that’s simply your right. If I put anything in a way which doesn’t make sense to you, or you feel I am taking sides or trying to talk you into something, please do let me know. If there is anything you want to know please ask. Any question or concern you have is important to me.

When writing this statement, I imagined speaking face to face with clients as I would speak with a stranger who might become a guest and whom I wanted to welcome and put at ease. To support this evocation of a face-to-face engagement, my pamphlet includes a photo of me that was taken by my daughter. This photo is intended to capture me as I might actually look when, having waited for clients to arrive, I come out to greet them as they approach my office. My daughter and I scrutinised this photo so that I looked welcoming, friendly and helpful. We took care to avoid reproducing conventions of professionalism and personal attractiveness which tend to present an idealisation of a counsellor rather than how the client might find them. This is not to say that I position myself as inexperienced. In my pamphlet I also present information about my experience and qualifications. And I appreciate that the weight given these and gendered assumptions about the expertise of experienced male professionals may allow me to foreground my friendliness without undermining my clients’ confidence in me.

In Derridean (2000) terms, my pamphlet is intended as an “exercise of ethical responsibility” (p. 9) to address my clients before I ask their name, and to present my expertise as a host and as far as ethically possible a “hostage” (p. 9) to their purposes. I want my clients to feel welcome, and to understand that decisions on whether to proceed with counselling would be made according to their preferences, my scope of practice, what other counsellors might offer, and our co-research of our progress towards their goals.

To further assist clients to imagine what our meeting might be like I offer an account of the way I work which includes questions that I imagine clients might ask themselves and how I might respond to their questions. This imaginary conversation also includes reference to their right not to answer questions their partner or I may put to them. When I meet with clients in person I expand on the importance of this right by saying something like:

I do not want your courage or your hopes to run away with you so that you say things that you might regret and before you have checked out that I can be trusted with them, and before it is safe for you to speak without doing harm to your relationship.

I intend this statement to invite clients to attend to their concerns rather than dismiss them as a form of pathology that they must discipline themselves to overcome or deny. I invite clients to consider reining in their courage and honesty until they have established that the conditions in our counselling relationship are safe and in order to counter common individualistic and pathologising explanations for silence, such as fear and dishonesty. I think that positioning clients to rein in their speaking to what they consider safe is particularly important in couple counselling, as I have often found that clients act as if the presence of a

counsellor will guarantee safety and provide an opportunity for them to vent their feelings in familiar disrespectful and harmful ways.

My pamphlet also makes clear that it is my responsibility to put things in a way that makes sense to them. I take this position so as to avoid positioning them so that when I say something they do not understand, that they do not attribute this experience to a lack of intelligence or lack of proficiency in language on their part. Instead, I want to emphasise that our understanding is a collaborative process and that when they alert me to things that I do that are unhelpful, this will provide me and them with opportunities to improve our teamwork. These strategies are also designed as a counter practice to the form of respect for expert knowledge that subjugates “popular” knowledge (White, 1988b, p. 10) by encouraging clients to remain silent about those of their experiences that might contradict expert knowledge.

### *An introduction to co-research*

At the first counselling meeting with all couples, and with the couples who chose to participate in my research, I reiterate this information from the pamphlet, and the brief biographical information it contains about my experience and my family. I invite clients to ask me questions about the counselling process or about me. I offer this biographical information and the opportunity for clients to ask me questions as a form of reciprocity. As they will be entrusting me with intimate information about their lives, I wish them to have the opportunity to know something of my life that might help them trust me to host our meetings. And, I explain that like them, I have the right to decide not to answer a question.

I also make explicit a basic requirement of even-handedness by stating that I will be keeping an eye on the time each person has to speak, and that I would stop interruptions so that people would have time to develop their thoughts. Looking back from my current vantage point I can see that my intention to “keep an eye” on how their conversational time is shared emphasises surveillance and policing rather than hospitality and doing them justice. I will say more of this in the following chapter.

At this first meeting I also explain that it is a routine practice of my counselling with couples that I enquire about their experience of the meetings, often at the halfway point of the meeting, and towards the end of each meeting - unless we were very pushed for time - and whenever there was cause for concern. I caution them against the usual practices of politeness in which they might answer, “Good thanks” when our conversation was distressing or making trouble between them. I explain that if they replied “Good”, I might ask more about their experience so that we can discover what in particular is working or not working for them. I explain that at these times I routinely ask questions about the effects our conversation is having on them and their relationship, such as: were they feeling more or less appreciated, understood and respected<sup>\*</sup>; how we were doing in relation to their goals, were we talking about the things they had hoped to talk about; and concerning their preferred identities, what were they appreciating about the way they were speaking?

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<sup>\*</sup> I am delighted that at a workshop I was offering a participant pointed out that I was offering binary descriptions when I suggested clients locate their experiences in terms of “more or less”. I have taken up her suggestion and I try to make more specific enquiries about their particular experiences. And I delight in that she brought this to my attention and I take that she did so as an effect of the ethic of co-research that was established by me and the participants at that workshop.

I advise the couples that at the end of meetings I invite them to let me know if after “sleeping on it” they had some concerns about how the counselling was proceeding, then I would welcome them letting me know of those concerns by phone or email, so that I could better assist them. I explain that I make this invitation for two reasons: I find it helpful to put some time and space between me and the decision to be made, and that some research I read, (Dijksterhuis & Nordgren, 2006) indicates that people make better decisions concerning complex matters when they have time to unconsciously process that information. Also, I do not want them to go along with decisions because they feel pressured or to keep the peace. And, I want them to have time and space to contact me individually and in confidence so that couples know they can provide me with information that might help me to make our conversations safer when they feel it would be problematic to speak about their concerns in joint conversations. Making it explicit that such contacts with me will be confidential also discourages attempts by either party to trick the other in to disclosing information given in such contacts by saying “Jim told me you told him...”.

I make it explicit that I want clients to listen to their own experiences and my invitations to them to voice their concerns to me separately or together are made so that I can better support them to safely give voice to and realise their hopes. In this way I want to avoid reproducing common problematic practices where persons are positioned to be silent about their heartfelt concerns for the good of their relationship, or where clients mistakenly think that having a counsellor present guarantees that they can safely say things they might otherwise not risk saying.

*Promoting safety through appreciation of difference and co-research*

Once counselling was underway and prior to their participation in this study, I provided the couples with written information outlining White's (1986) "appreciation of difference" exercise for them to use in our meetings and at home. A copy of this information as it was provided to the couples in my research is attached in appendix B.1. As I will show, as a result of my co-research and research throughout this study, I modified this exercise so that it foregrounds a deconstructive and material feminist approach, which emphasises that the views elicited are always in the process of being deconstructed, and that they are not conclusions or the truth. Nor is this exercise intended as a means by which a couple can simply reproduce and rehearse their pre-existing views. This modified exercise is depicted in appendix B.2. and I discuss it further in chapter 13.

In brief, the appreciation of difference exercise encourages couples to reduce conflict by suspending any ideas that an individual can "have access to the sole truth" (White, 1986a, p. 11) in relation to a particular event. Instead they are positioned to deepen their understanding, appreciation and respect of each other's experiences and hopes. In this way couples are positioned to better avoid familiar conflictual practices where they urgently attempt to persuade the other of the facts of the matter. I make this position clear to couples by explaining that our conversations are about putting their views together so that they have an in-depth, binocular view of their situations, and so I do not expect them to have identical experiences of the same events.

Similarly, in positioning us as co-researchers, I try to avoid such conflicts by avoiding positions of authority over what is the correct course of action for them.

Instead, I support collaborative enquiry into the real effects of their actions and thinking in relation to their purposes. White named this positioning “decentred” and “influential” (2007, p. 39). A therapist is decentred when he or she “is not the author of people’s positions on the problems and predicaments of their lives” (White, 2007, p. 39). Instead the therapist is oriented to acknowledge, attend to, and take responsibility for the real effects of his or her actions on the relationship with the clients. This includes addressing the operation of power in counselling and in people’s lives and situations, and to place the consciousness and the knowledge of the clients at the centre of therapy (White, 1997). A therapist gains influence by co-researching problems and predicaments using externalising conversations so as to provide people with “an opportunity to define their own position in relation to their problems and to give voice to what underpins this position” (White, 2007, p. 39).

I also make clear some of the ground rules that limit our counselling meetings, such as that I cannot assist them to do something illegal, or stand by if there is abusive speech or actions.

### *Participants’ experiences of hospitality and co-research*

These experiences of narrative co-research prior to the beginning of my research were influential in the couples’ decisions to participate in it. As these experiences necessarily occurred prior to the data collection phase of my research, I rely on the accounts the couples gave of their reasons for participating as evidence of the effectiveness and importance of these practices. They gave these accounts in our debrief meetings. These debrief meetings occurred after the conclusion of the counselling and video review meetings.

Miranda's decision to join this project was founded on her experience of externalising conversations:

We'd had counselling before. And the way you said "the problem is the problem and not the person" and also the few sessions we'd had, you know, that gives us the confidence, "Yes, if the sessions are the same then we're quite happy to participate", because I think if we'd walked in the first time around and then you'd asked to turn the camera on, it would be a completely different ... It would have been really frightening.

And her partner, Tony, agreed that knowing the counselling method we were using was the same safe method we would be using in the research was crucial to their decision to participate:

The fact that we got to know you and your technique was a positive. With the previous counsellor, if he had suggested it [participating in videotaped research] even once we would have run for the hills 'cause of his particular technique.

The other men who participated, also stressed the importance of having this experience of counselling with me prior to joining the research. Dave felt that without this experience of "a relationship" with me that "had benefit" he would not have participated. For Wiremu, the prospect of being videoed for a PhD would have been one he and Hinemoa "probably would have said 'No' to" if they had not had this time prior to the introduction of video recording.

I suggest that these participants' concerns about video recording are an effect of the long history of use of and understandings of video as a technology that will be employed to expose clients' or patients' personal failings or wrong doings, which I outlined in the chapter 3. I argue that the couples who participated in this research experienced externalising conversations and co-research sufficiently for

them to enter into a use of video technology that they understood they could influence.

*Hosting tangata whenua: Addressing the other in their language*

As Māori, Hinemoa and Wiremu are tangata whenua (people of the land) of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Treaty of Waitangi sets out a partnership between the Crown and Māori (Archives New Zealand. Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, n.d.). Throughout my career as a social worker and counsellor, professional training and codes of ethics (ANZASW, 2013; New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2002) have emphasised the importance of honouring this partnership by recognising The Treaty of Waitangi and by employing a bicultural approach to counselling. Social work and counsellor training has often begun with a pōwhiri, the process of being safely welcomed on to a marae, a meeting area for Māori. Durie (2001) suggested this marae process offered a model for the establishment of safe, hospitable and “mutually beneficial relationships” (p. 83) in “encounters with Māori beyond the marae” (p. 91). In this marae process the space between tangata whenua, the people of the land, or the local people, and manuhiri, guests, is managed through a process of call and response to ensure safety when visitors are welcomed. In this process the hosts, or “tangata whenua ... have a right to exercise control but also to demonstrate a capacity for hospitality” (Durie, 2001, p. 79).

As part of honouring this duty of providing safe hospitality, and in particular to indicate my willingness to be sensitive to and to discuss culture (Pope-Davis et al., 2002), the welcome on my office door is written in English and te reo. A Māori client made these welcome signs in response to co-researching questions from me concerning how I might improve my service. As part of this practice of hospitality

I greeted Hinemoa and Wiremu in Māori. I was careful to try to pronounce their names and the names of family members (whānau) correctly, and to use common Māori terms, such as whānau. As family or whānau is central to Māori concepts of identity, and the care of children is seen as an important and shared responsibility (Durie, 2001), I welcomed Hinemoa and Wiremu's own baby and their grandchild into the counselling room.

Hinemoa spoke of how she had "enjoyed" and appreciated the "space" I had made for her and Wiremu in this counselling prior to the research. She felt our counselling made it possible for them to speak their minds with some confidence that the result would be helpful to them.

Initially it [the decision to participate] was because I had enjoyed so much the counselling work that we'd done with you and I had great appreciation for the way in which the space was created for Wiremu and I with you. That really encouraged us to be courageous about, courageous and honest about what was going on and also to be hopeful. I really, really believe that you created that space, Jim.

Wiremu and Hinemoa also spoke of the how the counselling space was managed so that they felt safe once a meeting had finished:

Wiremu The other reason why I wanted to get involved was we've done counselling in the past. We've done family counselling and I thought it was crap actually... Things were unresolved and ... ninety percent of the time you left the office unhappy.

Jim Yeah?

Hinemoa (nodding)

Wiremu Unhappy and couldn't wait to get in the car or the car park and have a go at each other. Yeah.

Hinemoa It was unsafe, eh?

Wiremu It was very unsafe. Yeah that's what it was. It was unsafe.

Hinemoa True.

I took it as my duty as host and co-researcher, to take steps to promote the participants' safety in the space immediately after the conclusion of our meeting. Over the years many couples had told me of the times they had had arguments after meeting with other counsellors. I saw this as a call to me to provide couples with some protection from this danger. Accordingly, I routinely included in my co-research, questions about the possibility that our conversation could make trouble for couples after they left our meetings. Hinemoa and Wiremu had experienced me checking whether our conversation was likely to cause them problems after a meeting, and there had been times where they had spoken about potential trouble and we had teamed up to address this before they left. If it was necessary to take further time to do this, we made this time. As part of a practice of care for my clients and for myself, I always ensure there is a minimum of 45 minutes between my appointments to allow time to address any such issues and for me to prepare myself if I have another meeting.

*Research: Evidence of genuine care*

Another effect of an ethic of hospitable co-research was that the transcripts made from our videos were often seen as evidence of my care and commitment to my participants:

Dave It's quite honouring to feel that you as the counsellor had gone to that much effort for us... it helped me affirm my value in what we're doing, in the sense that someone sees value in asking us to participate. They see value in the work we are doing. Perhaps more so than we may, or I, even see.

Lolita Yeah, the fact that somebody was willing to gather up all the words said, you know?

Dave The information, yeah, spend hours making it easy for us to comprehend.

Lolita It was, yeah, that was huge for me.

Dave Mmm, quite uplifting, actually it felt supportive. It didn't feel like you're guinea pig's status. It made you feel like you had someone helping you, along the process. Quite reinforcing for me

Our ethic of collaborative deconstructive co-research positioned Dave and Lolita to read and use the transcripts as being of service to us all, and to see me as a fellow team member who cared enough to do the extra work involved with transcribing and who was, like them, prepared to be captured on video:

Dave But I think, I think for me the researcher or Jim, going through the video tape with us, qualifies [him for] that position of the, like [a member of] the group, because the previous session you are our therapist. There's me and her, and you're over there. The research, we're huddled round. We work as a team and we look to you for guidance, steerage. It's, for me it's quite a different process and that, I think that solidified your place, because I feel that you genuinely care about what happened. I feel it's you genuinely care. So that sort of opens my heart to what I say here.

As I will show, this collaborative use of video, which Pink (2007) had referred to as helping to democratise the process of research, opened space for us all, and supported us, for the most part, to resist and to recover from using video technology according to the familiar purposes of exposing the other's shortcomings.

## **Safety in deconstructive co-research as a practice of justice**

The experience of collaborating with the couples in my research prompted me to develop the understanding that I had sometimes been employing deconstruction as a somewhat misguided and patriarchal practice of care for the self and others (Foucault, 1988, 2000b, 2010). In this approach I consulted myself or my supervisors in order to correctly identify the taken-for-granted and problematic practices in play and to replace them with *the* correct alternative story I had identified and developed from the unique outcomes I had selected for the couples. Under this familiar misapprehension I had, despite White's (2007) cautions about the "hazards of totalising" (p. 37) descriptions of problems and of the importance of a "cool engagement" (p. 28) with the subject of investigation, at times enthusiastically misused White's (2007) likening of a counsellor to an "investigative reporter" (p. 28) as licence to, hospitably if possible, expose what *I* saw as "abuses of power and privilege" (p. 27). I was particularly vulnerable to campaigning for the correct story using "disguised instruction" (Bird, 2004, p. 353) when I thought I knew what the corrupt story and its correct alternative was. As I will show, an ethic of co-research and the wider experimental apparatus which included my supervisors, and a particular situation, which I describe in chapter 12, where I did not know what the correct story was, led me to step further into deconstructive co-research as a more powerful and hospitable way to address justice. This practice required me to defer my conclusions and to draw on my knowledge of relevant research and literature in order to better position my participants so that they might engage in an ongoing process of evaluating the value of these subordinated stories. Whereas I had previously sought to persuade my participants of the merit of the stories I had valued and which I thought my

supervisors and readers might value, this more deconstructive process positioned my participants to make more informed decisions about their preferences.

In the next chapter I describe the first step in this development when I was so taken with the power of video as a technology that might expose a common form of gendered injustice that I employed it to expose that Dave talked substantially more than his partner, Lolita.

## Chapter 6. Video material

In this chapter, I report on what happened when the video record of my first counselling meeting in this project made visible a common, often problematic, gendered pattern of conversational sharing. Struck by how skewed this conversation was, I experimented with counting the transcribed words the couple, Lolita and Dave, and I spoke in our counselling and research meetings as a means to promote co-research of how Dave and Lolita might more equally share their conversational time.

My experiment with using word counts was informed by my alertness to the injustice of one party dominating their conversational time and my intention to support more just exercises of relational power. However, as my analysis shows, along with new possibilities, my understanding of the video record as showing what I understood to be *the* reality that Dave talked too much, individualised and essentialized the problem, obscured the means by which this particular conversational sharing was discursively and dialogically produced, and reproduced practices of competition and fault finding common to coupledom. In response, I suggest a hospitable practice of deconstructive co-research using video as a just alternative to these familiar couple counselling practices.

In my analysis of my experiments to produce a fair sharing of our conversation I draw on Barad's (2007) analysis of the "intra-action" (location 786) between the material and discursive as observed from different positions in the wider experimental apparatus constituted by me and the participants and my supervisors. And I review my approach to doing justice for Lolita and Dave using a deconstructive (Derrida, 1992) lens.

## **Video: material-discursive evidence**

Commentators on the use of video described two conflicting effects of seeing oneself on video. In the first effect, video is described as having the power to render even familiar interactions newsworthy to the extent that viewers experience a rapid and profound reorientation towards what was taken-for-granted (Albright & Malloy, 1999; Bailey & Sowder, 1970; Berger, 1970; MacDougall, 2006; Padgett, 1983). The second effect is the opposite, and occurs when observers' taken-for-granted ideas are reinforced (Martinez, 1996; Pink, 2007) irrespective of the intentions of the filmmaker or the "truthfulness" and "objectivity" of the record (Martinez, 1996, p. 72).

When I watched and transcribed our first counselling meeting I was struck by how much Dave spoke compared to Lolita. For decades feminist researchers have shown how men and boys dominate talk with women and girls (Ayim, 1997). These researchers have drawn attention to how taken-for-granted assumptions meant that this unfair distribution of talking space often went unnoticed, and if it was brought to notice, such evidence was often received with surprise, denials, anger, and opposition by men or boys and attempts to excuse it by some women (Ayim, 1997; Cline & Spender, 1987; Spender, 1985). Sharing conversational time equally is something I have tried to be alert to in my practice of couple counselling (Depree, 2011), however the video records and the effect of transcribing it brought this issue powerfully to mind, along with some other taken-for-granted assumptions about responsibility. In chapter 3, I referred to the power of video to persuade the viewer that what they are seeing is an objective reality independent of discursive interpretation. I think at this time I was very much captured by the possibilities for doing justice offered by having an objective

account of Dave and Lolita's conversational sharing. An effect of this focus on counting words was that I found I was less attentive to the dialogical and discursive production of Dave and Lolita's conversational time. I did not stop to consider how my discursive positioning had me employing the experimental apparatus to select out particular phenomena, which fitted with this story, and to produce measurements of those particular phenomena I was interested in. However, as my analysis will show, while the experimental apparatuses that produce measurements of light's particle-like behaviour cannot measure light's wave-like behaviour, the video record does provide evidence of some of the dialogical intra-actions that produce conversational sharing.

The possibility of using the objective record in order to do justice to Dave and Lolita's conversational sharing encouraged me to step into those familiar therapeutic practices of expert care, exposé, assessment and intervention, in which I had been steeped and trained. Having assessed that Dave spoke more than was fair I presumed that it was my responsibility, particularly as a fellow man, to get Dave to see that he was responsible for this unfair sharing of their conversation. Much of my work with men had been informed by and benefited from Alan Jenkins' (1990) approach to inviting men to take responsibility for their abusive actions. In his ground-breaking work Jenkins urged counsellors to "decline 'invitations' by the [male] abuse perpetrator to attribute responsibility to external factors" (1990, p. 58). And Jenkins suggested that when men act disrespectfully and unfairly towards women, then "the abusive male" must take responsibility for how he has "failed" to "face... *his* [italics added] social and emotional pressures" (1990, p. 58). Jenkins' text suggests that while abusive actions may be

externalised, those actions belong to individuals characterised as belonging to the category of “the abusive male”.

While I was mindful that White (2007) had developed “externalizing conversations” as an “antidote” to this belief that “the problems of [people’s] lives are a reflection of certain ‘truths’ about their nature and character” (p. 9), in the belief that I was doing justice I was applying what I understood to be a self-evident and necessary exception\* to externalising approaches and an exception to some practices of hospitality.

I considered that the transcripts provided a relatively objective record of the words spoken in the meetings with Lolita and Dave. From this position, it was a simple matter to use the word count feature of my word processor to produce word counts for each page of transcript, and to generate word totals for each participant at this particular meeting. I then used spreadsheet software to produce pie-charts and line graphs, which I reproduce below in the format in which I offered them to Dave and Lolita. I considered that this data would provide a starting point for co-research designed to help Lolita and Dave to recognise the extent to which their conversation was unfairly shared.

### *Introducing the word count*

When I began our first research meeting by offering Dave and Lolita an opportunity to set the agenda for this meeting I also offered the possibility of looking at how they had shared their conversation. I introduced the word count,

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\* Later I will describe how Hinemoa also noted how this idea of an “exception” might be used as a justification for her in speaking in ways she considered unfair to Wiremu. At this point I wish to reiterate the potential importance of “exceptions” to hospitably addressing problems.

which I had already completed, by referring to the commitment I explicitly make to all couples to support them to have fair and respectful conversations. I had made this commitment when I met with Dave and Lolita at the outset of our counselling relationship and I had reiterated it when we met for counselling for the first time as part of the research project.

My intention was to align us as co-researchers of what constitutes fair and respectful speech. In doing so I hoped to step back from interrupting and limiting Dave's speech, which seemed to position me as on Lolita's side and finding fault with Dave. By calling us all to co-research fair speech I hoped that Dave might interrupt himself in the name of fairness. Viewing my intentions from a different time and place in the wider experimental apparatus that constitutes this research project, I can appreciate that my focus on Dave's speaking attached the problem to him, when a more dialogical exploration of how their conversational sharing was produced, might have better supported us to address question of fairness in relation to conversational sharing, without positioning Dave as *the one with the* problem. In the following chapter I will describe the development of a more collaborative and dialogical approach.

When I introduced the topic of conversational sharing to Dave and Lolita, it seemed that the project of sharing their conversation immediately captured Lolita's interest to the extent that she began to point out the prevalence of Dave's speaking before Dave and I had begun to look at our copies of the transcripts:

Lolita We're not allowed to do this eh? (points at a section of transcript and indicates speaker) "Dave" (laughing). That's bad, [I] have to behave (taps Dave on the wrist twice to get his attention when he is talking with me, and points to other sections of transcripts and

indicates speaker) “Lolita”, “Dave”, “Dave”, “Dave”, (pointing to a section of transcript) “Dave”.

Lolita continued to point out how often Dave spoke in comparison to her, while at the same time acknowledging that what she was doing was “bad” and “not allowed” and not in the spirit of fairness and respect which I had tried to invoke. Parker (1992) suggested “a discourse makes available a space for particular types of self to step in. It addresses us in a particular way...making us listen as a certain type of person” with particular rights to speak (1992, p. 9). I imagine that the word “counts” I had provided for each individual proved, a perhaps longed for, opportunity for Lolita to *counter* the imbalance in the sharing of her conversations with Dave by scoring the words I had counted.

Dave also accepted this familiar call to position himself in competition with Lolita:

Dave Yeah, but it depends on the page you pick?

Lolita Ohh!

Dave Well look Jim’s got the most words on that one [page].

Initially, Dave contested that the pieces that Lolita had picked were an accurate representation of the whole conversation. In the spirit of competition Dave then suggested that he was not alone in talking more than his fair share by suggesting that I might have spoken the most at times.

An effect of my focus on *making* Dave responsible for what I presumed to be *his* domination of the conversation was that by counting words (as if their frequency was what counted most) I positioned Lolita as the winner of conversation as competition, and Dave as the loser. This individualistic and binary positioning,

which did not account for how they co-produced their conversation through particular discursive practices, made it more difficult for Dave to acknowledge his apparently losing performance and more difficult for me to understand and address Lolita's performance of familiar competitive and fault-finding discursive practices without inadvertently supporting gendered discursive practices which suggested that she was in some way responsible for Dave's speaking.

Furthermore, looking at the situation through these individualistic and binary lenses it seemed to me that addressing Lolita's performance might be in some way rejecting what I understood as Jenkins' (1990) more expert and more enlightened advice to his fellow men, to not excuse men's problematic behaviour.

Lolita (taps Dave on the wrist, mouths "look" and points to another page of transcript) "Dave", "Dave", "Dave".

Jim I did it page by page too.

Dave Did you? So what's the final score then come on?

Jim Do you want to look at that now?

Lolita (laughing)

Dave Yes. Come on what's the final score? Because when you said that, I first went, I looked and I thought, "My God, I bet it's me". It has to be me.

That Dave twice asked me to "come on" and get to the "final score" indicated that he was speaking from the position of competitor. That he predicted that the final score would show that he spoke more than his share suggests that he had some prior knowledge that their conversational time was distributed in his favour.

Similarly, Lolita was not persuaded by Dave's argument that it might be she who spoke more when he suggested that the result depended on which page she picked. And rather than expressing hurt and anger and denying the data, as may have been predicted by some research (Ayim, 1997; Cline & Spender, 1987), when Dave

saw the final score he accepted its veracity and my position of authority with good humour, and he determined to speak less:

Dave Ok I'm going to say three sentences, syllables. (Jim hands Dave and Lolita the data as per figure 1. Dave looks at the pie chart and laughs heartily) Oh My God!

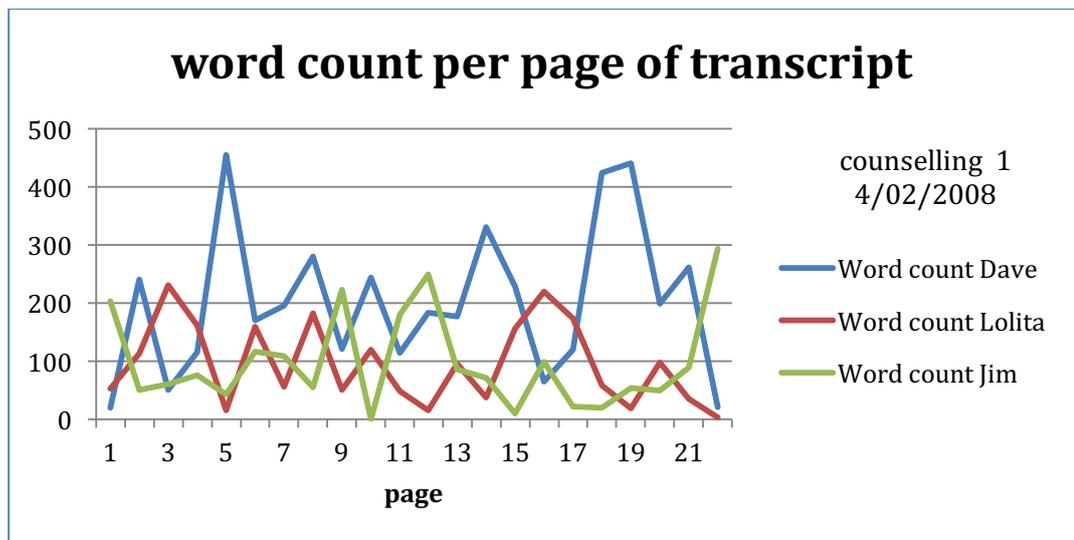


Figure 4: Words spoken by Lolita, Dave and Jim by page of transcript in counselling session 1

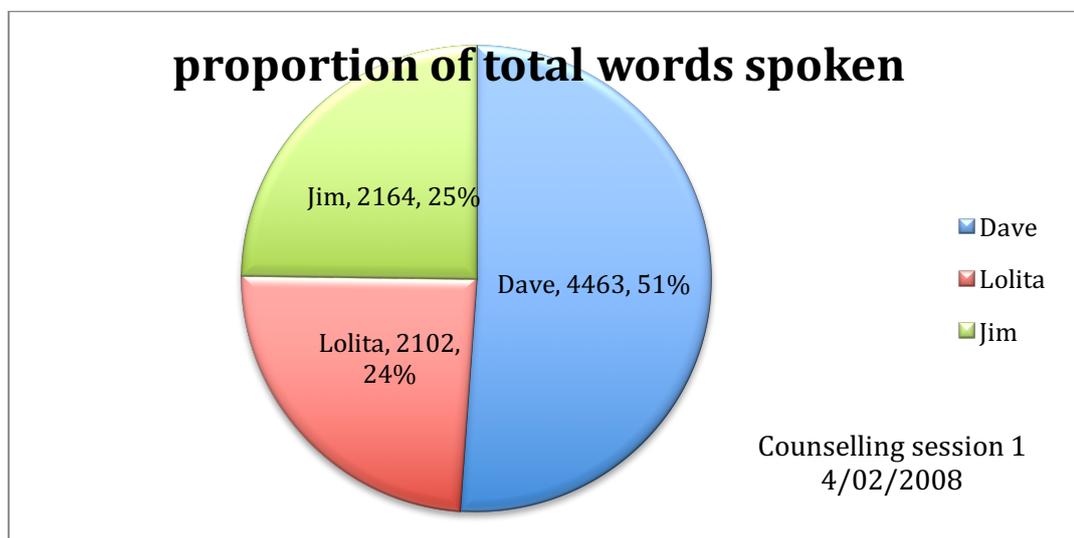


Figure 5: Total of words spoken by Lolita, Dave and Jim in counselling session 1

An important effect of the video record and Dave and Lolita's acceptance of the veracity of the transcript I produced from it was this material evidence for the

most part ended conversations contesting the distribution of our speaking and moved our conversations into contesting the meaning of the data. Both Dave and Lolita quickly concluded that their talk was unfairly distributed. I think this moral position is significant, because it suggests that Dave and Lolita had an awareness of what a fair and respectful conversation might look like that came to the fore when they were in a position to review an objective record (objective in the sense that the video and transcribing technologies leave unambiguous and reproducible accounts that are not dependant on the will of an observer, and which are artefacts of particular experimental arrangements and not evidence of truths about Dave and Lolita's personalities or of their relationship outside the experimental apparatus).

Presented with this evidence from the transcripts, Dave seemed to consider the possibility that his actions were somehow produced by some taken-for-granted approaches to conversational sharing which required "training" to habitually produce, and then more training to identify and revise:

Jim What are you thinking Dave?

Dave What's your training, your therapy training?

Jim Narrative

Dave Narrative. So if you can't get it right, who can? And I've had no training and look (pointing to data) that's why [I speak more]. It's really obvious (Laughs). I just take twice as many words to say what I think.

Lolita Hot air.

Dave's reference to "training" offered the possibility that he was not the problem and that there were discursive practices at play that made it difficult for him and I, as fellow men, to share conversations with women, and which required some sort of training to counter.

A deconstructive reading also suggests that I had positioned us to overturn the binary that gave Dave the upper hand in speaking with Lolita and invited Lolita to assume this position in their conversational sharing. Derrida (1981) considered a binary to be a “violent hierarchy” where one of the “two terms governs the other...or has the upper hand” (1981, p. 41). Derrida’s (1981) “general strategy of deconstruction” involves a “phase of overturning” binaries (1981, p. 41), which dislodges the binary and produces the “irruptive emergence of a ‘new ‘concept’, a concept that can no longer be, and never could be, included in the previous regime” (Derrida, 1981, p. 42). From this viewpoint, I read Lolita’s references to her “bad” behaviour by disrespectfully pointing out Dave’s domination of their talk with his “hot air” as her taking up a position I inadvertently offered her in the experimental apparatus that is common to coupledness, where one party critiques the other.

One of the factors that prevented me from entering a phase of repeated overturning of the binaries implicated in Dave and Lolita’s’ conversational sharing in order that we might co-produce a new concept was that I was committed to an idea of what I thought would be a just outcome. I had in mind Jenkins’ (1990) encouragement to allow no external factors to excuse men from taking responsibility for their actions and I felt responsible, as a fellow man who has often taken up more than my fair share of conversational time, for holding Dave solely responsible for his talking. To some extent this individualistic and binary focus on gender and responsibility positioned me as on Lolita’s side, and contributed to me not addressing Lolita’s contributions to their problematic conversational sharing. However, as I show, it was Lolita who tried to introduce a more dialogical understanding to our co-research.

*Reflecting on video replays from familiar individualistic and critical perspectives*

I had begun this first research meeting by offering Dave and Lolita an opportunity to select an excerpt of video from our first counselling meeting for us to co-research. From the position I had offered Lolita, she chose material “because there’s all this swearing [that Dave is doing] in it” and she continued the practice of counting I had introduced by holding Dave to account for his treatment of her.

When we had watched the video segment that Lolita had chosen in which Dave was referring to Lolita’s faults of getting “hypervigilant”, “needy and clingy”, Lolita authoritatively asked Dave if he had been listening to the video replay:

Lolita Are you listening? (to Dave)

Dave Yes, yes. Ok?

Lolita was asking Dave to appreciate that on the video he was taking an authoritative and disrespectful position with her, which included diagnosing her deficient actions. Dave’s reply indicated that he was somewhat reluctantly recognising the legitimacy of Lolita’s position.

In the pause that followed, I was aware that the conversational positions usual to our counselling had been reversed and disrupted, but I did not know what to make of it or how to proceed at that moment. In these situations, I find it helpful to step into co-research so that we might together evaluate what is happening and collaborate around how we might proceed:

Jim How are we doing with this?

Lolita I think that was a good little scenario, and that one [my comment to Dave] (points to camera) “Are you listening?” (laughs). I never talk to him like that either. I just thought I’d let you [Jim] know that.

Perhaps Lolita’s response indicates that she had noticed that she had taken up an unfamiliar, inhospitable and authoritative positioning, which I had inadvertently offered her. In referring to how she might be perceived by viewers of the video, Lolita was also indicating an effect of video recording as a means of surveillance and conscience. As this thesis unfolds I elaborate on this effect and show how we came to use video records more deliberately and more carefully as a means practice of care of the self by which a person can use their video records in order to review their actions in the light of their conscience, which is also subject to deconstructive enquiry.

Dave also took up the critical positioning I had offered Lolita and him. He addressed aspects of his speaking in terms akin to Lolita’s description of his “hot air”:

Dave I waffle.

Lolita (Nods and laughs).

While Lolita continued to expose Dave’s actions as laughable and a joke, perhaps prompted by her awareness of how she might appear to viewers of the video record, she also offered a more nuanced understanding, which referred to the contextual and dialogical possibilities regarding their conversational sharing:

Lolita Sometimes I would [want the conversation to be more equally shared]. Sometimes it’s convenient [when Dave speaks more]. And sometimes it’s just a joke. And I make fun of it.

Dave You [Lolita] can’t then go and look at the results of that hour (referring to the summary of word count) and then go “[Dave]

You've used more than the allotted space" if the other person has actually gone, "I don't want the space".

Lolita had introduced some complexity to the binaries that counting words produced and which cast speaking and not speaking as good or bad. She indicated that her views of their speaking and her approaches to their conversational sharing were influenced by particular situations. My reading of Dave's response through a deconstructive lens is that he was positioned and positioned himself, at this moment, primarily according to the familiar competitive, totalising, binary and individualistic discursive practices which I had offered when I produced individual word counts without a dialogical context and which Lolita and Dave had performed in individualistic and inhospitable ways when they referred to the other's "hot air" or "neediness" or to their own "hypervigilance" or "waffle". From this positioning, it seems that Dave took Lolita's more hospitable and complex reading of their conversational sharing as an opportunity to take an authoritative binary position on what Lolita "can't", and by implication, can say about his speaking. It may be that Dave read Lolita's reference to the dialogical aspects of their conversation as her giving up what she had called her "bad" behaviour and returning to the kinds of *good* behaviour that ChenFeng and Galick (2015) had identified as problematic and which requires women to respect men's authority, take responsibility for making the relationship work and "protect men from shame" (p. 43). I note these possibilities here in order to counter the common perception that I might be able to read what really happened here and to signal that problem solving actions can be both helpful and reproduce problematic norms.

At our meeting immediately following this first research meeting, Lolita talked of how there had been “a real positive outcome” for her from having watched her and Dave on video and then having time to consider her experience of this event:

Lolita [watching the video] I guess there was time to discuss the issue together without being distracted by other things, and um, (pause) I think, I know I am looking more closely at what’s previously been less conscious in my behaviour in relationship, in stances that I’ve taken about the right and the wrong. Who’s right and who’s wrong. Um, and so I’m looking for clues that might help me, help me kind of get some clarity around what my position is, my understanding.

Repositioned in this way Lolita had identified a binary of right and wrong which had affected her interactions with Dave, and which prior to seeing herself on video she had not been so conscious of. Lolita had taken up an ethic of co-research to the extent that she was “looking for clues” that might help her better understand her position in this binary. This represents a shift from her initial use of the video in order to demonstrate that Dave’s speaking was mostly “hot air”. And as part of this co-research she had made a movement away from competitive discursive practices and into more collaborative exploration:

Lolita I was able to come back later and engage him instead of pushing him away. And saying “I’m sitting with this problem. I don’t really know what to do” and so just put it out to him. And we had a look at it from lots of different angles, didn’t we?

Dave mmm

Lolita And so, it was nice to be, um, there wasn’t that defensiveness that might have been in the past. There were some invitations at different places in the conversation to step into something more defensive but neither of us (pause). I didn’t feel Dave stepped into any, defensiveness or anything. And I hope I didn’t.

I read Lolita's reference to her and Dave looking at their situation from "lots of different angles" as evidence that she was employing strategies that I would describe as taking up different positions in the wider experimental apparatus in order to produce different diffractions that might shed new light on this particular problem and the positions it occupies in different spaces. Her description showed a movement from in-the-moment individualistic descriptions of the problem as being Dave's "hot air" or her "hypervigilance", to more externalised and relational terms when she referred to "sitting with this problem" and looking at it from different angles with Dave. And in describing this conversation, Lolita's positioning in an ethic of co-research was evident in her use of respectful language and in her tentative approach to what might be considered the facts of the problem.

Dave's response to Lolita's description of her view of this problem and her relationship with it was to offer non-verbal encouragement for Lolita to continue. I argue that if Dave had been positioned and positioned himself according to more familiar discursive practices of competition, and without the possibility of his words being counted, he might have taken the pause Lolita offered to step into the "defensiveness" Lolita had named by speaking more. Lolita's naming of defensiveness as a problem may well have made defensiveness more visible and discouraged Dave from stepping into defensive practices. Similarly, the *naming* provided by the material records of our words spoken in our counselling meetings may well have acted as a form of "normalising gaze" (Foucault, 1984, p. 197), which discouraged some of those conversational practices which they knew in some ways to be problematic but often resorted to anyway.

*Word counts: “incredibly valuable”, “irrefutable” material-discursive artefacts*

Lolita came to rely on the word counts as “incredibly valuable” evidence to counter “some labelling” of her by Dave:

Lolita The word count is affirming for me that I actually do do a lot of listening. And, the continuity of the word count will help to ... balance out any purposely not speaking as much as you [Dave] normally do ... it’s like you [Dave] might come in one session and, and go “I’m not going to say much” but over time it all (gestures with her hand to indicate evens out).

The material evidence of the distribution of their conversational time gave Lolita an accurate picture of how much more Dave spoke compared to her, and when she saw the extent of his speaking she concluded that this familiar gendered conversational sharing was no longer acceptable to her:

Lolita And I remember when the word count first happened and I’m like “Oh that [Dave speaks more] doesn’t matter and when I saw it [the word count], it’s like “It does matter!” I liked it. There was something really affirming for me in seeing it.

However, the continued dominance of hierarchical binaries meant that when Lolita asserted her position of being “ok” and doing “a lot of listening”, Dave was easily positioned and positioned himself as *not* “ok” and *not* “listening”. In response he attempted to reverse this binary so that it was Lolita who was *not* “ok” and *not* listening:

[My impression] from the transcript and the video was the fact that Lolita blanks off, becomes wounded or defensive with what she sees to be an attack on her rather than an expression of what’s happening for me. And in the transcript it was confirmed by when you say it you switch off, you

don't hear me, you choose not to hear me. You've decided not to. And that's what I feel. I felt that was, there's the evidence.

In this moment Dave had moved from his initial position of accepting that he spoke more than his fair share by following some taken-for-granted training, and from his indication that together they might collaborate in order to share their conversation. The apparent material-discursive objectivity of the word counts and the guardrail they provided around the amount of speaking they both did, meant that Dave was not in a position to dispute the amount of speaking he and Lolita did. Instead he cited the words Lolita had used to describe some reactions that she had said that she sometimes had when Dave spoke more than her. The competitive discursive practices that often shaped our conversation according to familiar linear causal and binary terms, contributed to Dave totalising Lolita's occasional response as the cause of him speaking more than her: because she chose not to hear what Dave was saying then Dave spoke more in order to be heard.

I was also positioned to some degree according to these binaries that shaped Dave's responses, when I did not take up the more dialogical accounts that both Dave and Lolita offered when they spoke of how their speaking and listening were responses to the other's responses. Conceptions of linear causality are so familiar to me that I did not attend to these traces of dialogical understandings in the moment. In the next chapter I show how an ethic of co-research and an invitation helped the couples and I move into this more unfamiliar nuanced dialogical territory.

When Dave, Lolita and I had the opportunity to position ourselves in the wider experimental apparatus that produced diffractions of our counselling co-research,

then as researchers of the unfamiliar territories of our interactions on video records and transcripts, we were distanced from the heat of those moments. We were often also better positioned to externalise and hospitably co-research the material we observed. When Dave avoided naming Lolita as “wounded”, “defensive”, “blanked off” or responsible for his talking because she was not listening; and when Lolita did not treat Dave’s talking as “hot air”, “a joke” and “make fun of it”, they were better positioned to enter into more dialogical understandings that offered more space for more cooperative and respectful ways of speaking.

In one of those more contemplative moments Dave looked back over our meetings and concluded that the word counts had been “irrefutable evidence” that he talked more, and listened less than was fair:

Dave Because there were things in it [the word count] that made me...  
*physically* realise that I talk more than I listen.

Dave’s response spurred me to begin looking for a theory that accounted for the powerful and often irrefutable effects of that material objectivity and which took into account the discursive practices that went into producing, making sense of, and acting on that evidence.

### ***Changes in the amount of talking***

Despite Dave and Lolita’s awareness of the unfair distribution of their conversational time and their good intentions to share their conversation more equally, as they acknowledged at the end of our scheduled ten meetings, their efforts to more equally share their conversational time had not produced the results that had hoped for:

Dave It's like [I'd tell myself] "I don't know if I like it, but maybe my thing at the next session is maybe not say as much". And I found that a real process to not say as much.

Lolita Mmm. And then still end up saying more (leans forward smiling and pointing at Dave).

While Dave never again talked as much as had done in the first session, as the figures 6 and 7 show, Dave and Lolita's conversational time was shared equally only in counselling meeting five, and with the exception of research session four, Dave talked more than Lolita. I had stopped providing the word counts at research session four, and Dave had spoken the least when he knew that we would not be discussing the word count in the following session. This indicates that knowledge of the way speaking was shared and accountability for this sharing was not sufficient to produce a change in these particular circumstances.

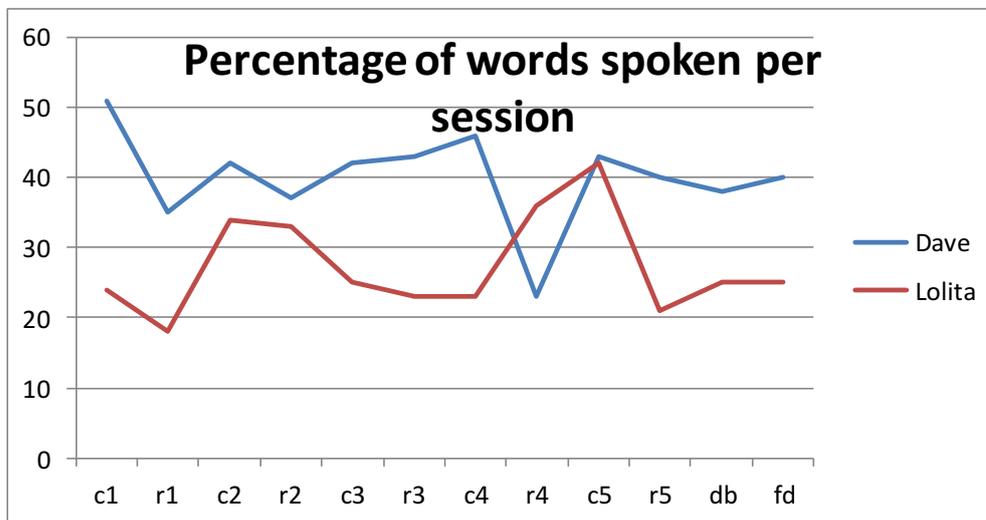


Figure 6: Percentage of words spoken by Lolita and Dave per meeting



Figure 7: Total of words spoken by Lolita, Dave and Jim per meeting

These word counts did not assist us in understanding what was producing this gendered distribution of conversational time. As Dave and Lolita had already indicated, the word counts could not show when Lolita was speaking less because it was convenient for her at that time, or when Dave was speaking more in an effort to be heard. And the word counts could not show when Dave and Lolita were speaking less in order to reduce their exposure to the “normalising gaze” (Foucault, 1984, p. 197) produced when the video apparatus was employed as part of an examination rather than an exploration. Like some of Berger’s (1970) clients, whom I discussed in chapter 3, Lolita reported some concern about seeing herself on video: “I felt my self really quite shy. I’d look at it [the transcript] and go ‘I don’t think I really want to see that much of myself’”. Nor, as I will discuss in chapter 12, could word counts distinguish those times when Lolita spoke more in order to find out if Dave was “festering” about something that might cause problems for her, or when she spoke less in response to Dave “clamping down” on her when he felt angry with her. And the word counts could not indicate when Dave was speaking less in response to Lolita wanting him to speak more.

## *Discussion*

I undertook this experiment with counting words with the intention of exposing what I saw as the injustice of Dave's domination of his and Lolita's conversational time. I saw it as my duty to provide Dave, as a fellow man, with "irresistible invitations" (Jenkins, 1990, p. 88) to face up to and take personal responsibility for talking more than his share. This positioning presumed I could do justice for Dave and Lolita by discerning the truth of the matter and then exposing what I knew to be wrong. My position also reproduced the hierarchical binaries implicated in Dave and Lolita's conversational difficulties. At the same time, the video records and transcripts provided some information that objectively and irrefutably challenged some of Lolita and Dave's taken-for-granted understandings of how they conducted themselves, and which produced a greater, if not equal, sharing of their conversations, and some revising of their assumptions about their performances of speaking and listening together.

This work with Dave and Lolita, and my deconstructive and material feminist analysis of it, alerted me to the importance of finding a way to use the power of video records to materially affect understandings that did not reproduce those familiar inhospitable, competitive and individualistic discursive practices that were contributing to many couples' conflicts and distress. The ethic of co-research that I had established and that I described in the previous chapter, provided practices by which we could all at times identify and step back from some more familiar inhospitable, individualising, authoritative and competitive practices of coupledness and counselling. These practices of co-research using video also began to bring to light, but not yet develop, some more dialogical understandings of how Lolita and Dave's counselling conversations were co-constructed. In the next

chapter I show how my next couple, Hinemoa and Wiremu, and I employed co-research with video to distance ourselves from these familiar discursive practices and to focus on some of the dialogical and contextual particularities of their conversational sharing.

## **Chapter 7. Sharing conversational time using hospitable deconstructive co-research with video**

In this chapter I demonstrate how an ethic of co-research supported Hinemoa, Wiremu and me to together develop, employ and review proposals for sharing their conversational time according to what they gave value to. In this approach to co-research using video, I show how I employed White's (2007) "scaffolding conversations maps" (p. 289) and "re-authoring conversations maps" (p. 75) in order to respond to Hinemoa and Wiremu's dialogical understandings and values, and how these dialogical understandings assisted us to deconstruct some of the individualistic understandings that had been problematic for them.

White (2007) developed his "scaffolding conversation map" (p. 289) to assist people to distance themselves from those known and familiar conclusions about their lives and relationships which were implicated in the production of the problems they faced. He proposed that scaffolding conversations might be used in conjunction with other maps of narrative practice, to assist people to "incrementally and progressively distance [themselves] from the known and familiar and [move] more toward what might be possible for them to know and to do" (White, 2007, p. 263). White (2007) envisioned that the therapist would contribute significantly to these scaffolding conversations and that he or she would "recruit others to participate in this" (p. 263) production of knowledge and identity.

My purpose in describing these practices of hospitable deconstructive co-research is to demonstrate how my co-research with Lolita and Dave better positioned me

to question the inhospitable position of authority I had at times taken up in order to count and counter what I took to be Dave's (as in belonging to and produced by Dave) unfair conversational practices. I will show how our ethic of co-research using video helped Hinemoa and Wiremu to help me to produce an alternative to those individualistic and adversarial practices common to coupledness, which I had, at times, inadvertently contributed to co-producing in the work I described in the previous chapter.

## **Initial impressions and familiar storylines: Stopping and listening**

At our first video research meeting I asked Wiremu and Hinemoa if there was a particular part of our previous counselling meeting that they wanted to review. As there was nothing in particular they wanted to watch I began the video replay from the beginning of the previous counselling meeting. Hinemoa stopped the video replay barely two minutes into their description of how they had come to attend self-improvement programmes:

Hinemoa This is handy eh?

Jim What were you thinking was handy [about watching the video] Hinemoa?

Hinemoa Ah, you know, getting the opportunity to step outside yourself and hear yourself, like, be yourself.

Jim And what was that like seeing yourself, Hinemoa?

Hinemoa My initial thought was "Oh cheez, there I go straight into it, blah, blah, blah". Just had a realisation, watching that, why didn't I just shut up? That was interesting. I just went "Oh Jesus there you go straight into it. Why don't you stop and listen? And listen to what Wiremu has to say". ... It was like

an out of body, third person experience. I was sitting here going “Shut up!” when I’m talking.

It seemed to me that in watching the video record Hinemoa had positioned herself and was positioned as a “third person” observer and researcher of her experience. Using Barad’s (2007) material feminist conception of the wider experimental apparatus I might understand Hinemoa as speaking from a position of observing a diffraction of our first videoed counselling conversation. I use the term diffraction as intended to signify that this video record is not a reproduction of what had happened in the counselling conversation, but a view produced by a particular material-discursive apparatus, which Hinemoa was positioned in according to particular material-discursive practices which occurred in a particular place and time. Using a material-feminist analysis I can attend to Hinemoa’s place in the wider experiential apparatus. I can notice that she was observing an unfamiliar depiction of herself in interaction with Wiremu, from the unfamiliar position of researcher, and almost a month after the videoed counselling conversation had taken place. From this position Hinemoa had named and characterised some events she had not previously noticed or named to this extent, such as, “going straight into it, blah, blah, blah”, which, she now saw as problematic. At the same time, her individualistic and blaming descriptions of her now somewhat unfamiliar actions indicated that she might be reading her actions according to some of the familiar discursive practices that had been problematic for Dave and Lolita.

I addressed Hinemoa’s re-view of her performance and her naming of actions that might otherwise have not been storied, using (2007) White’s (2007) scaffolding conversations map. White’s (2007) scaffolding conversations map is structured

according to categories of inquiry that support increasing levels of “*distancing*” (p. 275) of one’s self from “the known and familiar and from the immediacy of one’s experience of the events of one’s environment” in order that people can develop “proposals for proceeding in life that are in harmony with newly developed concepts about life and identity” (White, 2007, p. 276).

From her positioning in the experiential apparatus Hinemoa identified that she would have preferred to have acted differently by stopping and listening. In distancing herself and making this evaluation I understood her to have performed something of a “low-level distancing task” (p. 275) followed by a “*medium-level distancing task*” (White, 2007, p. 276). Medium-level distancing tasks

encourage people to bring into relationship specific events of their world in the development of chains of association that establish bonds and relationships between these events. These tasks also foster the comparison and categorization of the events of one’s world and the drawing of distinctions with regard to difference and similarity. (White, 2007, p. 276)

Hinemoa had also evaluated and drawn distinctions regarding the unfamiliar territory of herself in dialogue. She had indicated that her actions contravened her valued preferences for sharing their conversational time. This distancing and reflexion are features of “*medium-high-level distancing tasks*” (White, 2007, p. 276). “These tasks encourage people to reflect on, evaluate, and draw realizations and learnings from these chains of association” (White, 2007, p. 276). In considering her actions Hinemoa was taking personal responsibility for talking and not listening to Wiremu. I was mindful that Dave’s efforts to take responsibility for his speaking and listening had been undermined in part by the inhospitable descriptions he and Lolita had used to characterise his speaking as “hot air”, “a joke” and “waffle”. It seemed to me that Hinemoa had taken a

similarly inhospitable position with herself by rebuking herself as if there was a solution to this situation that was simple and her responsibility.

White (2007) found that it was usual for people consulting therapists to “rebuke themselves for what they discern to be manifest incompetence and inadequacy” (p. 266) in their failure to *simply* do what is necessary to overcome their difficulties. White (2007) considered this position and the idea that it “should be so simple” (p. 266) to do something about difficulties we experience as a product of notions of personal agency and responsible actions which did not take into account “traditional power relations” (p. 267), including those of gender and culture.

I considered that Hinemoa’s self-reflexivity in taking responsibility and naming a preferred way of conversing with Wiremu provided both an opportunity for us to co-research how they shared their speaking and also an indication that she might be storying how they shared their conversational time according to familiar individualistic and gendered discourses. I considered that the characterisation of her speech, as if it was idle, meaningless talk, might be an effect of these discourses, and that she might be taking responsibility not just for her contribution to their conversation but also for how they both shared their speaking. I experienced a responsibility to do her and Wiremu justice by deconstructing these pejorative descriptions and what I took to be her gendered positioning of taking responsibility for Wiremu’s speaking as well as her own (see Ayim, 1997; Cline & Spender, 1987; Jenkins, 1990).

In order to avoid scaffolding a conversation that supported these familiar and pejorative descriptions I employed White's (2007) scaffolding conversations map in conjunction with his "re-authoring conversations map" (p. 75). Re-authoring conversations

invite people to continue to develop and tell stories about their lives, but they also help people to include some of the more neglected but potentially significant events and experiences that are 'out of phase' with their dominant storylines. These events and experiences can be considered 'unique outcomes' or 'exceptions'. (White, 2007, p. 61)

I drew on White's (2007) re-authoring conversations map in order to assist Hinemoa and Wiremu to select out significant events that were out of phase with the storylines which positioned Hinemoa as deficient and personally and solely responsible for the so called simple task of sharing their conversations.

White (2007) envisioned scaffolding conversations as a "conversational partnership" (p. 263). As I wanted our enquiry to be a performance of such a partnership, I invited Wiremu into the conversation:

Jim           What was your experience of that Wiremu? Did you have a sense that Hinemoa was talking more than was helpful to you or not?

Wiremu       Oh you notice it. I mean just from there [watching it on video] you notice ... things that maybe you didn't have to say, or things that... Yeah it's just, ...it's just different, it's just different to watch.

I had intended my question as a move away from the practice of counting words and towards helpfulness to each other as a criterion for partners evaluating their conversation. However, after repeatedly observing the video record of us

reviewing the video record and transcript of our counselling meeting on my own and in my own time, I noticed that my question constructed a familiar binary, helpful or not helpful, which I had positioned Wiremu to evaluate. My purposes might have been better served if I had deconstructed Wiremu's experience of how they had shared their conversation before asking him to form conclusions about that experience.

However, Wiremu avoided my invitation to position himself as uppermost in this binary and he aligned himself with Hinemoa in agreeing that "you" notice things when watching yourself on video that you might not otherwise notice. By using the plural form of "you", Wiremu included himself in sharing the problem of speaking according to their relationship goals. I wonder if the ethic of hospitable co-research we had established and which I discussed in chapter 5, might have resonated with cultural values of relational connection (Durie, 2001) familiar to Hinemoa and Wiremu, with the effect that they were well positioned to reshape our conversation when my questions might have otherwise invited them into the individualistic territories I was more familiar with.

When Wiremu did not take up the opportunity to critique Hinemoa's helpfulness to him, she continued to reappraise what she had said in the video:

Hinemoa Um, actually I'm listening to my content and I'm really glad that I said those things and they were very relevant to me... so I'm pleased about that part for me. But the fact that I dive in there and I do a lot of talking I'm not so happy about that.

In considering the record of her speaking from a researching position in the wider experimental apparatus, which included Wiremu's commentary on how when they

were watching the video they were better positioned to notice things, Hinemoa had taken up a more nuanced and less self-critical position. Hinemoa moved from simply derogating her speech to appreciating what she had to say and taking a moral stand for sharing their conversational time.

When, as part of a practice of appreciative turn taking, I invited Wiremu to contribute his viewpoint, he supported Hinemoa and a more dialogical understanding by suggesting that he looked to Hinemoa to know when to speak and that he, like her, spoke in ways that might not fit with sharing their conversational time fairly:

Jim            So Wiremu from your point of view?

Wiremu        I have a tendency too, because you can see on the video I look to her to say “Yeah, you talk, because”... Yeah I do, because I have a tendency too to jump right in there ... I mean, I should just sit back and listen.

A characteristic of dialogical, “relational-responsive understandings” (Shotter, 2000, p. 102) is that our actions are understood to be discursively produced and shaped by, or built on, but not caused by, a previous action, which is itself a response to a previous action (see Bakhtin, 1986; Shotter, 2000; Shotter & Billig, 1998).

An effect of using video review that captured the previously unseen territory of Hinemoa and Wiremu interacting with each other and with me, was that Wiremu had *seen* and commented on how he *looked* to Hinemoa to talk. I considered this another disruption to the flow of the storyline that positioned Hinemoa as the cause of how their conversation was shared and that remedying this was a simple

matter for her to achieve. I invited Wiremu to story his contribution to the sharing of their conversation:

- Jim            So Wiremu ... were you saying that you felt you gave Hinemoa an invitation to start off in some way?
- Wiremu        Yeah, I saw on the video [that] I just looked at her and went (nods, raises eyebrows, lifts hand) [as if to say] "You can go."

The video record's depiction of this interaction between Hinemoa and Wiremu along with their relational-responsive understandings made visible the subtle cues that Wiremu had given Hinemoa. In observing this visual record of their interaction they were both interested in discovering more about the no-longer-simple matter of how they called each other into conversation. Wiremu had aligned himself with Hinemoa in sharing her hope that they might work to share their speaking together. Now positioned as co-researchers of a shared and honourable undertaking, they were enthusiastic about my suggestion that we position ourselves in the wider experimental apparatus in order to notice these relational-responsive positionings.

We then watched a further five minutes of the video of their previous counselling meeting. I was interested in further disrupting and deconstructing the discursive current that had relatively rapidly carried Hinemoa from watching a short excerpt of video to the familiar waters that produced her initial reflexive response. Steier (1991) distinguished two forms of reflexivity, "'small circuit' reflexivity, where we act instinctively, and a long circuit reflexivity where we act 'contemplatively'" (p. 163). More recent research has suggested that rather than instinctive, such relatively fast responses might be better understood as including "expert" and "heuristic" thought as well as "the entirely automatic mental activities of

perception and memory” (Kahneman, 2011, p. 13). These understandings suggest that Hinemoa’s quick response to the video was likely to involve those familiar discursive practices that had seemed to work for her in the past, and which were likely to be implicated in the distribution of their conversational time. In order to examine this quick thinking and to trouble its flow, I further slowed down our enquiries using short and specific questions as well as a close analysis of Hinemoa and Wiremu’s interaction on video.

I drew their attention to another exception or potential unique outcome to the narrative that positioned Hinemoa as incompetent at stopping herself from speaking and at letting Wiremu speak. I had noticed that in the video excerpt that we had just watched, Hinemoa had refused an invitation I gave her to speak more and instead she had invited Wiremu to speak. I stopped the video replay and asked:

Jim            So Hinemoa, you were talking about you not stopping and listening and I was asking you questions, and you invited Wiremu to speak.

Hinemoa    Oh did I?

Jim            Did you notice that?

I imagined that Hinemoa had not noticed this potential exception on the initial video replay because it did not fit with the story of her as unable to stop herself from talking and to listen. White (1997a) explained this blindness to events using the analogy of events floating across “the screen of our consciousness” (p. 130) and disappearing from our lives if they are not storied. In this situation, the video record literally provided a screen that preserved and displayed events, including potential unique outcomes, which might otherwise have vanished from consciousness without the possibility of recall.

As co-researchers of the events and practices recorded on the video we were well positioned to capture these fleeting potential unique outcomes. By slowing down our enquiry and focusing on particular events, I hoped to further “exoticize the domestic” (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xi; White, 1991, p. 27) territory of their conversational sharing sufficiently that they might draw on understandings other than those taken-for-granted understandings that were most available to them. To map this new territory, I chose to begin by asking landscape of action questions (see White, 2007). Landscape of action questions focus on the “material” (White, 2007, p. 78) of the story, “the sequence of events... that make up the plot and the underlying theme” (White, 2007, p. 78). I used this focus to facilitate a re-authoring beginning with slowly re-viewing the diffracted material events in order that we might build a story from this unfamiliar material foundation, and as much as possible encourage the use of interpretative lenses other than those provided by the known and familiar storylines that quickly produced clear individualistic and pejorative descriptions.

While Hinemoa joined me in looking for interactions that might account for how they shared their conversational time, an effect of her habit of using familiar storylines as her frame of intelligibility was that she imagined an event that did not occur in the video but that fitted with what was known and familiar to her, and which she thought might account for her actions:

Hinemoa One thing I did notice, is that he went like this (reaches across Wiremu with one arm) for me to just stop. Like “I’ve got it”. And he started talking. And I went and sat back. (pause) Oh, isn’t that funny?

Hinemoa described her actions in making space for Wiremu as a response to his actions and as an act of distancing herself from familiar speaking practices; “I went and sat back”. In doing so she had distanced herself from the idea that it was solely her actions that were problematic, to offering a commentary on an interaction between Wiremu and her that fitted with a preferred storyline. I took Hinemoa’s puzzlement about their interactions as an indication of an effect akin to that which I experience when I change the prescription for my spectacles and things and space appear more clearly but somehow out of place, leaving me unbalanced. Myerhoff and Ruby (1982) described a similar vertigo producing effect when people experience a shift in the flow of their understanding and of an awareness of new possibilities. They described this kind of shift as generating “heightened awareness and vertigo, the creative intensity of a possibility that loosens us from habit and custom and turns us back to contemplate ourselves” (Myerhoff & Ruby, 1982, p. 1). Myerhoff and Ruby went on to suggest that “once we take into account our role in our own productions, we may be led into new possibilities [from which] we may achieve greater originality and responsibility than before, a deeper understanding at once of ourselves” (p. 2).

Hinemoa’s commentary was based on some of the familiar understandings available to her and these did not take into account those interactions not storied but which were captured on the video. An effect of calling on these familiar individualistic and causal discourses was that Hinemoa attributed her preferred action to Wiremu’s intervention. She was poorly positioned to read her actions as shaped by and an agentic response to Wiremu’s actions, and as an exception to the storyline that positioned her as not stopping and listening.

At this moment I invited Wiremu to again contribute to our co-research in the hope that he might be better positioned to provide an alternative account to Hinemoa's description of her actions in this instance as primarily shaped by him, and in so doing contribute to the kind of "conversational partnership" (White, 2007, p. 263) they hoped might be possible for them:

Jim            Did you notice that Wiremu?

When I reviewed this video record from different locations in the experimental apparatus and with the benefit of distance and time from the immediacy of the events, I noticed that my question invited Wiremu to make sense of "that" according to the most available and familiar storylines. Taking up a reflexive stance on my counselling practice, I would have liked to name this emerging storyline in relational-responsive terms in order to better position Hinemoa and Wiremu to notice those events that fitted with dialogical understandings of their sharing of this conversation. For example, I might have asked Wiremu, "What did you notice you and Hinemoa doing to indicate to each other how you might share the conversation?"

Before Wiremu could answer, Hinemoa stepped back into an account of her noticing Wiremu's move to speak:

Hinemoa    That's why I had [finished] my turn

Wiremu     I didn't notice that.

Jim           Shall we look at it again?

In the moment it was not clear to me what subtle clues, if any, Wiremu and Hinemoa had given each other, which resulted in Hinemoa speaking when I was addressing Wiremu. Instead of focussing on this live interaction, a process which

would rely on our recollections of that moment, I chose to continue to focus on the more reliable and accurate video record of our previous counselling conversation. Reviewing the video record allowed us to proceed to a slower, detailed and more contemplative re-view of their interactions.

Hinemoa and Wiremu continued to watch the video of our counselling meeting as I rewound it in order that we might re-view the excerpt in question. In effect this produced another diffraction of the counselling meeting in which time was speeded up and reversed and there was no sound. Seeing herself and Wiremu interact in fast rewind mode prompted Hinemoa to further revise her interpretation of what had happened by comparing her storied memory of what had happened with the reality disclosed by the video record:

Hinemoa (watching DVD rewinding without sound to our chosen starting point) Oh I got the distinctist feeling of that, that he did something, like as profound as (repeats outstretched arm across gesture), like that, maybe not the body movement. But I got the sense that's what he did at that time. That just stopped me dead in my tracks, in my tracks from babbling. Maybe it was his body language or he was asserting himself. He did something with his legs or something, or rubbed his face, or – it was the signals to tell me “Hang on now, shush! You've had your turn. I'm going to take it from here”. I found that really interesting. Yeah, yeah, see he takes the attention off me and puts it on himself (referring to DVD rewinding without sound).

Hinemoa had previously made sense of her own actions and then her interaction with Wiremu according to dominant gendered and pejorative storylines about over-talking, which also credited Wiremu with the power to stop her talking. When the video replay resumed again, instead of imagining that Wiremu had put

his arm out in an unmistakable gesture for her to stop speaking, Hinemoa noticed that Wiremu had made a slight body movement which she read as him getting ready to talk:

Hinemoa    See he started to move (pointing). His body's starting to move which would indicate to me "Yeah you're carrying on, I'm getting ready to talk".

In contrast to the previous thin description that positioned Hinemoa as deficient in sharing speaking with Wiremu in this particular conversation, in this account Hinemoa began to reposition herself as alert to, and responsive to, Wiremu's indications that he wanted to speak. Hinemoa also gave evidence of a familiar gendered practice of women reading the subtle cues that men offer to know whether speaking space is available.

From a dialogical perspective, Hinemoa and Wiremu's speaking in their preferred ways was dependent on their responses to each other and not on a simple linear notion of causality. It may have been that rewinding the video of their interaction deemphasised familiar notions of causality and helped Hinemoa engage with other familiar cultural relational-responsive understandings. While an effect of this co-research and research using video was that Hinemoa and Wiremu co-produced an emerging account of their conversation as a gendered and dialogical process, this account did not entirely displace the more familiar linear understandings of the problematic aspects of their conversation, which attributed their conversational sharing to Hinemoa's personal failing of being overly talkative.

## More dialogical proposals develop

To support this emerging dialogical account, I invited Wiremu to offer further comment on his contribution to their interactions and to position himself as a moral actor who had a responsibility for how their conversations were shared:

Jim           And were you trying to indicate that [you wanted to speak] Wiremu?

Wiremu       (laughs) Probably. Yeah. The thing is when I look at it now I can see.

Like Hinemoa, when Wiremu had the opportunity and was positioned to focus his research on depictions of his and Hinemoa's interactions, he began to question some of the familiar individualistic assumptions that he had called upon to make sense of their conversational sharing as primarily caused by Hinemoa's characteristic excessive speaking habits and which had at times guided his selection of facts.

In order to position Hinemoa and Wiremu to develop an hospitable and just account of how they might share their speaking, I invited them to consider whether the way that Wiremu indicated that he wanted to speak supported their moral position of respectfully sharing their conversation:

Jim           And did that, (pause) was that OK that Wiremu was indicating it that way?

Hinemoa      Oh yeah! Yeah, Yeah. And I know his signs too. So that's one of them.

As I began my question I noticed that I was stepping into offering them a binary, did it or did it not support them. I caught myself, but unfortunately, I offered that binary in a different form, ok and not ok. I might have asked "How was that at the

time?” and “How does that look to you as you observe it now?” Together, these questions not only avoid the binary ok/not ok, they also offer different diffractions of this phenomena by offering different positions in the experimental apparatus.

Even without these preferred questions and their intentional repositioning of us in the experimental apparatus, our close analysis of the video record had not only made visible subtle cues that Wiremu was offering in his body language, and that Hinemoa was responding to, it also made visible some previously neglected experiences:

Hinemoa Oh yeah! That’s why I shut up, because he’s right, and I sort of feel like if I look at my body language, my body posture, I sort of feel like I go like this (sighs and sits back) “Thank God for that”. Yeah. (laughs) You know, someone else is going to talk. I just felt like at that time I had a sense of relief, “Oh thank God for that. Someone else can have a turn. I don’t have to be out front there”.

Hinemoa had witnessed herself doing something, sitting back and listening, which previously she had understood as being beyond her. She saw that she had responded to Wiremu’s subtle cues when he wanted to speak or looked to her to speak. Furthermore, she identified that rather than feeling annoyed at having to share their conversational time, she found that she had been relieved that “someone else can have a turn” at speaking. And having come to these realisations about these chains of association, a medium-high-level distancing task, she formulated an alternative understanding of her identity, a high-level distancing task (see White, 2007):

Hinemoa And so I’ve had another realisation watching this, that I put myself out there, a lot, and I do this in my life. Put myself out there to get the ball rolling and then I’ll slowly drift in and

merge with everyone else. Maybe I have an identity that says that I get the ball rolling and start things and then people jump in and then I can back out and then that's my job done...

Anyway that was really interesting watching Wiremu and having these realisations for myself about stuff. Wow! This is cool (looking at Wiremu).

Wiremu Mm.

After being positioned and positioning herself to review the video for information that might support her preferred ways of being, Hinemoa considered a new possibility that she was called to speak and that her speaking was an identity she took up and then put down *in response to others and to the situation*. This new identity also included the implication that Hinemoa putting herself out there was a moral act that was undertaken in order to get “the ball rolling” so that others might be encouraged to contribute to the conversation and that Hinemoa might then merge with them or leave them to carry on without her. This multi-storied account was a significant shift from her and Wiremu's initial singular account, which named her as unable to shut up and listen.

An effect of our focus on dialogical unique outcomes, my attempts to undermine practices of derogation, and of our positioning and repositioning in different times and places in the experimental apparatus that was constituted with co-research practices and video technology, was that Hinemoa and Wiremu were enthusiastic about seeing themselves on video, and about continuing to find ways to collaborate in sharing their conversations. The account we derived from the video was one that produced evidence, which they might have otherwise overlooked, of the honourable actions Wiremu and Hinemoa had taken together to resist familiar problematic practices in order to share their conversational time.

## What's fair sharing?

These developments brought us to the complexities of trying to determine what might constitute fair sharing of conversations. In response to Wiremu's suggestion that a way of evaluating whether they might have had a fairly shared conversation was that "you walk out of here and feel comfortable that you said what you wanted to say and you've had your share", Hinemoa offered another more individualistic conception of a fair counselling meeting:

Hinemoa I come in here with an intention that I will have my time and I will have my say and create the space I need in the session, to do whatever I want to do, what I need to do...

Wiremu (sighs)

At this moment I understood Wiremu's sigh as a both a form of resignation to the reinstatement of a position he saw as contributing to unfair sharing of their conversations, and a protest at this reinstatement. By not speaking Wiremu was reproducing a familiar response that contributed to unfair sharing of their conversational time, and one which did not fit with his commitment "do ... a bit better" at sharing the conversation effectively. At the same time, by sighing he was offering a subtle invitation, for those who might be concerned about making space for him to pick up. I asked him to voice what was behind his sigh:

Jim What Wiremu?

Wiremu I'm just thinking [whether] that intention considers anyone else?

When Wiremu tentatively wondered about the fairness of Hinemoa's position, he made space for Hinemoa to also question how her position fitted with their shared purpose of fairly sharing their conversational time:

Hinemoa Yeah, well that's true. That's true. That's true because [at the time] I just think, "Oh well, you're a grown up, you want to say something, say it. It's not my responsibility to create a space for you, babe. You're a grown man. We come here for our reasons, you want to say something, create your own space, do it!" Yeah I suppose it is like that, It's true then, it is true what Wiremu says.

In enthusiastically evaluating her position Hinemoa voiced some familiar individualistic ideas that attributed conversational sharing solely and simply to whether a person was grown up enough or assertive enough to take their turn. She also distanced herself from those ideas by rehearsing them out loud so that she and Wiremu could better recognise and evaluate them.

I encouraged Hinemoa to continue this questioning of these known and familiar conceptions of individual responsibility:

Jim So are you questioning that idea, do you mean, Hinemoa, just now?

Hinemoa Yeah, yeah. Maybe I could... provide space. I can't create space because only Wiremu can create his own space in which he can do whatever it is that he wants to do, but I can maybe...I don't know.

Hinemoa explored the familiar individualistic binary of responsible/not responsible. And she considered that neither her being responsible for Wiremu speaking or him being solely responsible for his speaking with her worked in practice. It seemed to me that in rehearsing the effects of these binary positions, Wiremu and Hinemoa were deconstructing often taken-for-granted concepts of responsibility.

Wiremu Unless, if you set as your intention to consider other people's views ... because [if] you're creating space for yourself, how big is that space? That space could be... fifty minutes of the hour, or...I don't know how big is that space?

Hinemoa So?

Wiremu But if you consider other people you can actually monitor yourself and think, "OK, maybe I should let someone else talk? Ok, um, I've talked a bit much, now I'll just wait and"

When Wiremu rehearsed the position, "maybe I should let someone else talk...I've talked a bit much", perhaps, Hinemoa saw him as presenting a negative caricature of her. As I described in chapter 3, Kimball and Cundick (1977) might have predicted her response to such a characterisation would be to defend herself. She responded by suggesting that Wiremu attend to his own behaviour before critiquing hers:

Hinemoa (interrupts) Yeah, I think maybe you need to consider what you need to create for you to have a good experience.

Wiremu I'm not saying...yeah, I can understand that too.

While Wiremu began to respond with a familiar counter argument, he stopped himself and he indicated that he was holding both Hinemoa's and his own view. And in this inclusive deconstructive self-reflexive space, Hinemoa noticed an idea that had interfered with their intentions to share their conversations:

Hinemoa I just realised, there's an exception to that rule ["everyone has a right to be and for me to get out of his space"] (laughing).

Jim Yeah what's that?

Hinemoa Oh there's a "but" and I just felt that from what Wiremu was saying: [that exception is] "but you know we only have an hour here and if you're not going to seize the moment and you're just going to sit there" and...that's not fair either but I just had a realisation, rightly or wrongly, that's how I am,

sometimes in here. You know we've only got an hour with you, and I come with the intention to get the FULLEST benefit, because it's only sixty minutes for God's sake! ...If you're not going to step up and throw yourself into that moment.

Hinemoa again contributed to the deconstruction of her ideas by distancing herself from them and dramatizing them. Wiremu was then better positioned to invite Hinemoa to deconstruct some of the text of her performance:

- Wiremu "Step up"?
- Hinemoa Yeah I know, I know. And "[If] you're not going to throw yourself into that moment and use it to its fullest benefit, then bloody hell I'll do it".
- Jim (to Wiremu) So what were you thinking about the "Step up"?
- Wiremu Oh, just strong words. They were
- Hinemoa (interrupts) Yeah.
- Wiremu Criticism.
- Hinemoa It is. It is. He's right.

Together, Wiremu and Hinemoa supported each other to focus on deconstructing and co-researching the ideas and practices that went into or disrupted their preferred way of conversing. I would have preferred to have asked Hinemoa more about her *knowing* that her former position was problematic. My asking Wiremu to name more of what was problematic about the view Hinemoa was rehearsing may have been unhelpful. I wonder if Hinemoa recognised this reappearance of familiar problematic practices and if she talked over Wiremu in order to reassert her sovereignty over the interpretation of her own actions and to reposition them both as in agreement and against criticising the other.

Positioned as co-researchers using video, Hinemoa and Wiremu were in a position to explore, rehearse, re-view and laugh about the ideas that they were up against in their work to share their conversations. It seemed to me that we had employed strategies of deconstruction, which as Derrida (1981) suggested involved both the deconstruction of language and the reversing of binaries to produce a “new concept” (p. 42), to the extent that Wiremu used the same term that Derrida had used in his search for an alternative:

Wiremu I mean, so what’s the session about then? If it’s a whole *new concept*?... I mean what’s the session for? Is it for us both to come really and step up or (pause). It just causes a different dynamic in the session I suppose.

Hinemoa ... I’m not saying I’m right. I’m saying that’s the way I’m seeing it and I’m feeling like actually I’m definitely not right, but it was good that this whole thing would lead me to that realisation.

In order to provide scaffolding for this exploration of this “new concept” I drew on White’s “*high-level distancing tasks*” (2007, p. 276) category of enquiry. These tasks encourage people to formulate concepts about life and identity by abstracting these realisations and learnings from their concrete and specific circumstances” (White, 2007, p. 276).

Jim How would you see it Wiremu? What metaphor would you use instead of “stepping up”? How would you want it to be?

Wiremu Well, just let it unfold how it’s going to unfold. Allow each other to say what they have to say and just let it unfold how it’s going to unfold. And if that, yeah, and if that day I’m not wanting to share as much, or I don’t feel I need to share as much as I would on another day, well then that’s because of what’s going on then, [and] what’s happening in the session. And what’s been said.

White (2007), following Vygotsky's (1986) proposition that "the central movement in concept formation, and its generative cause, is a specific use of words as functional tools" (p. 107), proposed that "language and word-meaning evolution is crucial to conceptual development" (White, 2007, p. 274) and a key feature of scaffolding conversations. When Wiremu offered the metaphor of "unfolding" to describe this "new concept" I was interested in developing the implications of his choice of this words.

Wiremu had suggested that this "unfolding" was a relational practice where each person allowed the other to have their say and which was influenced by contextual factors, such as a person's feelings in the moment and what was happening between them and with the counsellor. This metaphor of "unfolding" has been used by Davies (2006, p. 436) and Durie (2001, p. 86) to draw attention to some of the tensions between individual responsibility and relational responsibility.

Following Butler, Davies suggested that:

in profound contrast to this end-driven market model of the individual... Our responsibility lies inside social relations and inside a responsibility to and for oneself in relation to the other – not oneself as a known entity, but to oneself in process, unfolding or folding up, being done or undone, in relation to the other again and again (Davies, 2006, p. 436)

This tension between individual and relational responsibility seemed to me to be a feature of Hinemoa and Wiremu's conversations. In this sense this relational unfolding of responsibility was not a new concept to Hinemoa and Wiremu, but a familiar concept, which had until this point not been brought to consciousness and named. In chapter 9, I will describe some more of the developments that came from exploring the concept and practice of relational responsibility.

When Hinemoa first saw herself on the video she considered that her actions did not fit with her preferred way of speaking. She called on a familiar simplistic and individualistic discursive account to explain the distribution of her talk with Wiremu and to rebuke herself for not "just shutting up". Together we employed hospitable, collaborative and deconstructive co-research to disrupt Hinemoa's account and to bring forward an account of her positioning herself and being positioned to "get the [conversational] ball rolling" and of Wiremu and Hinemoa inviting each other into speaking. By employing the video technology in the wider experimental apparatus of co-research Hinemoa and Wiremu were better positioned to be less familiar with their experiences and to identify subtle previously un-storied cues through which they called each other into speaking or not speaking. This process of co-research with video also helped Hinemoa and Wiremu produce a collaborative performance of hospitable, and at times enjoyable, conversational sharing.

In the next chapter, I extend my analysis of some of our counselling and co-research of these emerging territories of the intra-action between the video record and discursive practices of individualism, sovereignty, confession and correction.

## Chapter 8. Co-research with video: conscience, confessions and care

In this chapter I examine a profound effect of the use of video in therapeutic settings that all of the participants in my research experienced and named in different ways: reappraisals of their interactions and reorientations to what had been taken-for-granted. While the participants often referred to themselves as *reflecting* on the video record, as I noted in chapter 3, I now try to understand the video records and our appraisals of its material and the participants' confessions regarding this material, more as diffractions produced by our positions in the wider experimental apparatus. I take this stance in order to disrupt the common discursive practices that suggest that such reflections exactly mirror the truth independently of discursive practices. I present two examples that illustrate the importance of treating so-called self-reflections of wrongdoing as practices of confession. I argue for responding hospitably to such confessions and for doing such confessions justice by employing a practice of redemptive deconstruction.

In Foucault's (1978) words:

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but that authority requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates,

redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation. (Foucault, 1978, pp. 61–62)

In the following two excerpts I examine the effects of firstly judging a confession as a required self-exposé without redemption, and secondly, of deconstructing a confession prompted by so called self-reflection using video and the discursive practices that produced, judged and shaped responses to that confession.

## **Video evidence and confession without redemption**

At our second co-research meeting and after a brief discussion about how we might organise our co-research, Dave spoke about how he had taken up the position of a researcher of their counselling conversations. Prior to our research meeting I had provided Lolita and Dave with a transcript of our previous counselling meeting. Dave described how he had read through this transcript and highlighted particular utterances, and he offered an analysis of and commentary on their interactions:

Dave I found this particularly interesting, reading this through this morning (indicates the transcript) because I went through with a highlighter and just marked areas, and I could relive the thing. And you're right when you (Lolita) said, you made comment about how it may not have come across how you intended. Or it makes you, like "Oh that didn't sound...I don't want it to sound like that".

As I write this now, sitting at my desk, seven years after this research conversation, I imagine Dave sitting at his desk, two weeks after our counselling conversation. Both us are employing the wider experimental apparatus of my research from positions distant in time and place from the externalised record of our counselling conversation. The diffractions produced by these changes in the material-discursive experimental apparatus, which included our written words, supported Dave to "relive" his experience differently and to take a position outside

the argument he and Lolita had had about their positioning as parent and child (italics indicate speech from the previous meeting), and they supported me to reappraise my contributions to this counselling conversation.

Dave This is what you said (reading Lolita's words from the transcript of counselling meeting two) "*The unhelpful thing for me too, is that it does set up that dynamic where Dave becomes like a parent, or you know, in the authority, sensible role and I'm in the disruptive [role]*". And I [Dave] laughed and said "*There's nothing wrong with that*", you know, and (reading Lolita's speech) "*Well it's kind of a habit that we've got into in our relationship where you go 'Settle down, that's enough of that'*" ... Well I just, when I read that I had a reaction to that to myself as to perhaps why I'm like that.

It may be that Dave was better positioned to make this shift by Lolita's more externalised description of the problem. In our first counselling meeting Lolita had taken up the word counts according to a familiar individualistic positioning which I had inadvertently made readily available. Whereas from that position Lolita had critiqued Dave's speaking as "hot air", in her speaking which Dave chose to report above, she offered a more externalised and dialogical description of a "dynamic" and "habit" that they both had which positioned them both in "roles" that she experienced as "unhelpful".

While Dave's repositioning in the wider experimental apparatus as a reader of the transcript of their conversation had made this alternative reading more available to him, as Barad's (2007) analysis suggests, Dave was not considering these records from a position outside familiar discursive practices. And his response to Lolita's dialogical formulation was to take up familiar individualistic discursive practices that valued personal responsibility and which encouraged Dave to confess, "why I'm like that".

Perhaps Dave's *taking of personal responsibility*, his confession of wrongdoing seemed so appropriate and helpful that none of us attended to the risk posed by uncritically taking up his invitation to find out what was wrong with him and to overlook the dialogical and deconstructive enquiries that might have explored how he, to use the description he offered in chapter 6, page 152, was *trained* by others and how he trained himself to interact that way with Lolita. As I described in the previous chapter, I had been alert to this danger when Hinemoa derogated herself in similar circumstances. I suspect that I might have departed from deconstructive theory by concluding that it was appropriate for Dave to take full responsibility for *his* seemingly self-evident, gendered, problematic conversational practices.

Both Dave and Lolita had a longstanding interest in psychotherapy. And this may have contributed to them taking up this piece of our co-research according to familiar practices of counselling as involving practices of confession and examination. In counselling as a practice of confession, when people consult therapists they make sense of their lives according to familiar storylines. "In doing this, people link the events of their lives in sequences that unfold through time according to a theme or plot. These themes often reflect loss, failure, incompetence, hopelessness or futility" (White, 2007, p. 61).

An effect of these traditions and of Dave and Lolita's positioning in them at this moment, was that Lolita asked me to stop the video so that we could examine Dave's confessions of personal failure in order that he might be subject to what, in Foucauldian (1984) terms, might be called "correct training" (p. 188) by employing the video as an instrument of examination, rather than for the kind of

more dialogical “training” in sharing conversation that Dave had initially referred to:

Dave I’ve become parent-like and authoritative, and ... I don’t know why I’m like that ... I carry a sense of, um, ah, probably, self-righteousness maybe, about how things should be, and I probably do inflict it on Lolita. I don’t know where it comes from. I have a suspicion when I read this [transcript] that it comes from my own feeling of ah, awkwardness about so many times that I have screwed up in my life and that I’m probably aware of my ability to still, excuse my French, “Fuck up”. You know and it’s like I’m almost projecting perhaps, a sense of, I feel uncomfortable when Lolita’s like that sometimes, because I, it makes me feel internally uncomfortable. And it triggers something, I’m not too sure what. But I do have that clamping down because it makes me feel safer if it’s controlled like that. So maybe that is a controlling thing. I don’t know.

At this point, according to Jenkins’ (1990) approach to men who act abusively, Dave might be said to have taken personal responsibility for his controlling actions. He had twice agreed that Lolita had made her point. He had stated that he did not know why he was like he was. And he considered those aspects of his personal history and personality that might explain what *triggered* him “internally” to *clamp down* on Lolita. For Jenkins (1990) “the solution is obvious” (p. 58) in such situations; the abusive male must take responsibility and face the ways he has “failed to face emotional and social pressures” (p. 58) and not attribute these failures to “external factors” (p. 58).

When Lolita provided more examples of the problematic *dynamic between them*, Dave seemed to read them according to familiar individualistic and pathologising discourses and as further evidence of his personal failings:

Lolita That links in to me, a dynamic that we had a while ago that I thought was really significant, where we were talking about how the children have left home and I said...[Lolita provides other examples of Dave's problematic interactions]  
there's a dynamic that possibly feeds into what you are talking about.

Dave then traced *his* "patterns of behaviour" to their internal cause of "low self-esteem", for which he was doing "personal therapy":

Dave Well, it comes from (pause), I spent my, the work I'm doing, my personal therapy is, changing the patterns of my behaviour and a lot of my patterns of behaviour were this class clown, the drunk idiot at the parties, the antics, and all of that was because of low self-esteem, and that, it just makes me feel very uncomfortable.

Crucially, at this point Dave's confession had not produced the kind of redemptive or even compassionate responses from Lolita or me that might be expected in a Christian tradition of confession (see Foucault, 1988). And Lolita's responses regarding Dave's "more inhibited way of being" and his lack of awareness about what informs his actions, suggested that in confessing Dave had not achieved the kind of self-mastery that might be an expected benefit of confession in a Greco-Roman tradition (see Foucault, 1988).

In order to reposition us so that we might together interrupt this escalation of negative identity conclusions, I invited Lolita and Dave to co-research how the conversation was going for them:

Jim How are we doing with this piece of the tape?

Lolita This is really relevant to where I'm at too.

I imagine Lolita was also alert to and responding to cues that told her that Dave was experiencing the “very uncomfortable” feelings he had referred to in his account and in a move to respond to Dave’s discomfort and to reposition them as together in their enquiry, she invited him to consider her as affected by the same concerns. I invited her to respond to our conversation, in case it she might have some inside knowledge to contribute to a more hospitable deconstructive conversation:

Jim So was there anything else you wanted to say in response to what Dave was talking about Lolita?

Lolita Only that what you are saying makes a lot of sense. And it’s heartening to hear the, um, the reflection towards insight that’s going into it. Like I can, I can really experience your effort around this (to Dave). And it’s not easy.

Although Lolita tried to support Dave and show her appreciation for his “heartening” “*insight*”[italics added], it seemed that Dave was experiencing the kinds of “very uncomfortable” feelings he associated with the negative identity conclusions he had confessed to, to the extent that he was no longer in a position to attend to our conversation:

Dave Sorry?

Lolita And it’s not easy.

Dave Is it?

Lolita No.

Jim Not easy, you mean for Dave or for you both?

Lolita For Dave. No. I can see it’s not easy for Dave.

(long pause)

Jim How are we doing with this?

(long pause)

Dave (nods) Good.

It seemed that Dave was overwhelmed by the experience of confessing to distressing apparent truths about himself without redemption and without experiencing a sense of self-mastery. My dialogical reading of Dave's response would suggest I might have understood Dave's distress as a response to inhospitable discursive practices which depicted him as the problem. Had I taken up this reading I might have been better positioned to not only, as Gottman (2011) suggests therapists do in such situations, support Lolita in her efforts to reassure Dave, and to help Dave calm himself, I might also have repositioned us so that we were co-researching the dialogical discursive practices which were shaping their interactions. By not addressing these individualistic practices of examination, I contributed to reproducing a discursive practice very familiar to Dave and Lolita where binaries which positioned one as the authority on the other's personal failings were frequently reversed, without producing a lasting new concept.

When Lolita stepped into producing evidence that corroborated Dave's confession, he did not experience this as producing preferable identity conclusions, or preferable relational understandings, or redemption for him. The way that Lolita and Dave were positioned and positioned themselves contributed significantly to Dave retracting his confession and asserting his self-mastery and mastery over Lolita using familiar discursive practices. And at the same time, Lolita and I were both positioned in a problematic binary: either we cared for Dave, and Lolita stepped back from being "right" about his behaviour and holding him accountable for his controlling actions, or we continued to expose Dave to the understanding that Lolita was right and Dave was wrong.

Our review of this excerpt finished with Lolita trying to voice something of her experience of this binary of right and wrong, ok and not ok:

Lolita It seemed that some of mine [my values and ways of being] had to be wrong in order for Dave's to be ok.

Dave No, I think (pause). Yeah that's, maybe, you're hearing that, yeah.

Constrained by these binaries, and most likely still feeling distressed and defensive, Dave read Lolita's attempt to name the binaries of right/wrong, ok (person)/not ok (person) as implying that he was wrong and not ok. And he responded, as I described he had done in chapter 6 in relation to my project of counting the words we spoke in our meetings, by again moving to reverse their positions in these binaries:

Dave No ... I've felt...challenged and repetitively bullied by you as to how I do things, my parenting techniques, my value systems, family and friends, things like that.

Dave's previous two utterances had begun with "No", indicating that he may now be positioned defensively, in contrast to his initial openness to consider his contribution to their difficulties. After naming Lolita's judging of him as the problem, and to prove that she was mistaken and that he was ok, Dave called on familiar "dividing practices" where individuals are classified and compared and separated according to binaries such as "mad and sane", "sick and healthy" (Foucault, 1982, p. 778):

Dave I have this internal process going on, that I can't be that fucked up. You know, I function in the world ok. How I am is ok, surely it's ok?

In this particular dividing practice Dave compared himself to other men in his community who were in heterosexual relationships. Because of the dominance of

patriarchal practices and the prevalence of violence by men in heterosexual relationships in New Zealand (Fanslow & Robinson, 2005), Dave could easily conclude that he did not fit into the category of stereotypically *not ok* men who dominate their partners with physical violence and who apparently do not care for their partners as he cared for Lolita.

In the face of Dave's retraction, Lolita turned to the video record in order to show that Dave's actions were problematic.

### **Video evidence as proof of the other's wrongdoing**

When viewers of therapeutic videos retained authority over the meaning of their video then they were more likely to "own" (Berger, 1970, p. 25), remember and act upon their insights than if someone pointed out the correct interpretation (Alger & Hogan, 1970), and they were less likely to feel blamed and criticised (Alger & Hogan, 1970; Bailey & Sowder, 1970). However, when the clients in couple counselling did not agree with video representations of them, then this increased distress (Alkire & Brunse, 1974; Kimball & Cundick, 1977). So it perhaps unsurprising that when Lolita attempted to use a video excerpt to show Dave where he was taking the controlling or authoritative stance with her - a stance which he had agreed that he had taken - he responded by using the same excerpt to demonstrate that she was mistaken (*italics below indicate speech from the video replay which they were re-viewing*).

Lolita chose the following excerpt in order to invite Dave to again reflect on his position as he had done when he first read the transcript and then witnessed himself:

*Dave What I'm saying is, I don't want to feel I'm stifling you because part of that [absence of inhibition] is what attracts me to you. Whether I feel uncomfortable or not with it, is maybe my hang up. But as I've always said to you a relationship is about honouring the other person. And if I knew that it was behaviour that I did constantly and incessantly that caused you pain, or grief or worry I would modify that behaviour, or I wouldn't be in the relationship. So I would moderate it to a level that I was happy that I wasn't giving up my self but I was also being respectful of my partner's wishes. And I, to be honest, really bluntly, I expect the same back. I expect you to be flamboyant and out there but not at a point where I get lost in the relationship, either. So as I say*

Lolita (to Jim) Stop that [video] there.

[video replay stopped]

(to Dave) Listening to yourself talking to me there Dave, do you, do you think, like my sense is that you sound like you're coming from an authoritative place. Like it sounds like an authority in your voice. As I'm listening I'm hearing an invitation to, I feel like I'm getting a lecture on something. Like information is being imparted to me.

After asking me to stop the video replay, Lolita phrased her enquiries carefully, tentatively and deferentially. She voiced how Dave sounded to her. She did not tell him how he was, and she invited him to consider her experience. A close analysis of Dave's utterance is likely to support Lolita's claim that Dave took an authoritative position with her. Lolita might have pointed out that Dave's utterances centred his judgement of what constituted care of Lolita and of himself. For example, when Dave stated he did not want to "feel" he was "stifling" Lolita, rather than not wanting her to feel stifled, and when he said that if he "knew" his behaviour caused Lolita "pain or grief or worry" rather than asking how she felt. Similarly, Dave referred to his own speech as if he was referring to an

authoritative source when he said, “as I’ve always said” and “as I say”. In contrast to Lolita’s tentative and careful enquiry, Dave spoke *bluntly* and implied that Lolita was falling short in acting respectfully to him. Lolita might also have pointed to Dave’s criteria for changing his behaviour, if he “knew” that his behaviour was “constantly” and “incessantly” problematic for Lolita, which was so rigorous that it was unlikely to be met. Lolita may have reinstated her concerns about how they were positioned in binaries by referring to Dave’s individualistic position that he would *either* “moderate” *his* behaviour to a level *he* was happy with, *or* leave the relationship.

So while Lolita might have produced significant evidence of Dave taking positions of authority in their interactions, an effect of their positioning was that even when she proposed that Dave consider that she was experiencing his tone as authoritative and lecturing, Dave responded by positioning himself as more authoritative than Lolita. In doing so he rejected Lolita’s much-reduced position that she felt he had used an authoritative tone, whereas before he had taken responsibility for *being* controlling and authoritative:

Lolita Do you hear any of that [authoritative tone] in that?

Dave To be honest, no.

When Lolita appeared to attempt to avoid this binary by inviting Dave to join with her in reflecting on their experiences of what was shaping their interactions, Dave was not well positioned to see her utterances as an invitation to adopt a less certain position and to work together so that they could problem solve together:

Lolita Because I often hear you use terms like I’m lecturing you or bullying you and I don’t perceive that in myself at all (pause) and yet I hear, watching something like that [on video] it’s familiar to me that you are telling me something and your voice takes on a

very authoritative [tone] (pause), and at times you'll say "Whoa, I haven't finished". And so I experience similar [in you] to what you're experiencing in me. And yet I'm oblivious to.

An effect of this reversing of binaries was that Dave took Lolita's invitation to consider she might be oblivious to something about her own actions (a position Dave had taken at the start of this meeting when he had said that the transcript shows how you "may not have come across how you intended") as a means to discredit her judgment of him:

Dave (Talking over Lolita) Well you think you are [experiencing the same as me]

Lolita Yeah, it's like I don't recognise that place of authority that I'm coming from when you are feeling bullied or (Dave interrupts).

Dave's response positioned Lolita as if she was taking the untenable position of claiming to know what he was experiencing. And in contrast to their former collaborative and reflective approach, Dave had talked over Lolita and interrupted her to authoritatively assert his view that he did not take a position of authority with her. At the time, Lolita and I were trying to attend to the content of what Dave was saying, and he was quite quickly offering content which required time to consider. With this focus, and in the heat of the moment it was difficult to notice and attend to these relational practices which are often a taken-for-granted feature of conversations between males and females (Ayim, 1997). None of us appeared to notice that Dave's actions constituted evidence of the authoritative stance that he was attempting to disprove, or that he had moved the focus from his initial acknowledgment of some of his problematic interactions to focussing on Lolita's actions. And although I had a sense that there was something problematic

about the focus, speed and nature of Dave's speaking, I found it too difficult to address this when there was so much that Dave was wanting answers to.

After disrupting Lolita's argument Dave took up her evidence based approach:

Dave But, what I've just said [there], was I actually telling you what you were? Was I saying what exists for you while I was explaining how I see it? Wasn't I?

Dave had interrupted Lolita with what were in effect four questions in quick succession. The frequency of these questions left Lolita poorly positioned to give them due consideration, or to reflect on the way they were delivered. And Dave's questions misrepresented Lolita's position. Lolita was not claiming that Dave was telling her what she was, or what existed for her as Dave had suggested. She had said she felt he was taking a position of authority with her and speaking as if he was imparting his knowledge, or the facts of the matter to her. So when Dave asked her if he was "actually telling" Lolita what she was, Lolita had few options but to agree that he was not telling her how she was:

Lolita Yes. Yes. You were explaining to me how you see it.

Dave I wasn't telling you.

Lolita No, I guess the thing for me is when you're telling me how you see things, there's a, for me I feel like I'm being told how things are by somebody in a place of authority.

(pause)

Lolita restated her position that she *felt* that Dave was taking a position of authority, perhaps, in part, because she could not point to particular evidence that showed Dave's positioning in the way that the word counts had *irrefutably* shown the words that they had used. Lolita tried to invite Dave to take up a more uncertain, explorative position in order that they might both identify the *dynamics*

of the problem by looking beyond what was being said and considering the tone of what was being said:

Lolita I think we're looking at what's not being said. For me it's something in the tone and there's even that piece where [on the video where Dave says?] "*And I, to be honest, really bluntly, I expect the same back*". It's got, there's often a dynamic for me like that and I, so then I get confused or I get, I feel unjustified when I hear you say things like I've laid the law down, or I'm bullying you with something. Because my perception is I don't even recognise if I use that same kind of tone.

From his position as uppermost in this familiar contesting of binaries, which at times they referred to as their "power struggle", Dave again interrupted Lolita and used the video in order to disprove Lolita's position that he had an authoritative tone – again, despite having previously agreed with Lolita that he was authoritative, controlling and parent-like in some of his interactions with her:

Dave Could we just rewind and run that piece again and just play that 30 seconds?

Dave *I would modify that behaviour, or I wouldn't be in the relationship.*

Jim Is that early enough?

Dave Yeah.

Lolita Mm

Dave *So I would moderate it to a level that I was happy that I wasn't giving up my self but I was also being respectful of my partner's wishes. And I, to be honest, really bluntly, I expect the same back. I expect you to be flamboyant and out there but not at a point where I get lost in the relationship, um, either.*

Positioned with the burden of proof and looking for some irrefutable material evidence of something as relatively subjective as tone, Lolita was not well positioned to see or hear what she had first been alert to, or to report on this

without escalating this argument. She had already noticed that sometimes when Dave was being positioned to consider the evidence of his problematic actions he might find this distressing. And Lolita may well have been softening her approach in a common gendered response (ChenFeng & Galick, 2015) to the more argumentative approach that Dave employed by interrupting her, raising his voice and positioning her as mistaken:

Lolita That sounds different, that sounds different there.

Dave Can we just. (DVD stops). There's nothing to me authoritative. I don't sound like I'm TELLING you how it is, but it's interesting how you took that.

Lolita Mm

Dave Because.

Prior to this meeting Dave had been positioned and positioned himself as a careful co-researcher. He had sat at his desk reading the transcript of our counselling meeting and highlighting instances where he considered he had taken an authoritative approach. At the beginning of our meeting he had been interested in how he came to take up such positions. Over the course of our meeting he had taken up a familiar position in order to resist our examinations using video and he had moved to arguing that there was “nothing” authoritative about his actions.

I interrupted Dave here because I recognised that we had been captured by a pursuit of the truth, which unlike the word counts could not be irrefutably proven, and which had us very problematically positioned. Reading this from my current place in the wider experimental apparatus and distant from this moment in space and time, it seems obvious to me that a more useful deconstructive enquiry might have focussed on how these changes in our positioning were produced. I might have begun this enquiry by making my concerns transparent in order that we

might co-research how we produced this externalised relational *dynamic* and move away from co-researching Dave and Lolita's failings: "It seems like we began this in a spirit of co-research but that somehow the way that I have facilitated this enquiry, or not facilitated it sufficiently, has re-positioned you as on different sides of an argument. Can we take a look at how this happened so that we can be better positioned to work together in order to do your situation and your hopes justice?".

However, at the time, I attempted to counter these truth claims by asking for a more "experience-near" (White, 2007, p. 40) account from Lolita. Unsurprisingly, when Lolita turned to the video and employed an openness to other possibilities, in the face of Dave's certainty and emotions, she was persuaded that she might have been mistaken:

Jim Did you experience that it changed the second time?

Lolita Mm, and I'm watching his body language and seeing him sit back a bit and but, yeah, when we just went through it the time before that, he was a bit louder in his voice at the 40 [minute marker], at the 40

Jim Oh yeah.

Lolita 42 [minutes]. It felt that way from memory, but, yeah looking at it now I don't see it as authoritative, as so authoritative.

And when such close analysis did not produce persuasive evidence for Lolita, I then tried a wider view in the hope that there might be some contextual evidence for what Dave and Lolita had agreed at the beginning of this meeting: that Dave had taken an authoritative and problematic stance with her:

Jim So do you want to go back to the piece where it seemed like it set the context?

Lolita Yeah. See if it's any different for me. At 42 [minutes into the recording]. Or a bit after that.

When we watched this excerpt again, Lolita saw it differently:

Lolita No, it's quite different.

Jim So what was different about it Lolita?

Lolita Um. (long pause). There's, there's a softer tone in the voice than I perceived the first time. Like even as he's putting it out, there's some, holding back, some, mm.

Jim So what (pause) what do you think contributed to you know, you being able to recognise that tone of voice the second time?

Lolita It's lost its charge for me, or it's lost it's (long pause). Maybe less reactive the second time, like I've had my reaction.

It seemed to me that although Dave had initially taken up a researching position that allowed him to look at his actions in a different light, the discursive practices that he employed from this position still served to shed light on his personal failings and to position him so that he produced a confession. In this confession he invited Lolita and I to help him to understand “why I’m like that”. When Lolita took up this invitation Dave read her enquiries in the individualistic terms most familiar and available to him and as a practice of examination using video technology. When Dave was not redeemed for his confession, he reversed the process of examination and he positioned Lolita as lacking.

Looking at this interaction as Dickerson (2013) suggests, “using patriarchy as a lens for understanding” (p. 102) also offers a reading of Lolita’s and Dave’s experiences as a common effect of patriarchy. Dickerson (2013) suggests that patriarchy positions men to centre their experience and to feel “a sense of ‘rightness’, of ‘knowing’, and of ‘needing to be competent’” (p. 110) to the extent

that experiences “outside of those patriarchal injunctions can affect men and direct them to feelings of incompetence and failure” (p. 110) and into defending themselves. And when women try to “underline their experience so that men can finally get what is important to them in the relationship” (Dickerson, 2013, p. 111) this may engender more defensiveness and more underlining.

I note here that this depiction of these relational discursive practices which Dave, Lolita and I enacted does not sum up their relationship. Outside of this “dynamic” as Lolita called it, there were many indications that they were shaping their relationship according to their hopes. And even within this problematic dynamic there were exceptions and acts of resistance that encouraged us to continue our co-research. So while for part of our next meeting Dave moved further into the kinds of “games” that Foucault (1982) described, in which “the objective is to act upon an adversary in such a manner as to render the struggle impossible for him [or her]” (p. 793), Lolita again resisted these moves by referring to the video technology (as she had done when she referred to the word counts).

Dave One of the things I wish to ask Lolita, or to work on here, is the fact that that perception [of hers was mistaken]. There was an example the other week where Lolita watched that video thing and saw my attitude a certain way, and then when you [Lolita] re-visited it [you] could see that it wasn't like that, you know? And ... I sometimes wonder if how you [Lolita] see things in our dynamic is taken out of proportion or misrepresented from how it actually is.

I did not interrupt this *dynamic* as much as I might have liked to, and as Lolita was entitled to: there were times when she was talked over and silenced in ways which do not fit with an hospitable ethic of co-research. Despite my omissions,

Lolita was not easily persuaded that she was mistaken about her perceptions. Instead, she continued to research her and Dave's interactions in light of her observations of the video record and to hold on to her own discernment:

Lolita Being able to go back and re-look at it [the video] and discern for myself that it sounded different the second time around. That's been sitting with me a lot, and I've often over the last week watched what I'm receiving from you [Dave] and wondered am I, you know, I might think "You're grumpy" and it makes me wonder to myself "Am I just perceiving it that way? Does he actually sound like that or is it my expectations of you or something filtering it in that way?" Yeah, so it's made me stop and think instead of just responding.

Lolita refused the binary positioning she had been offered that there was "nothing" Dave did that was authoritative, and she indicated her preparedness to consider what was going into her experience before responding.

This use of video was such a significant event for them both that almost four months later when we looked back over the five counselling and five research meetings, both Dave and Lolita referred to these conversations. Dave reiterated his position that the video had proved that he was not authoritative:

Dave I was being labelled into a particular role and type of behaviour, and when I saw the videos it was refreshing to me personally to go "No I don't think I was. I think I was like this". And I found that quite reinforcing.

Lolita had also developed her preferred narrative. She had taken up Bird's (2004) analysis of the effects of dominant views on the interpretation of experiences of those whose views were marginalised. Bird (2004) predicted that when a person names an experience which is not supported by dominant cultural ideas then she

or he is likely to be regarded as mistaken as to the truth of the matter, or exaggerating or over sensitive, while the person whose experience is validated by these dominant ideas is likely to feel “hurt”, “angry and upset” (p. 273) at being the subject of such culturally invalid and unjust claims. I had provided this information to Dave and Lolita as a supplement to their copies of my version of White’s (1986a) appreciation of difference exercise. Calling on Bird’s (2004) analysis and words, Lolita took up the position that when her views were being challenged then she would consider her experience in the light of this knowledge of the operation of “dominant” discourse and she was not so inclined to accept that her experience was wrong or “over sensitive”:

Lolita Because that, that scenario, I know it’s left a big imprint on me. But, so what I find myself doing is [I’m] still committed to checking my view out, and also being willing to hold to my truth of it. So yeah, I’ve challenged myself not to accept that dominant kind of view that I’m the one that views things wrong or over sensitively. That can happen but it may not always be the truth.

My experience of the effects of these conversations where co-research using video technology was employed according to familiar individualistic truth games, led me to question my stance and to follow Lolita’s example of being more open to considering some of my taken-for-granted thinking and cherished positions. I regret that I was not in a position to better support Dave and Lolita in this conversation. I argue that a more slowed down deconstructive approach, which kept in mind ChenFeng and Galick’s (2015) strategies to address common patriarchal practices, might have supported me in addressing this situation without positioning Lolita and Dave in binaries of right and wrong, ok and not ok, defence and attack. This experience left me determined to be more influential in addressing these all too familiar experiences of couples counselling.

In the following example, I show how Hinemoa invited Wiremu and me to question some of our taken-for-granted positions, and how together we entered into a more deconstructive, hospitable and collaborative practice of co-research of the interactions which produced their conversational sharing.

### **A restoration of hospitable collaborative deconstructive co-research**

In the following excerpt, I began with the same taken-for-granted use of video that produced my practice of counting words with Dave and Lolita. This approach exposed Hinemoa as individually responsible for dominating their conversational time and Wiremu as a critic of Hinemoa. As Lolita had done when she referred to Dave's speaking as "hot air" and "a joke", Wiremu took my approach as an invitation to derogate Hinemoa's speaking. I go on to show how, despite this problematic reappearance of the use of video as a technology to expose wrongdoing, Hinemoa invited Wiremu and me back into more hospitable and dialogical practices of co-research.

Despite good intentions and the teamwork I described above, at our next meeting, Hinemoa and Wiremu continued to struggle with sharing their conversational time. Similarly, I was still struggling with how to employ the video records. I wondered if I extended the word count to an analysis of an excerpt from their conversation this might be more effective in exposing what I still saw to some extent as Hinemoa's problematic individual speaking habits:

Jim            Do you [looking to both Hinemoa and Wiremu] think it's useful to have information, say about the amount of time

people say the same thing or the number of interruptions, or do you think that isn't, ah (pause)

Wiremu Ohhh. If that's delaying anything. If it's just wasting the session's time, I suppose yes. But, no, I don't think it's really important unless that person is just dominating and just, it's, the sessions not, we're not getting out of the session what we should be getting out of it. If it's not a fair process, yeah.

Jim What do you think of that Hinemoa?

Hinemoa (laughs)

Jim It's really about the use of video I'm talking about, not

Hinemoa Yeah. I actually think that might be a very useful life skill (laughs).

Jim What?

Hinemoa Well you know? Recognising how much one bleats on unnecessarily (laughs). Initially that suggestion made me feel uncomfortable, but then, I mean, actually I think, for me personally, yes I think that ... is information that could be useful. And I'm not just talking in terms of the use or duration of the video I'm talking about outside of here, because the real effect of this work it matters out there, yeah?

Like Lolita, as the person who spoke less, Wiremu's initial response indicated that he did not think that equally sharing was "really important" unless not sharing had some detrimental effect. And like Dave, Hinemoa, as the person who spoke more, considered her speaking problematic when the matter of conversational sharing was brought to her attention. This suggests these discursive practices might well have come to light, in the course of our co-research and without my intervention, if they had crossed a threshold to the extent that one or both of them considered these conversational practices were "dominating" their conversations.

While I intended to provide the conditions for informed consent and to position Hinemoa so that she was free to reject this proposal, at this moment I think she was positioned to consider her discomfort as evidence of avoidance and to master her fears according to concepts of personal responsibility. Hinemoa again quickly acknowledged that the amount she spoke was a problem they had tried to address:

Hinemoa You always tell me you want me to stop talking. And then you say to me “You already told me that a hundred times.” And I go “Oh, OK”.

Hinemoa was alert to the possibility that she would be exposed to criticism from Wiremu, and she tried to invite Wiremu into a more hospitable, collaborative approach by asking him to understand how hard it would be for her to reduce the amount she speaks:

Hinemoa You know that this will be done incrementally, eh (laughs)? You know I can’t go from reminding you a hundred times to just zero? I’ll need at least six months to integrate this (laughs).

Hinemoa also indicated a dialogical understanding of some of her talking. In describing some of her talk as “reminding”, Hinemoa alerted Wiremu to some of the more dialogical understandings we had explored in our previous meeting. Hinemoa had said that she had felt compelled to *remind* Wiremu “a hundred times” when he was “not keeping promises” to her and their children. In this meeting Wiremu had said that when he feels that Hinemoa is disregarding his ideas and treating him like a child then he will withdraw from their relationship and not keep his promises to her. Hinemoa’s attempts at what she called “coaching” Wiremu into teamwork were more visible and measurable in the video and transcripts because she was, in her words, *fighting* for a better relationship and

in using aggressive and disrespectful language she visibly took up more of their conversational time, and Wiremu's withdrawal from speaking with her meant that he spoke less.

Hinemoa's use of humour served to remind Wiremu that she was aware of what she needed to do to play her part in their conversational sharing, and that she wanted understanding from him and not criticism. Critchley (2002) suggested "the distinction between *laughing at oneself* and *laughing at others*" is crucial as when "the object of laughter is the subject who laughs" in "true humour" (p. 14) such laughter does not wound a specific victim and "can be said to have a therapeutic as well as a critical function" (p. 15).

However, in contrast to the hospitable dialogical response that Wiremu had taken in our previous research meeting, Wiremu took up a practice familiar to couples in counselling and which I had invited, that of complaining about the other (Dickerson, 2013). And as Lolita had done, he did so using humour:

Wiremu        Six months? (Ironic).  
Hinemoa        (laughs) So go from a hundred to eighty, to seventy.

Under the influence of these familiar discourses myself, I then further positioned Wiremu as a complainant and critic of Hinemoa, despite Hinemoa's continued acknowledgements of what she would need to do:

Jim             Wiremu you said that Hinemoa repeats herself, and so um, then listening to that, um, there were a couple of phrases, like you [Hinemoa] said "Why didn't I shut up, stop there" or "talk less" and there were seven times that you said that in four minutes. And then the other phrase was that your "content is good". And you said that five times in four minutes.

In only documenting Hinemoa's words I obscured their relationship to Wiremu's contributions to how they shared their conversational time. This focus on Hinemoa also positioned Wiremu to use the evidence I was producing to critique Hinemoa's speech, despite her request for understanding and care from Wiremu. When Wiremu continued to respond unkindly to Hinemoa's willingness to look at her actions, I remembered that a similar thing had happened when Lolita was positioned to critique Dave. While at the time I did not appreciate how my individualistic line of enquiry contributed to this problematic positioning, I felt it was important to stop this enquiry from going down the same lines that I had taken Dave and Lolita's co-research:

Wiremu     Sure it wasn't in two minutes [and not four minutes]? Sure it wasn't in two [minutes that Hinemoa said the same thing over and over].

Jim           (To Wiremu) Stirrer.

As the conversation was moving quickly I interjected by naming Wiremu's position with Hinemoa as stirring up trouble and not helpful in the way Hinemoa had referred to. My fast response contributed to me continuing to reproduce the dominant individualistic and competitive discursive practices and binaries in play, except that on this occasion I had tried to reverse my initial positioning by giving Hinemoa the upper hand in this binary of wrong/right. I had also hoped that I was using humour in an ethical way, so as not to remain silent in the presence of something problematic, and to offer an opening to an alternative form of inquiry, one not so bound by the seriousness of the documenting of personal failings. I wanted my humour to be as Critchley (2002) suggested, some sort of call to us to together and in a more playful manner, "face the folly of the world and change the situation in which we find ourselves" (p. 18).

At the same time, my use of humour in this way served another purpose that Critchley (2002) had noted, as a “reminder that [I was at that moment] perhaps not the person [I] would like to be” (p. 75) in reproducing familiar individualistic and adversarial positions based on who I judged to be in the wrong. So while I would argue that this is not an appropriate or accomplished intervention, and not one I would advocate for, it made more visible some of my taken-for-granted individualistic assumptions about what I judged to be really going on, and the ill effects of this positioning. As Besley (2005) suggested:

counsellors need to be aware of the part they play in using technologies of the self and the effect these have in constituting the self. Furthermore, they need to become more conscious that they provide a means to address care of the self of which confession forms only a part.” (p. 380)

In her response that follows, Hinemoa did not accept the known and familiar position call Wiremu’s humour offered her. She invited us both to honour her confession of wrongdoing and into practices of care. I think it is significant that Hinemoa named Wiremu’s actions as unhelpful to her in their project of sharing their conversation. And she offered a commentary on the effects of humour:

Hinemoa See that joking. That’s one of the times it’s not [helpful].

Wiremu I thought you said to me it’s going to take six months for you to integrate this.

Hinemoa That does not help. That, that is not helpful. Really, Wiremu. When Wiremu is saying something, he’s having a point but he tries to mask it in humour.

Wiremu I was just trying to say that (inaudible, baby calling out).

Hinemoa called to us to realign ourselves with the ethic of an hospitable collaborative enquiry and she did so in a respectful and honourable manner. And,

as she went on to say in later sessions, she called us to account in more diplomatic and respectful language than she might have previously employed. In the moment of this excerpt she was performing a new identity in relationship as a strong and respectful partner, and as a woman who can call to account two men who did not appreciate their part in producing her confession and then criticising her.

Hinemoa's call and example prompted me to wonder how I had positioned her and Wiremu to act in ways that were dishonouring of them both, particularly when it seemed we had teamed up so effectively in our previous meetings. While my individualistic position on exposing personal responsibility was so taken-for-granted that my responsibility for how I had positioned them both was not clearly visible to me at the time, I did recognise that our positioning was producing evidence of personal failings that might produce conflict:

- Jim            One of the hazards is that those things can be used against a person
- Hinemoa      Which is not the intention of it eh, Wiremu?
- Wiremu       Oh well, you said to me that it's going to take six months for you to integrate.
- Hinemoa      I was joking.
- Wiremu       Well you...ok, ok.
- Hinemoa      Ok. So, um, wow! That's good information.

I was concerned about what had happened and unsure how to proceed. As part of what White (1997a) refers to as "practices of 'transparency'" (p. 203) I made some of my struggle clear and I invited us to co-research how we might better use the video:

- Jim            What's the best way in your experience to deal with that information when it's on the video... And what could be done

differently about it because I am quite anxious about the possible ill effects, maybe that happened just now, you know? The ill effects are that, um, it becomes a weapon to beat each other up with, or yourself with (pause).

This practice of co-research better positioned us to restore our careful collaborative approach. Hinemoa took up my invitation and she reminded us that we had been carefully collaborating until the video evidence had been used against her:

Hinemoa My intention with anything that we work at is [that its] not going to be used against each other, Wiremu? Because that can be quite discouraging, we're doing so well. We don't want to discourage anybody and muzzle them with humour eh? Because that's really not helpful.

Wiremu Yes.

Hinemoa It wasn't funny, Wiremu, what you just did, I felt a bit offended by that.

Wiremu I, I totally agree with that and I'm sorry.

Hinemoa hospitably invited Wiremu and me into respectful teamwork in “anything *we* work at” and by reminding him and me, “*we*'re doing so well”. She aligned us with the intention of not wanting to “discourage anybody” or “muzzle” each other. In saying she was a “bit” offended she indicated to Wiremu that while she found his comments unhelpful, she was not so offended that she did not want him to re-join their project. Wiremu took up these careful invitations by “totally” agreeing and apologising to Hinemoa.

Hinemoa's call to us to reinstate hospitable collaboration helped us avoid the reinstatement of the binary positioning that had been so problematic for Dave and Lolita. When, like Wiremu, Lolita first joked about Dave's speaking performance, neither Dave nor I named her actions as unhelpful. Instead Dave was positioned and positioned himself in order to take personal responsibility for his actions until he felt he had been critiqued enough and then he attempted to reverse his position in these individualistic binaries by suggesting that Lolita was *the one* doing the bullying and not listening.

Also, it seemed that another effect of my positioning of us to co-research some of the "hazards" associated with our use of video technology, was that Hinemoa and Wiremu were better positioned to consider their place in the wider experimental apparatus constituted by the video and our discursive practices. From this position they offered a commentary on some of the benefits of being in a position to consider their own behaviour as depicted by the video without someone else "pointing out" (with or without the video record) where they were going wrong:

Hinemoa The beauty about this process is you actually get to see it for yourself. You don't have to have someone hit you up... THIS here is like having a conscience. Not someone telling you stuff and pointing stuff out to you, but you get to do it for yourself and you get to realise it for yourself by watching yourself. That's far less painful, and far more helpful (laughs), than getting outed.

Wiremu Because nobody wants to hear that. Sometimes you can take that sort of stuff but nobody wants to hear it. When Hinemoa says it to me, straight away I want to think of saying things to her [about] which [things] she does [wrong].

Hinemoa It's like outing myself, seeing myself on the video. That's the effect it's had on me, anyway.

This positioning encouraged Hinemoa and Wiremu to take up a practice of care of the self in which they worked upon their selves in order to transform themselves according to their consciences. Foucault (1987) described the practice of care of the self as “an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one's self and to attain a certain mode of being” (p. 2). Hinemoa indicated that she had in effect widened our experimental apparatus further so that she considered her actions according to her conscience, and *as if* she was being videoed and that this video record would be the subject of re-view:

Hinemoa I noticed about three days ago it was like I was me but I was having this out of body experience like watching myself doing whatever it was that I was doing as if I was watching that [gesturing to the video monitor]

At our next meeting Hinemoa elaborated on this effect:

Hinemoa So now ... I'm monitoring myself. I'm watching how I'm carrying on behaving. And I tell you man that's made all the difference and I feel that in terms of moving forward and the gains that we've made, most of that has happened actually since we've started watching ourselves on that TV. See now, I'm more aware of how I behave; not just because the TV camera is on now but it's like I've got this conscious monitor thing happening with myself now.

Hinemoa was enthusiastic about this development, which she saw as giving her the opportunity to monitor her own actions and thoughts according to her conscience and without someone else having to point out her failings. In this

respect, her intra-action with the video technology allowed Hinemoa to extend the experimental apparatus and to employ it as a practice of care of herself and others.

However, if following Butler's (1997) interpretation of Foucault's (for example, 1984) work on subjugation, we understand that subjugation is not only produced by power external to oneself, but also by our subjugation of our selves according to our consciences, and that our consciences are discursively produced, then the monitoring that Hinemoa subjected herself to cannot be assumed to be liberating. As Besley (2005) suggested, a counsellor has a particular responsibility to be aware of the role they play in constituting clients' identities and for taking particular care to deconstruct not only confessions of wrongdoing, but he or she must also be alert to the possibility that expressions of conscience may in effect be products of dominant discourses and may constitute the enslaving demands of a "master" (Butler, 1997, p. 3).

For me, this was the beginning of a profound repositioning which is at the centre of this thesis. It meant that theoretically, at least, I was no longer interested in taking the position that my ideas were somehow sufficiently outside of my participants' or clients' situations, and that the video technology was sufficiently objective to allow me to make assessments and form conclusions about what was fair for us. In the three previous chapters I have shown some of the hazards of taking approaches which had at their heart assumptions that I had not questioned: when the truth is obvious I am obliged to introduce my participants to that truth in order that I might fulfil my responsibilities to them and protect them from injustice. There is much that is close to my heart about this assumption, and which

I wanted to keep close. As I will show, stepping more into deconstructive enquiries offered a way of addressing justice with my participants and clients.

## **Confession, video and relational-responsive redemption through deconstruction**

When I presented data to demonstrate to Hinemoa that her conversational sharing was problematic, I positioned her as the problem and Wiremu as a critic of her. As it had for Dave, this positioning caused discomfort to Hinemoa and obscured the more dialogical understandings she and Wiremu had been discussing and which they had been calling on to guide their respectful conversational sharing.

At the beginning of this chapter I described how when Dave was initially positioned and positioned himself and as a researcher considering his own actions, then he confessed to, firstly, speaking “twice as much” as Lolita, and secondly, to authoritativeness and self-righteousness. Then when Dave was tied to these negative, uncomfortable identity conclusions and not exonerated or redeemed for his confession, and instead he was subject to Lolita’s and his own criticisms of his speaking as “hot air” and as evidence of his internal problems being triggered, including his lack of self-awareness, inhibitions and “low self-esteem”, Dave moved to care for himself by consulting himself about whether these negative identity conclusions were just. When he compared himself to other men, Dave concluded that he was “not that fucked up”, and he retracted his confession and sought to gain the upper hand in this game of truth. He used the video evidence to *point out* that Lolita was bullying him. An effect of this positioning to use the so

called facts of the video record to point out the other's problematic behaviour was that we frequently lost sight of the dialogical discursive practices at play.

In contrast, when Hinemoa began our review by confessing to not stopping and listening to Wiremu, our co-research was initially focused on her concerns, and my subsequent *pointing out* was supposedly in service of her concerns. Our deconstructive enquiries produced a preferred identity for her and a dialogical understanding of their conversational time, one which all parties considered just. After reviewing the video record, Wiremu decided that Hinemoa was “just being too hard on [her]self”, Hinemoa thought that her “content” was “very relevant” that she was the person who got the ball rolling in their conversation, and that Wiremu might “do better” at picking up his share of their conversation. With these hospitable, just, multi-vocal, dialogical, externalised and redemptive understandings to call upon, Hinemoa and Wiremu were better positioned to recover from the familiar individualistic practices of criticism and disrespect, which I had reinstated when I positioned Wiremu as a critic of Hinemoa.

As a deconstructive approach would suggest, in foregrounding dialogical understandings I do not wish to instate a binary that promotes relational understandings and excludes personal responsibility. Rather I wish to call upon the extraordinary power of video to depict the self in interaction and to provide an objective record (in the material-feminist sense that I have discussed in chapter 3) which serves as a protected text on which to base our collaborative deconstructive enquiries, and which supports us to take up different positions in the wider experimental apparatus, in order to enter into hospitable and just practices of care of the self and other.

In the following chapter I show how together, Hinemoa Wiremu and I, developed our practice of deconstructive co-research using video in order to address how they might do justice to their situation and to their hopes.

## **Chapter 9. Whānau and community development in videoed couple counselling**

In the previous chapter I described how I came to focus more on the dialogical interactions between members of two of the couples in my study, in order to support them to collaborate in an hospitable process of co-research, particularly around sharing their conversational time. In this chapter, I show how Wiremu, Hinemoa and I employed co-research using this more dialogical focus alongside some familiar narrative therapy practices in order to support their preferred identities and their relationship as a couple.

Intrinsic to narrative therapy is the idea of an “audience”, a forum of acknowledgement” (White, 2007, p. 13), to the developments in people’s lives. I describe how I facilitated a documentation of preferred developments, and provided enhanced forums of acknowledgement using “re-membering conversations” (White, 2007, p. 129) and “taking it back practices” (White, 1997a, p. 132) and “definitional ceremony” (White, 1997a, p. 93) in order to facilitate and sustain reciprocal relationships of care between Hinemoa and Wiremu, their children, their work and their community. I describe each of these approaches when I employ them later in this chapter.

### **The contribution of children**

A primary reason that Hinemoa and Wiremu came to counselling was that they were concerned about the effect that their relationship difficulties were having on their children, and particularly on their teenaged son, Edward. On one occasion,

he had been so distressed that he had tried to burn their house down while they were in it.

Relations of reciprocity are particularly relevant to Māori (Durie, 2001). Both Wiremu and Hinemoa are Māori. Whānau is a Māori term often loosely translated as extended family, but which might include adopted children, or whāngai children, and the term whānau may be applied to non-kin groups such as teammates, colleagues or neighbours who care for each other and have a shared purpose (Durie, 2001). “The capacity to care, manaakitia, is a critical role for whānau” (Durie, 2001, p. 200) and for whānau there is an expectation of reciprocity in relationships. Similarly, when Māori present in therapy they do not present on their own: “Māori never enter into a space of engagement as an individual: who they are and who they are connected to comes into the room with them” (Swann, Swann, & Crocket, 2013, p. 12). Hence, engaging in conversation about those others’ contributions and connections to a couple’s lives is imperative. Hinemoa and Wiremu embodied this understanding in the times when they literally brought their infant child or their grandchild into the counselling room.

The influence of children has been noted in therapeutic contexts. When reflecting on his therapeutic practices, White (2000) acknowledged that the contribution of “the voices of many children” (p. 5) had been “powerfully influential” (p. 10) in shaping his practice. Partly as a consequence of his experience with consulting children, White (2000) questioned structuralist notions of childhood. White (2000) suggested structuralist notions produce relationships between adults and children where children “can become the focus of ‘assessment’, ‘management’, ‘intervention’, and/or ‘treatment’ in a power relationship that is marginalising of,

and frequently disqualifying of [children's] knowledges and skills of living" (p. 16). White argued that there are opportunities for children to contribute to their parents "empathic and compassionate parenting practices" (2000, p. 20) with the proviso that parents are not using their power to abuse or exploit their children. Like Weingarten (1997), who gave an account of her teenage son comforting her when she was fearful, White (2000) argued that children can have "relations of reciprocity with their parents around expressions of tolerance, acceptance, patience, perseverance, caring and compassion" (p. 22). These contributions include the love children inspire from their parents, and which compels their parents to uphold heart-felt values on their children's behalf, as well as the active contributions children make in shaping their parents' actions.

It seemed clear to me that I had a moral responsibility and a cultural and theoretical duty to address not only Wiremu and Hinemoa's relationship as a couple but also the co-production of their relationship as parents and the safety and wellbeing of their children.

In counselling session two, Hinemoa and Wiremu had spoken about their appreciation that they were working together as parents. The following excerpt is taken from the following meeting, research session two. Hinemoa and Wiremu brought to this meeting their infant grandchild who lived with them. In this meeting I replayed this appreciative conversation from the previous meeting in order to position Hinemoa and Wiremu as an appreciative audience to, and co-producers of, their preferred identities and their preferred performance of parenting.

After watching this excerpt Wiremu appreciated that the video constituted a record of the changes they had made over time, and which they may not have been conscious of if we had not made them visible through our co-research and *documented* them using the video:

Wiremu Just watching it I think we've come a lot further than that, as well. Yeah, just watching it. I mean we still have our hiccups and, because of the pressures of work the changes and things that have happened we've been at each other, but it's been different in the way that we know that the outcome will be ok and we'll get over ourselves and we'll move on and we'll deal with what has to be dealt with.

White (2000) wrote of the importance of documenting the unique outcomes that are identified in narrative conversations in order to make them visible and enduring, and in so doing contribute to “‘rescuing the said from the saying of it’ the ‘told from the telling of it’” (p. 6). White (2000) suggested this documentation could take “many forms, including certificates letters, announcements... and transcripts of therapeutic conversations” (p. 6). I extended our co-research to document what Hinemoa and Wiremu did to produce their preferred relationship and relational identities:

Jim So has this process [of counselling] and the things that you have been doing in your relationship, has that changed your idea about yourself?

Wiremu Oh! Yes, definitely.

Jim In what way, Wiremu?

Wiremu (Long pause. Kisses baby on the top of the head) Oh it's a lot of things I suppose. I'm just totally more aware of it's not just about me or Hinemoa... there's a bigger picture... In our world there's not just us two. There's our children. There's work. There's the people we work with, there's the wider community, and you can go further than that.

Wiremu performed a preferred identity when he kissed their grandson. I believe this action was an embodiment of Wiremu's love and of the reciprocity between him and their children and grandchildren, which helped Wiremu and Hinemoa connect to, and co-produce, values such as patience and tolerance.

When Wiremu mentioned his increased awareness of his whānau and community I took this as a cue for me to extend our co-researching conversation to focus on these wider reciprocal action-shaping and identity producing relationships. I began by encouraging Hinemoa and Wiremu to deconstruct and develop their understandings of what they "accorded value" (White, 2007, p. 84) to in navigating these "wider" territories of their lives:

Jim            So what would you say the values that you are standing for now are?

Wiremu        Oh, Gosh! Values. (pause) Self-responsibility, integrity. (shifting baby in his arms), No he's alright (to Hinemoa)...being honest and fair. And that's not just to me or to Hinemoa, that's to our children, our work, our family. I mean because our stuff in the past, like I said, that it's not just about us, it's affected them so much. So, it's just being fair to them and honest with them and how we are.

Hinemoa      What about loyalty?

Wiremu        Oh, no (reaches across to Hinemoa, laughing). Yeah loyalty, of course...And that's changed so even the kids know now, eh? The kids know. Because the kids don't even go there anymore and try and play anything [off against their parents].

In reaching out to Hinemoa, Wiremu was reaffirming his loyalty to her and acknowledging that he had not expressed loyalty to her in the past in relation to their parenting.

*Imagining children's experiences of developments in their parents' relationship*

When Wiremu extended this relational account to include how their children had noticed them parenting together I took this as an opportunity to make the children's experience of and contribution to Hinemoa and Wiremu's parenting more visible:

Jim            So what changed it, Wiremu, for you? What was the turning point?

My care to follow White's (2007) re-authoring conversations and fill in the gaps regarding the turning point in this storyline produced an account of their children's place in these developments:

Wiremu    (kisses baby) What's changed is, yeah, just, our children, our son, our daughter. Just looking at our children and thinking "Yeah...I mean if we're not going to do it for each other, I mean at least we can do, you know, something for them". Not wanting them to grow up to be us...

Hinemoa   Some of our motivation eh? For continuing to come and work with you [Jim], is our desire to have our children have a different experience of relationships...So part of our motivation for coming here, other than having ourselves more connected and loving to each other is to provide our children with an example that this is how relationships can work.

Hinemoa and Wiremu's love for their children had compelled them to uphold heart-felt values on their children's behalf. In this account both Hinemoa and Wiremu and their children were honoured. I took their heart-felt and powerful expressions of the importance of their children's experience as an opportunity to make their children more visible in our conversation, and to illuminate the

relations of reciprocity that might shape Hinemoa and Wiremu's preferred relationships with each other and with their children.

In what follows, I invited Hinemoa and Wiremu to imagine their children's experience of their relationship as parents and to speak on their children's behalf. This approach is founded on a longstanding approach to narrative Family therapy in which family members are invited to conduct a "review and reappraisal" (White, 1988c, p. 10) of their relationships with each other. By using this approach without Hinemoa and Wiremu's children present Wiremu and Hinemoa were invited to take up different positions in our experimental apparatus, which foregrounded their children's experiences of their parents' relationship and of family life. In this way Hinemoa and Wiremu imagined their children as an audience to developments in their family life and the children were not directly exposed to the possibility that they might present views with which their parents might disagree. I was careful to focus my inquiry on their preferred developments in order to position the children as an appreciative audience and not as critics of their parents:

Jim            So what do you think the children are appreciating about the change in your example or your relationship?

Wiremu        Oh, they're feeling a lot more settled, and I think, I think they're feeling a lot more about (pause) they know who they are, and where they're at and what's happening. They feel more safer.

Hinemoa      And the world's not going to come to an end because mum and dad have just had a major disagreement. They don't have to start worrying about whose house they're going to stay at on a Wednesday, and whose house they're going to stay at on a Friday. They don't even worry about that.

Wiremu's and Hinemoa's answers revealed not only significant developments in the children's experience of their home as a safe place, which they did not have to flee when their parents argued, but in answering on their children's behalf, Hinemoa and Wiremu were performing their preferred family identities as a "mum and dad" who could safely address their disagreements, for children who "knew who they are".

### *Children intervening in their parents' relationship*

In performing and comparing her experience and their children's experiences of the more distant past and the recent past Hinemoa deepened her appreciation of their children's contribution to their preferred ways of being together as a family. When I sought to get a more "experience-near" (White, 1995, p. 89) account of what Hinemoa and Wiremu were doing when their children appreciated them, Hinemoa gave an account that included the actions that their children were intentionally taking to support Hinemoa and Wiremu in their efforts to resolve their differences. And Hinemoa dramatically voiced Edward's part in their improved problem solving:

Jim            So they're appreciating that you're solving things in a way that you didn't used to?

Hinemoa    Well, even when they see us arguing, like before it was like they would completely, totally zone out, so they didn't have to be connected with it when we argued and screamed and carried on. Now, they do notice us arguing - but it's not like how we used to argue - and that's like almost, um, disinterested.

Wiremu      Because they used to come and oh, try and be, not mediators, but try and say a few things and we'd shut up and then we'd carry on.

Hinemoa    [Now it's] "Come on guys" – this is Edward – "Come on guys. You know you can discuss this better than that". Oh "more

effectively”. He’s very good with words my son. “Come on guys you can discuss this far more effectively than you are” (laughs). He’s funny.

Here I wanted to encourage Hinemoa and Wiremu to evaluate the helpfulness of Edward’s contribution to check that his actions were contributing to their preferred problem solving:

Jim Does that help?

Hinemoa Oh yeah! [I might say] “Shut up Edward!” [Then] He goes “No, no, no. Come on Hinemoa. Come on”. Oh it’s funny. Funny. It does. It always stops us. Always.

Wiremu It takes all the

Hinemoa The charge out.

Wiremu The charge out... But they’re feeling a lot more safe and they’re feeling a lot more secure and they’re feeling more safe too around knowing that the things that are important to them, they can get.

Hinemoa and Wiremu’s re-enactment of Edward’s contribution to his parents problem-solving demonstrated something of the dialogical “relations of reciprocity” (White, 2000, p. 22) which were valued by Hinemoa and Wiremu. In Hinemoa’s dramatization of Edward’s part he “knows” that his parents “know” how to discuss the issue “far more effectively” and he now knows that by communicating with them about what is “important” to him he may get what he wants. As a result of this knowledge about his own and his parents’ more effective problem solving, Edward was in a better position to safely resist Hinemoa’s instruction to him to “shut up”. In Hinemoa’s account, rather than shutting up or leaving, Edward urged his parents to discuss the issue together according to their preferred values and knowledge, “Come on guys you can discuss this far more effectively than you are”. Also, in encouraging them to engage with their good

advice Edward was depicted as taking the kind of position that Wiremu and Hinemoa preferred when they spoke of not “outing” each other’s bad behaviour and instead encouraging each other to reflect on their actions according to their consciences. And in this account, Hinemoa and Wiremu identified Edward as a person whose intervention promoted their safety by taking the emotional “charge” out of their dispute and helped them to regain their more effective strategies.

### **The co-production of new identities**

In Hinemoa and Wiremu’s account of these developments in their family life Edward was described as a knowledgeable and caring supporter of his parents, whereas in the past Hinemoa had described him as “deceitful and misleading” and a child who had “betrayed” them and tried to burn their house down. This change in Edward’s identity in response to his parents’ different responses, also contributed to a change in their identity as parents who produced a child with wise advice and whom they loved dearly, and in their identity as a whānau who cared for each other, and who could solve problems together:

Hinemoa I’ve noticed that when we first started coming to see you I told you I was deeply offended by Edward’s continual betrayal, and deceit and disappointment...I used to get really, really, deeply wounded over, like “Oh, I can’t believe he did that”. Oh well, I don’t anymore. I just go to him “Oh, you’re frigging kidding! What! What did you do?” He’ll tell me now... And I go “Oh well. So you know what’s going to happen now?” and he goes “Yeah I know”.

When Hinemoa asked Edward to reflect on his actions she employed a form of co-research that avoided personal criticism. Similarly, in co-researching their own performances they also avoided subjecting each other to condemnation and

criticism. In their conversation and physical gestures towards each other and to their baby, they produced an honourable performance of care in relationship. An effect of our co-research with video was that they had been *moved* in the sense that White (2007) referred to when he was speaking of “katharsis” and “definitional ceremonies” (p. 195), where people were *moved* both emotionally and “transported to another place” (p. 195), a place in which one might “achieve a new perspective on one’s life and identity”, “reengage with neglected aspects of one’s own history” and “reconnect with revered values and purposes for one’s life” (p. 195).

Hinemoa went on to describe how her relationship with Edward had changed:

Hinemoa Ohh! [Edward] He’s amazing. I love him so much. I love spending time with him and talking. God, yeah! He just tells us everything now.

When Hinemoa performed this account of the transformation of her relationship with Edward and of his valued place in their family, I invited her and Wiremu to consider what it would be like for Edward if he knew his parents had spoken to me about him in this way:

Jim So what do you think he would think of you having talked about him in these terms this morning? You know? About his contribution to stopping your arguments and your love for him? What do you think he would think of that?

My intentions were threefold, firstly, that in reflecting on this account, Hinemoa and Wiremu would witness themselves speaking as united parents who love their son; secondly, that their imagining of Edward’s appreciation for them might support a reciprocal appreciation of him by them; and thirdly that they might be

moved to tell Edward about this conversation in a form of a “taking-it-back” (White, 1997a, p. 132) practice.

White (1997a) developed “taking-it-back practices” (p. 132) as an antidote to a one-way account of therapy which positions a therapist as the provider of knowledge and clients as the sole beneficiaries of the counselling. Taking-it-back practices acknowledge the privilege and benefits to therapists of entering into a therapeutic relationship. In this taking-it-back practice I wanted to oppose the one-way account of parenting as being for the sole benefit of children and to acknowledge Edward’s contribution to the developments in Hinemoa and Wiremu’s relationship as parents and as a couple.

I hoped that if Hinemoa and Wiremu told Edward of this performance of their appreciation of him, then this telling might also provide a significant alternative to the kinds of “problem-saturated” (White, 1988b, p. 3) conversations that they had had with other professionals and which had reproduced negative identity conclusions about Edward. I anticipated that this telling of their appreciation of Edward, their love for him, and his contribution to their problem solving, might also constitute a form of “re-membering conversation” (White, 2007, p. 129). Re-membering conversations provide an opportunity for people to revise their relationships with significant figures in their lives and to re-engage with their dialogical histories and identities.

Wiremu indicated that Edward already knew that they appreciated him:

Wiremu    I think he knows too well, because we do share with him – Hinemoa more than me – that we are appreciative of him, the changes he's made. ... And, um, the kids can see that it's

different, now, and...you got to wonder why our son was behaving the way he was behaving – well why wouldn't you behave like that?

In stark contrast to the individualistic fault-finding and blaming approaches Hinemoa and Wiremu had employed in the past, Wiremu's account again emphasised their interconnectedness and their preferred ways of being together. When Hinemoa and Wiremu suggested that Edward's actions were an effect of their problematic example as a couple and as parents rather than a product of his character, they positioned Edward and themselves as responsible family members who together had made potentially lifesaving changes according to cherished values. An animated conversation followed where Hinemoa and Wiremu speculated about what might have happened if, as Hinemoa said, Edward's "parents had not cared enough to change themselves to show him there was another way". In this preferred and appreciative account, Hinemoa and Wiremu had stepped into an alternative, and at the same time familiar, concept of relational care.

### *Video and definitional ceremony*

Hinemoa and Wiremu's often dramatic performance of their movement from a primarily individualistic blaming culture to one where reciprocal care and appreciation thrived, and their enthusiastic responses to seeing this reciprocal care played out on video, prompted me to view these video review meetings as forms of "definitional ceremonies" (White, 2007, p. 165) and to routinely anticipate, co-produce and refer to what Hinemoa and Wiremu might appreciate when they witnessed themselves on video.

Myerhoff referred to the importance of those in definitional ceremonies to “dramatize themselves” as part of countering “problems of invisibility and marginality” and to position themselves to be noticed, recorded, listened to, and photographed” (1986, p. 267). White (2007) adapted for therapeutic purposes what Myerhoff (1982, 1986) called definitional ceremonies. In therapeutic definitional ceremonies, therapy sessions provide a “context for rich story development” (White, 2007, p. 165) in which the clients’ lives and achievements are honoured. Usually such ceremonies are performed before “carefully chosen outsider witnesses” (White, 2007, p. 165) who speak together about what they are drawn to, and moved by, in the clients’ lives. The clients then witness these outsiders’ re-tellings of their lives “in ways that are powerfully resonant and highly acknowledging” (White, 2007, pp. 165–166).

I adapted White’s (2007) practices of definitional ceremony to suit my circumstances in which Family Court regulations primarily, and also the structure of my research precluded including in our meetings anyone (except infants) other than the couples. To compensate for the physical absence of outsider witnesses in my definitional ceremonies I chose particular excerpts from our counselling meetings that I considered dramatic unique outcomes. Then, in our research meetings Hinemoa and Wiremu witnessed their own performances. In witnessing these performances Hinemoa and Wiremu were positioned so that they had, as Hinemoa had put it in our first research meeting, “an out of body, third person experience” of themselves, in which they were both performers and witnesses to their performances of their preferred perspectives on their lives and identities. From this more distant position and less familiar viewpoint in our wider experimental apparatus they also had time to disengage from the kinds of fast

thinking required in the moment and engage in more contemplative thinking. They could also make more room for this contemplation by stopping, rewinding and replaying the video. I could also support this contemplative mood by asking questions which deconstructed their responses so that Hinemoa and Wiremu were involved in a retelling of their recorded story, and then a deconstructed retelling of their experiences of witnessing and responding to their performances. In these retellings of Hinemoa and Wiremu's life stories and identities, I had in mind White's (2007) purposes for definitional ceremonies as providing opportunities for Hinemoa and Wiremu to "re-appear in their own eyes...experience an acknowledgement of the identity claims expressed in their stories, experience the authentication of these claims" and to "intervene in the shaping of their lives in ways that were in harmony with what was precious to them" (p. 184).

My first step in this definitional ceremony process was to encourage Hinemoa and Wiremu to co-produce a dramatic telling in our counselling meeting that they could witness on video at the next research meeting. To begin, at our next counselling meeting, I asked about how the developments they had described in our previous meeting might have moved them to "achieve a new perspective on [their] life and identity" (White, 2007, p. 195):

Jim     So is that success, do you think it's changed your view of each other and of yourself in your relationship in some way? Like, did you used to think that you couldn't handle things and now you can, or what's changed about your (pause)?

To emphasize movement, I invited Hinemoa to continue to contrast how family members thought of each other in the past with how they thought in the present. I

asked her to speak on their behalf so as to position her as a spokesperson for the developments they had achieved.

My intention in positioning Hinemoa as a spokesperson was to provide her with an opportunity to perform her view of the development of their relationship by comparing the more distant past with the recent past in the “edited” and “tidy” (Myerhoff, 1982, p. 111) form characteristic of definitional ceremonies. When Hinemoa described how she used to see Wiremu, I quickly invited her to contrast this individualistic internalised view of Wiremu with her view of him now:

Hinemoa I didn't have any confidence that Wiremu could handle situations before. I didn't. I just thought he was useless.

Jim So what's your view of him now?

Hinemoa Oh...when stuff happens I have to go and talk to him ... and I say to myself, “Oh my God! I've got to talk to Wiremu about this”. Like now I actually feel like, not that I need him, I don't need him to help situations but I want (pause) I want to connect with Wiremu and work through stuff because actually he's got some bloody amazing ideas, stuff I would never think of.

When Hinemoa gave an account of her appreciation of her *connection* with Wiremu and of his ideas, I then invited Wiremu to attend to this change (Ideally I might have better addressed the relational quality of this change and avoided familiar individualistic perspectives by asking Wiremu something like, “Did you know that Hinemoa had changed her view of the connection between you both?):

Jim Did you know that Hinemoa had changed her view of you?

Wiremu I noticed because before I just (pause) because she sort of took on that role that she wouldn't answer me anyway or hear what I had to say so I wouldn't even bother... But we've seen the results we can get together and we've been sort of pressurised

lately eh? It's real pressurised and we need both of us and we've sort of come to the conclusion too that when we both do work together that we get the results that we want; we can do anything.

Wiremu, as he had done when he described their children communicating to get what they want, constructed the solution in dialogical terms: "when we both do work together...we get the results we want". And he offered a retelling of their situation by indicating that Hinemoa not answering or listening to him was a "role" that she took on rather than an aspect of her personality. And he suggested that Hinemoa's and his own actions were themselves responses to responses and to "pressure".

When I invited Hinemoa and Wiremu to story what I understood to be a migration of their identities (see White, 1995) from what they used to be, "hopeless", to what they were now appreciating I imagined them witnessing themselves at our next research meeting:

- Jim            In the past did you get caught - did you ever start thinking that you were hopeless, yourself Wiremu, or (pause)?
- Wiremu        Oh yeah, I questioned myself, yeah.
- Jim            So has this changed your view of yourself, your success?
- Wiremu        Yes.
- Jim            In what way, Wiremu? What have you (pause)?
- Wiremu        I'm enjoying it and I like being more involved in decision-making and yeah, it's just good to be a part of it instead of outside of it.

Hinemoa took up the practice of appreciating their relationship from their children's viewpoints by extended this relational definitional account of Wiremu's new identity by performing the extent of this migration from Edward's viewpoint:

Hinemoa I'm not the only one noticing Wiremu's changes. Because you should see my son, my big son: he used to treat his father like he was a nothing before...But I see my son now, oh I love it. He's like – eh when he talks to you? (turns to Wiremu) "Hey Dad" and it's like a real respect, like "This is my Dad, this is my father" and his whole presence and his whole approach to his father is respectful. Before he was like, "Not going to listen to you". And [now] I hear him call out to his father sometimes, man it's nice. "Hey Dad", and like, he really, really genuinely cares what his father is going to say.

It seemed to me that Hinemoa had performed something of a re-membering conversation (White, 2007, p. 129) in storying and upgrading Wiremu's and Edwards' identities and memberships in each other's lives.

To thicken this re-membering conversation in anticipation of us reviewing it, I invited Wiremu to join Hinemoa in re-membering Edward:

Jim So what do you think he's [Edward] appreciating about you that's changed his relationship with you, Wiremu?

Wiremu I think it's that he feels more safe and he feels more safer when he knows what's going on and he knows (pause) he feels more settled with us too in the way that yes, we can be pretty predictable now and the way that he knows that.

Jim Predictable in a sense that (pause)?

Wiremu Oh, that he will know that he can't play us off, he can't put himself into positions where (pause) yeah, we're predictable in a way that he knows that, you know, that he (long pause)

Hinemoa There's safety for him in our relationship.

Wiremu retained a relational focus by including Hinemoa in his description of them as predictable and safe parents who invite their children into closer relationships with them.

Hinemoa and Wiremu went on to illustrate this closeness and safety with an account of their experience of how Edward had acquired a new identity to the extent that he had noticed that he was “growing apart” from some of his friends who got into trouble or who were “immature” in Hinemoa and Wiremu’s view, despite being older than Edward. Hinemoa and Wiremu also described Edward’s experience of a change in his whānau’s identity. Hinemoa spoke of Edward considering his family, and particularly his parents, as “fair and reasonable”. In their accounts Hinemoa and Wiremu imagined themselves into Edward’s experience in a way that was compassionate, understanding and appreciative. Their account included their honourable contributions to his development and his contributions to their development as whānau.

### *Co-researching videoed performances.*

In our third and final research meeting, Hinemoa and Wiremu watched these excerpts from our previous counselling session. Events in their lives has meant that they were not available to meet in a fortnight and instead it was almost six weeks later when we reviewed the video record. These sorts of delays are common-place in my experience of counselling. Our co-research with video provided some opportunities to make connections with the last meeting, despite the time gap. Rather than rely on our memories of what we were doing in counselling six weeks ago, the video record enabled us to co-research some of the differences between that meeting and what was happening now.

Hinemoa stopped the video just after she had said that Wiremu had some “bloody amazing ideas”. Hinemoa said she was “uncomfortable” with watching her and Wiremu’s performance.

When I asked Hinemoa what she was uncomfortable with, in a potential unique outcome to their usual conversational sharing, Wiremu answered:

Wiremu Things have fallen back a bit – not totally, but we just recognise that some stuff where we were there is not actually helping, well [it is] helping, just not as – we still do them but not as much as we were at that time.

In this account, Wiremu externalised the problem as “things” and he spoke of how together they were currently not doing as much according to their proposals as they had when the video was made. He considered that he needed, “to be more responsible for what I do, what’s going on for me”. In response to my questions, Wiremu identified that he needed to make more of a commitment and overcome his fear, “fear that it’s going to be hard work, fear that I’m not going to be able to do what I want to do”. Wiremu then took responsibility for sharing the conversation with Hinemoa. He invited Hinemoa to talk, “Oh! I’ll let Hinemoa talk”. In these actions Wiremu was performing an alternative to the interaction they had described in the previous chapter, where Wiremu would withdraw from conversation with Hinemoa and she would “fight” to get him to take responsibility by reminding him “a hundred times” and coaching him to take responsibility.

Prior to the video replay beginning Hinemoa had asked for pen and paper. She literally took up the position of co-researcher. She took notes while she was witnessing their performance on video, as a researcher might do. In order to share the conversation Hinemoa enquired about Wiremu’s experience and then she read from her notes:

Hinemoa “Full of insight and able to articulate the insight really well. And yet not so consistent walking the insight.” You know, walking the talk... It’s like watching someone on TV who

knows what should be happening and who has an intention to create that but for some reason walks out the door and doesn't do it as much as she obviously had hoped or intended that it would happen on the video. Eh. Wiremu? We're full of intentions.

Wiremu Yeah.

Hinemoa And watching those I feel full of "it" [bullshit](laughs)... it's easy to talk the talk but outside of the room things haven't gone as consistently as we would like, actually walking the talk.

Positioned in an ethic of co-research Hinemoa selected out two aspects of the video. Firstly, that they had not consistently carried out their intentions, and secondly, that they were making progress:

Hinemoa Can I just say about my other bits (points to her notes)?

Jim Yeah, yeah.

Hinemoa I just want to acknowledge though from watching that, even though our progress is not where I'd hoped it would be, we are making, we are making progress and that was obvious from watching the video. Like for example, our language. It's more assertive. It's more positive. It's more constructive. I really noticed that when Wiremu was talking. It's really, really constructive. It's very self-reflective. It's more self-responsible.

Hinemoa selected out information that fitted with the practices we had developed through our co-research with a focus on what was helpful in relation to their purposes. Hinemoa literally noted their progress and she externalised their "language" and described it as "more constructive", "self-reflective" and "self-responsible". As Wiremu had referred to earlier, viewed with an hospitable ethic of co-research, the video, like being on TV, served to make visible what they needed to do and to document what they had done and might have otherwise

overlooked. Furthermore, Hinemoa and Wiremu had described how watching themselves, and imagining what they would look like if they were on video, was significant in producing these dialogical and self-reflexive and self-responsible positions, and in maintaining these positions, even when they were not on video.

*Video and co-researching the wider picture to sustain preferred developments and identities*

Hinemoa and Wiremu had raised an important concern about how they might better maintain the changes they had committed themselves to. I invited Hinemoa and Wiremu to co-research how they might sustain their hopes in the face of the inevitable ups and downs of life. I began by deconstructing their discouragement by asking about encouraging unique outcomes implied but absent in the term discouragement:

- Jim            So what encourages you when you're faced with that discouragement?
- Hinemoa      I reckon the success of other people helps my discouragement.
- Wiremu        Yeah.
- Hinemoa      Like
- Wiremu        Acknowledging them eh?
- Hinemoa      When I get discouraged about something I see or talk to someone who's had good success in the area I'm feeling discouraged in.

Hinemoa and Wiremu connected their encouragement to their reciprocal relationships with others. I then invited Hinemoa to consider her experience of encouragement in relation to the particular event that had produced her discomfort about the gap between her intentions and their performance:

- Jim            In the video ... when it stopped you were talking about Edward's success that he'd achieved with your support? Is that the kind of thing that helps?
- Hinemoa      Yes... An example was, if I'm feeling discouraged about like feeling that I'm not moving forward, then I've got many friends I can connect with, and just their sharing with me about how they felt in their life like that and how they've moved forward, that can bring me heaps of joy and heaps of encouragement.
- Wiremu        Just acknowledging other people too.

I understood Hinemoa and Wiremu's conversations with others as forms of definitional ceremonies, in that such conversations "provide opportunities for being seen and in one's own terms, garnering witnesses to one's worth, vitality and being" (Myerhoff, 1986, p. 267). In these reciprocal relationships of care, being helped by others was honouring of those called upon to help as well as those being helped.

Our co-research extended to take in these wider connections and responsibilities to others, "children... work... the wider community" that Wiremu had spoken of. Wiremu described how they had applied the principles they had developed in their couple relationship and whānau to their workplace, with similarly beneficial outcomes:

- Wiremu        And we've changed. And now everybody loves coming back to us eh? Everybody likes working with us again... We're not like this all the time (indicates fists bumping together).

Not only had video and co-research become a lens through which they viewed their interactions but it had also become a lens through which they viewed others' interactions. At our next and final meeting, when Hinemoa was speaking of the

benefits of seeing oneself on video, she re-membered Wiremu by giving an account of a time in the past when he had acted for the benefit of the “wider community” he had referred to:

Hinemoa We were doing some shopping with our kids, we walked out of a shop. The mother of a couple stormed past the shop.

Wiremu Oh, yeah, that’s right.

Hinemoa Just a random couple and the father came down following her. They looked like they’d obviously had a thing, and he was literally dragging this little two-year-old along and the baby was screaming and crying and everybody was upset. And the way he was dragging this kid down the street! [then] Wiremu goes, “Hey bro!”

Our co-research had prompted Hinemoa to re-member Wiremu by reengaging with neglected aspects of Wiremu’s history, and Wiremu seemed to experience what White (2007), when speaking of definitional ceremonies, described as “a familiarity with knowledge of life and skills of living, that [he] was previously barely aware of” (p.195). And in their account Hinemoa and Wiremu considered the transformative power of video in the “art” of shaping one’s life in relationship to others (see Foucault, 2010, p. 43):

Hinemoa I wonder if he [the father dragging his two-year-old] had the opportunity - on the news or something, I don’t know – to see himself on a video playing back, whether he would have been astounded and shifted, because he knows that’s not who he really is. And whether that would have been a life defining moment, changing point in his life. I believe it’s a really, really powerful thing to see.

Wiremu ... Because you saw it, and you think, “Holy heck! I don’t want to” (pause) [do that]. Yeah.

Hinemoa and Wiremu had taken up this practice of video co-research to the extent that it appeared to have become part of their approach to life and a means by which they might “reconnect with their revered values and purposes” (White, 2007, p. 195), in particular with “manaakitia” (Durie, 2001, p. 200), the caring for whānau in the widest sense. And they had come to imagine the benefits to others if they did the same.

Hinemoa and Wiremu included their relationship with me in these practices of care when they kept our final appointment despite their multiple commitments. As our meeting drew to an end they offered these comments:

Hinemoa If ever there was a time we could make a genuine excuse not to come it would have been this morning. We’ve got eight kids at home, including two little one-year-old infants, the house is upside down, we’ve got to go to Wellington [a four-hour trip later today]. We’ve got to organise work... and we’ve got two young people also coming with us, so, man! It was so full on this morning. I was literally puffing (laughs).

Wiremu Like today it’s about coming here, giving to others eh? You know we committed to you...and by keeping that commitment too it helps us move forward with what we’re doing. And it helps you know, this [our counselling meeting] has been huge for me today, really huge...we’re going to go home in a different light now, you know? (turns to Hinemoa). It’s all good.

Hinemoa and Wiremu not only honoured their commitments they also commented on and storied their performance as testimony to their preferred ways of being together:

Hinemoa I think, that, is a testament to how we’re growing as people. Six months ago I would have just rang and said “I’m so sorry

Jim, I just cannot do it today” ... I was not prepared to do that today.

Wiremu We know that on the way to Wellington one of us would have brought it up and we would have [gone] “Ohhh!” It’s there, and what it does is it holds you back and in a way it

Hinemoa It fixes your attention.

Wiremu Yeah, it fixes us and we know it holds us back ...

It seemed to me that our scaffolding conversations with video had reconnected Hinemoa and Wiremu to their heart-felt values to the extent that they felt compelled to continually consider, to “fix”, on the fit between these values, their relational identities and their actions, as if they were imaging watching and co-researching their interactions on video.

Hinemoa You know, that feels really, really great, actually that we are becoming the sort of people who when we make commitments, they’re important enough, even despite the circumstances of the moment...who go “No, no, this is a commitment that we made to this other person and a respect for them and what we’ve committed ourselves to, it’s really important that we get there”.

An effect of the ethic of the relational-responsive co-research we had established was that Hinemoa and Wiremu took a more hospitable and encouraging position regarding themselves and their relationships when they experienced a gap between their intentions and their performance. The video record was instrumental in establishing and fixing this focus and in documenting unique outcomes and performances of preferred identities that might have otherwise been lost.

## Summary

In this chapter I showed how, in order to support Hinemoa and Wiremu's relationship as parents and as a couple, I widened the focus of our co-research to bring to the fore their reciprocal relationships with their children and their community. I used video to dramatize and document the co-production of Hinemoa and Wiremu's preferred developments and identities in these relationships. And I employed an effect of our use of video as a form of conscience to support Hinemoa and Wiremu in reviewing their proposals for life, and in reviewing their performance of those proposals and in performing their preferred relational identities outside of our meetings as if they were on video.

Our co-research with video also allowed me to appreciate Hinemoa and Wiremu's relational-responsive values and practices and to address some of the often individualistic and taken-for-granted assumptions that I had been unwittingly employing in order that I might do so called good couple counselling. As the couples and I stepped more into deconstructive and dialogical co-research I came to more deeply appreciate that this process might safely allow us to co-produce extraordinary outcomes while avoiding the kinds of conflicts between counsellors and couples that often characterise couple counselling when counsellors employ disguised instruction in order to encourage couples to do what a counsellor thinks is right. As I have described, the couples often found such positioning regarding the truth problematic, and I found that - understandably given the rapid, radical and ongoing changes to practices of coupledness - my assumptions about what was the right thing to do were often out of step with one or both of the members of the couples' understandings of the particularities of their relationships and

circumstances, and that some of my approaches were too rigid to address these particularities.

In the following chapter I develop this deconstructive and dialogical approach in a domain where an individualistic approach is often prescribed in order to avoid colluding with or excusing men who act abusively and to get them to take personal responsibility.

## **Chapter 10. Couple counselling, video and deconstructive co-research for a problem of “anger management”**

In the previous chapter I used video to position Hinemoa and Wiremu as co-researchers of, and witnesses to, their preferred relational-responsive and identity shaping performances. And I extended this co-research to include whānau and community who had shaped, or might appreciate and authenticate, Hinemoa and Wiremu’s strategies and identities.

In this, and the following chapter, I draw together some of what I learned from my co-research with Lolita and Dave, and Hinemoa and Wiremu, to offer a deconstructive approach to the territories of individual responsibility for violence and of spousal, family and community influence in stopping violence. I describe my approach with Miranda and Tony in largely chronological order to show how our work produced the developments they had hoped for. To capture something of these developments, I begin by describing how I facilitated a practice of safe and hospitable deconstructive co-research with video, which Miranda and Tony took up, both in our meetings and in their day to day lives. In the following chapter I show how we extended and amplified this co-research to include and develop support from family and community. While in practice these approaches were interwoven and supported by the frequent and regular practice of hospitably co-researching the progress and safety of counselling, I present them as two chapters for the sake of clarity.

## **Couple counselling and violence by male spouses**

Miranda and Tony came to counselling together as they felt the best way to address the problem of “Tony’s anger management” was as a couple. While individual or group counselling for men and women is more common in addressing men’s violence, and couple counselling is often seen by professionals as appropriate only after the man has taken responsibility for his abusive actions (HAIP, 2015; Jenkins, 1990, 2009; Patrick, Tapper, & Foster, 1997; Pease, 1997; The Duluth Model, 2015), couples often seek help with anger problems that one or both of them are dealing with (Doss et al., 2004; Gurman, 2010), and couple counselling (Goldner, 1998), and family and community approaches (Colorado, Montgomery, & Tovar, 1998) have met with some success in addressing men’s anger problems.

As I had with Hinemoa and Wiremu, I felt that I had an ethical responsibility to support Miranda and Tony to increase the safety of their relationship for them and for their children. And I was aware that the ethics of deconstructive enquiry suggested that I defer my conclusions about what was the right approach for their situation and instead carefully proceed with co-research which was informed by any therapeutic approaches which might host a just and safe process and outcome. This practice of co-research would include determining what combinations of couple and individual counselling might best serve their purposes. As it turned out, although I offered them both individual sessions, they found it most useful to always meet as a couple.

In order to put Miranda and her children’s safety ahead of concerns for Tony and Miranda’s relationship (see Goldner, 1998), in addition to the usual explanations I

give regarding my approach when I first meet with clients, which I described in chapter 5, I emphasised that the pre-conditions for us working together on this project were: that Tony committed to non-violence, that Miranda and Tony could contact me at any time to report any concerns, and that these conversations with individuals would be confidential unless the speaker gave permission for specific things to be passed on to the other party. In the meetings themselves, I placed particular emphasis on practices of co-research by frequently inviting both Miranda and Tony to tell me if at any time in our counselling conversations they felt uncomfortable or that they felt that they were being invited to think of themselves as the problem, or they thought that I was treating them unfairly, or if they were concerned that their conversation was producing, or likely to produce, trouble between them. I employed the video records of our meetings to enhance our externalising of problems and thereby reduce the potential for interpersonal conflict, and I employed the principles of White's (1986a) appreciation of difference exercise to support Miranda and Tony to understand that when they spoke about their concerns that these utterances were acts of care taken in order to reshape conversations that might otherwise be harmful to them.

## **Using deconstructive co-research with video to promote safety**

Tony and Miranda were adamant that I had to focus on what they called "Tony's anger management". Using a deconstructive approach I thought of this definition as "sous rature" or "under erasure" (Derrida, 1976, p. 60). "The gesture of sous rature implies 'both this and that' as well as 'neither this nor that' undoing the opposition and the hierarchy between the legible and the erased" (Spivak, 1976, p.

320). This approach to deconstruction as a practice of justice allowed me to collaborate with Tony and Miranda in order that we might produce understandings which gave them the most influence over what they considered to be the problem and which did their hopes justice. Using this approach, we took up positions in order to consider whatever territories and understandings we considered influential in contributing to the problem and to avoid taking binary, hierarchical and adversarial positions. And importantly for me, I could defer offering them a benign hierarchical position that would have me employing “disguised instruction” in order to *show* them what I imagined to be a more accurate account than offered by the term “anger management”. Using a deconstructive approach to co-research we could, as part of an ongoing process of safely addressing justice, together both draw on anger management strategies (American Psychological Association, 2011) and on analyses of men’s violence which addressed those patriarchal and gendered practices of coupledom and family life which contributed to men’s violence against women and children (Goldner, 1998; Jenkins, 1990; O’Neill & Patrick, 1997).

Our starting point for our deconstructive co-research was that Tony and Miranda agreed that there were times when Tony would feel stressed and angry. In this state he would believe that when Miranda and their sons, Gregory and Brendan, who were eleven and nine, objected to his actions they were telling him off. He would then feel that this was so unfair that he was justified in calling them names and belittling them. Outside of these moments of stress and anger, Tony believed that his responses in these situations were problematic and he was concerned about the distressing effects of his actions on his family.

### *Deconstructing some binaries together: Small steps*

Our first recorded counselling meeting began with Tony and Miranda noticing what Miranda called a “huge improvement” in how Tony was handling his anger, and that Brendan and Gregory seemed more relaxed as a result. However, Tony felt that he was struggling with attending to and building on these apparent unique outcomes. When Miranda moved to help Tony by pointing out what to her was a unique outcome in Tony’s handling of his anger, Tony proposed that these events were an escalation:

Miranda I noticed this time when I said, “If you want to talk go outside and we’ll talk outside” ...he actually didn’t carry on – because normally that’s the point where “I’m right” comes in and it’s going to be stress whatever has happened – but he sort of took the option of just walking out.

Jim Was that something you had noticed, Tony, that when Miranda offered to talk [you left]?

Tony Yeah, at that point I didn’t see much benefit in talking.

Jim So did you see it as being a positive development in the way that Miranda was talking about?

Tony No, I sort of didn’t see it that way actually, it’s interesting she saw it that way. No, I saw it as an escalation, actually, but an escalation maybe in a different direction.

At the time my focus was on slowing down and focussing this conversation in two ways. Firstly, by inviting Miranda and Tony to take turns at co-researching their accounts in the hope that this strategy might also interrupt more familiar rapid monologues which rehearsed problematic positions. Secondly, I oriented our conversation to deconstructing this event in small steps beginning with a “landscape of action” question (White, 1991, p. 30) in order to check that Miranda and Tony had a shared view of what they did. I followed this with a landscape of

consciousness question (White, 1991, p. 31), to check that Miranda and Tony had a shared understanding of this event. I had in mind that these inquiries might lead to a potential “unique outcome” (White, 1991, p. 30) constituted by Tony employing a familiar anger management strategy by taking “time out” from a situation in which his anger was getting the better of him. I also had in mind what had happened in parts of my meetings with Dave and Lolita, when I allowed too much space for familiar problematic patriarchal practices.

However, when I invited Tony to consider Miranda’s account of the positive development of Tony walking away from an argument Tony suggested that his *walking out* was “an escalation into a “childish reaction”, “a tantrum” and a “threat to leave” which he did not intend to carry out. When Miranda restated her position in order show Tony why she considered his “walking out” as a step forward, and a choice by Tony not to fight, and he then responded by saying that he had employed “a different” “style of abuse”, they were positioned in a familiar conflict over what was *really* happening.

At the same time, I noticed that Tony was not simply reversing the binary, *was a positive development/was not a positive development*. I wonder if our ethic of co-research, and my naming of the “way” that Miranda was talking about it, which implied that there was more than one way to experience it, helped Tony to note his *interest* in the *sorts* of ways that he and Miranda experienced this event, and to tentatively propose, and be open to the possibility, that *maybe* it was an escalation.

In the moment, my thinking was shaped both by familiar presuppositions that the perpetrators of abuse should be accountable to those that were the subjects of their

abuse (Jenkins, 1990; White, 1995) and that perpetrators were likely to distort the facts of the abuse (Jenkins, 1990) and a suspicion that I might be employing such approaches in ways that oversimplified situations and obscured other readings. This understanding of accountability invited me to consider that Miranda was employing the correct thinking in the binary that accounted for Tony's actions as solely positive and time out, and other interpretations as an effect of his mistaken or adversarial positioning. An effect of this binary thinking was that I initially overlooked the space that Tony had made to for us to together *sort* through their understandings, and I was inclined to the more familiar conclusion that Tony's actions might constitute a denial of the apparent truth that Miranda was representing and may also be some sort of controlling tactic which prevented her from being in a position of knowing what he was doing.

Later, when I re-viewed the video record prior to our next meeting, I was in a better position in the wider experimental apparatus with the time to reengage with a more deconstructive perspective. A deconstructive perspective encouraged me to address my suspicions about taking a binary approach. Deconstructive enquiry provided me with an hospitable and ethical means to facilitate a collaborative exploration through which we might together produce some understandings that might be more helpful to them and which they (and I), after due consideration, would consider just. This ethic helped me notice that I had not posed my question to Tony solely in the binary terms which were in the back of my mind (positive development/not positive development), but rather asked him to consider the way he saw it in relation to the way that Miranda saw it.

I also remembered that Dave and Lolita had been similarly opposed over whether or not Dave's actions had been "controlling" and "aggressive" and that when Dave saw himself on video, he had considered his actions and changed his position, before changing it back in response to our exposé of his aggression. Consequently, I thought we might be in a better position to address these questions and positions when we all reviewed the video record of this conversation at our next research meeting.

So while there was an opportunity that I missed to build on Tony's tentative and non-adversarial responses the video record allowed me to notice this missed opportunity which might otherwise have been storied in problematic terms and to re-view it with Miranda and Tony. At our next meeting, I replayed a 13-minute excerpt beginning from when Miranda had described Tony "walking away" from "blaming" and "conflict" as an "important" "step forward" and an act of "taking the kids into consideration" and which concluded with Tony stating that his actions were a "different style of abuse".

However, as is often the case when people see themselves on video, Miranda made a rapid and unexpected shift in her understandings of what had happened between them. From this different position and time in the wider experimental apparatus Miranda moved her attention from the binary of whether Tony had managed his anger or not to considering what she saw as Tony's problematic response to her attempts to support him in managing his anger:

Miranda All I can hear is the same lines, I think, that we've heard for years: [speaking in Tony's voice] "I'm backed into a corner, I'm tired of doing this, I'm trying to make you happy and I keep getting dumped on and treated like this and I can't take this, I can't, it's difficult and I'm being blamed for everything and I'm the butt of all the problems"... I don't hear any

change. I don't hear a new perspective on anything ... And quite frankly it makes me feel like saying, "Well, what are you still doing here then?" I've heard this for such a long time, it's never solved anything. I have bent over backwards to be happy and supportive and to be everything under the sun. It never makes any difference. And I'm at a point where I know that doesn't make any difference...my happiness will come when our boys are treated right and treated like human beings in the house because that's my biggest sadness is the boys' sadness and it's not easy for me at all.

It seemed that for Miranda, when she had this opportunity to step out of responding quickly in the moment and according to familiar gendered responses which sought to placate and reassure Tony (see ChenFeng & Galick, 2015), and to observe an unfamiliar view of herself and Tony interacting, then she reversed her positioning. From this new position, Miranda voiced her disapproval of Tony's responses to her efforts to help him.

I was concerned that this rapid reversal using a dramatization that Tony was unlikely to find respectful, might be distressing for Tony. I was mindful of evidence that when role played representations in a mental health setting clashed with the clients' views of themselves to the extent that they were considered negative caricatures of them, then this produced increased risk of suicide and marriage break up for couples and significant decreases in positive self-perception (Alkire & Brunse, 1974; Kimball & Cundick, 1977). I was also concerned that Miranda's rapid and unheralded reversal of their positions might prompt the kind of escalation of conflict and adversarial positioning that had happened with Dave and Lolita and which are common in couples counselling (Gottman, 2011; White, 2004a).

In order to avoid these dangers, I again positioned us so that we might carefully and slowly deconstruct their accounts and their responses to those accounts in small steps and evaluate the extent to which those accounts produced safer responses that did Miranda and Tony's purposes and values justice. Crucially, in this research meeting using video, I could invite Miranda and Tony to deconstruct the video record. In effect this helped them externalise the problem and reduce conflict as they based their analyses on the material the video provided, a record that they both considered accurate. When I explored something of Miranda's response to the video and her current position she confirmed that there had been something about the material depicted by the video and the time to consider this material that provided her with a different and surprising perspective:

Jim            So was that more striking to you, Miranda, watching it on the video than you remembered at the time?

Miranda      Yeah, surprisingly so.

Jim            Why do you think that took you by surprise?

Miranda      I think I'm watching it rather than hearing it. It's sort of given me time to react, I don't know, I have no idea.

My invitation to Miranda to take up a position as an observer of her experience also had the effect of helping her to step back from a hot engagement with Tony and the problem, and to take up a more contemplative engagement with the material. In this respect the video record when combined with co-research supported us to position ourselves with the kind of "'cool' engagement" (White, 2007, p. 29) that White had envisaged when writing about "the early phases of externalising conversations" (p. 29). White (2007) had suggested that in:

a 'cool' engagement with the problems and concerns that bring people to therapy...the person has the opportunity to transcend the 'playing field' of the problem – that is, address the problem in a territory that is not the home territory of the problem. In so doing, people usually experience a

reduction in their sense of vulnerability to the problems of their lives and begin to feel less stressed by their circumstances (p. 29).

The external video record supported a cool engagement in that we could occupy new territories in the playing field provided by the wider experimental apparatus, territories which were not the familiar *home* territories of conflict. Engaged with our experiences of the video material in this way, we were better positioned to focus on the often unfamiliar territories of the self in interaction.

I also supported Miranda and Tony to engage in this new territory by continuing to invite them to slow down and to take turns in their co-research in relation to the video. By also asking Tony to reflect on the video rather than on Miranda's initial hot response to it, I wanted to continue to give Miranda and Tony short turns at considering their experiences of the video record and to avoid providing space whereby either party might engage in familiar heated adversarial positions based on their urgent recollections rather than on the video record. I also wanted to avoid the detrimental effects of positioning them as critics of each other that I had produced when I positioned Wiremu as a critic of Hinemoa's speaking, and Lolita to use the word counts as evidence of Dave's problematic actions. And I wanted to promote the kind of practices of care of the self and others that Dave had stepped into when he re-searched the transcript of his counselling conversation with Lolita and me. The possibilities of rewinding and replaying the video also encouraged me to ask Miranda if I might put her account on hold while I enquired about Tony's experience of the video replay. In this way I managed a more careful co-production and deconstruction of their unfolding experiences of particular utterances as recorded by the video:

- Jim I want to be able to come back to that piece you were talking about, Miranda, if that's ok with you.
- Miranda Yeah.
- Jim So Tony, rather than you responding to that piece [that Miranda just said] ...if I can get an idea of what your impressions were before hearing [more of] Miranda's impressions. What were you thinking watching yourself?
- Tony I kept on saying "I can't, I can't, I can't" and that's just not true... So I heard a lot of - I agree with Miranda - I heard a lot of self-justification in terms of "I can't cope, I can't cope, I can't cope" and it's just not true...

Like Miranda, when Tony viewed these recorded interactions on video he was in a position to observe his experience of his and Miranda's interactions, and to compare his familiar and remembered story of what had happened with what the video showed. Much later, at our final meeting, when I invited Tony to look back over our counselling time together, he called this an "eye-opening" moment. He remembered seeing himself on video and having the opportunity to "analyse closely what's been going on" and doing a "double take" and seeing that what he had been "playing over in his head" "wasn't truthful". In taking this position as an observer of himself, Tony had also taken up some of the language associated with the use of video technology to the extent that he spoke of reviewing what was "*playing over* in his head".

With different views of their interaction available as we positioned ourselves in different times and places in the wider experimental apparatus constituted by our co-research of our counselling meeting using video, Tony focussed on the relationship between his values and his actions. In Hinemoa and Wiremu's words, Tony was both "outed" by Miranda and he "outed" himself for failing to act with

integrity and good judgement. This kind of acknowledgement positioned Tony as honourably taking responsibility for his actions and supported him and Miranda working together on deconstructing a shared view of an aspect of the problem:

Tony        I should be, you know, rising above that and being pleasant, being nice and being respectful regardless of whether Miranda is having a bad time or whatever and not reacting to that but reacting instead with integrity and with my own good advice in each situation.

Hinemoa and Wiremu had referred to the *pain* and unhelpfulness of being outed by the other, and perhaps Tony's reference to "rising above" Miranda "having a bad time" may have been both a preferred taking of responsibility and a familiar response to Miranda outing him by outing her in return and reversing this positioning by "rising above" her actions.

I was conscious that each participant in this research had been moved in response to re-viewing the video record from a different place and time and that when the couples managed these unfamiliar confessions of wrongdoing according to familiar individualistic and critical discursive practices, they were more likely to be drawn back into familiar practices of coupledness which involved reversing their positions in binaries concerning who was right and who was wrong and who was not ok or ok. Standing back from this moment I can appreciate that deconstructive theory (Derrida, 1981) and White's accounts of the "migration of identity" (1995, p. 103) and of "scaffolding conversations" (2007, p. 263), suggest that these sorts of reversals are unlikely to be entirely avoidable, and may be a necessary part of the unfolding of a new concept, provided that they can be addressed safely.

At the time I noticed that in the to-and-fro of the counselling I was somewhat preoccupied with instating a less nuanced, more singular reading of some of the therapeutic literature concerning men's abusive actions (Goldner, 1998; Jenkins, 1990). I was preoccupied with the requirement that "the man can tolerate a redefinition of the presenting problem from something relational or partner focused to an explicit focus on his violence" (Goldner, 1998, p. 60). My positioning was also influenced by my understanding that my role as a narrative therapist involved employing "bifurcation questions" (Tomm, 1993b, p. 67).

These kinds of questions, which juxtapose two contrasting options ... and invite the client to state a preference, are obviously 'loaded'. They serve to mobilize and align a person's emotional response. The questions do this by creating a bifurcation (or branching) with reference to alternative meanings and alternative direction of movement. The alternatives are usually bipolar. (Tomm, 1993b, p. 67)

My own re-viewing of this video excerpt and transcripts from different places in the wider experimental apparatus and at different times, better positioned me, as it had my participants, to see my positioning in a different light. I noticed that I had been employing these kinds of questions more to assist Tony to select the correct alternative from the binaries of his bad advice and his good advice, to recognise the truth that he had managed his anger from the falsehood that he not, and to recognise that he was solely responsible and Miranda not at all responsible for how the incident when Tony had not/escalated their conflict in a different way/taken time out (both under erasure) had played out.

In this instance, the argument over whether Tony had managed his anger or not managed his anger obscured more dialogical territories and nuanced proposals. An exploration of these dialogical territories might include how Miranda's response

and Tony's anticipation of their children's responses, contributed to Tony changing his approach from using obviously angry actions to get his way, to attempting to get his way by escalating the situation in a way less likely to lead to him using physical violence. A deconstructive approach also allowed me to understand Tony's actions as discursive practices that might be both controlling, in that he changed tack in order to control Miranda, and also not fully under his control, in that he experienced himself as having a "tantrum" and acting according to familiar fast thinking habits.

In addition, a deconstructive strategy may employ a reading of the texts which are being called upon to produce positions and truth claims. One such reading suggests that both Tony and I were performing a problematic and taken-for-granted practice of "the care for the self" (Foucault, 1987, p. 1). Foucault (1987) described the practice of care for the self as "an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one's self and to attain a certain mode of being" (p. 2). Foucault (2005) described how in Greco-Roman times this care of the self was a responsibility of a male elite, which they performed in order "to govern others well" (p. 51). Foucault observed that in relation to Platonic thought:

the problem for the subject or for the individual soul is to turn its gaze on itself in order to recognise itself in what it is and recognising itself in what it is, to recall the truths to which it is related and on which it could have reflected. (1987, p. 5)

This reading of Foucault (1987) allowed me to employ, under erasure, an understanding of Tony, using his words, as "attempting", in good conscience, to fearlessly turn his gaze on himself and to "honestly" take responsibility for his thoughts and actions, and to consult his "own good advice" about what in truth he should do, or what Miranda should do. Foucault (2010) suggested that in such a

practice of fearless and honourable truth telling one becomes the “partner of oneself by binding oneself to the statement of the truth and the act of stating the truth” (p. 66).

In relying on *his* “integrity” and “own advice” and taking responsibility for himself and the truth as he saw it and by confessing this truth, I understood Tony to be binding himself to his idea of the truth as a principle with which to govern himself and his family. When Tony “honestly” called upon his “integrity” and “good advice” in order to understand the “facts” as he saw them he was positioned to “rise above” Miranda’s experience and to govern her and their family. At this moment, this partnering of Tony with his reading of the truth centred Tony’s knowledge and authority and effectively pushed to the background his relationship with Miranda, his actual *partner*. An effect of this partnering of himself and the truth was that in this instance, Tony was not well positioned to appreciate Miranda’s experience when she spoke of bending over backwards for him, as in a sense he saw himself as bending over backwards for what he understood was truly right for both of them. These understandings helped me avoid understandings that simply constituted Tony’s so called *self-centredness* as the problem, and to support those aspects of his “good advice” which did him and his family justice, while placing that “good advice” under erasure. Later, as I will show in chapter 13, these understandings of practices of care of the self and others made it possible for me to develop more hospitable deconstructive enquiries.

However, in this moment I was aware that I had not addressed the familiar and potentially unjust binary positions that Tony and Miranda had taken up in response to re-viewing the video and to each other’s responses. And remembering

some of the experiences I have described when I or one of the participants tried to show or point out what we saw as the other's problematic actions, I was reluctant to enter into this conversation. As I felt ill equipped to address Miranda and Tony's positioning, and as Tony had agreed with Miranda's account of their interactions, I employed the video record to shift our focus to re-viewing a video excerpt of an event they had both agreed was an exception to the problem of what they described as Tony's anger management.

### *Co-researching agreed unique outcomes*

Together we turned our attention to a video excerpt that both Tony and Miranda agreed constituted a time when in Tony's words, he "didn't react in *the* [italics added] normal [problematic] way". Tony's account indicated that he was employing an externalising practice by referring to *the* normal way and not *his* normal way. Although prior to watching this excerpt Tony did not "remember what went wrong or what happened" our co-research of the video revealed that he had not trusted his emotions and instead he had stopped himself, counted to ten and told himself "I can handle it". This excerpt concluded with Tony and Miranda agreeing that talking together had been influential in resolving the problem in a different way (speech from the video excerpt is italicized):

*Tony* ...long story short, we talked about stuff and (pause) Yeah. I had a good cry and (pause) you know? We had a family hug afterwards so we repaired the situation so it was a (pause) for me it was very positive, I don't know about for Miranda, I don't know if, you know, she (pause).

*Jim* Was it a positive thing from your point of view, Miranda?

*Miranda* I think the positive thing is he actually, finally talked because he hasn't [been talking]. When he's not talking I have no idea what's going on. And for him talking and me just knowing

*what he's thinking and where he's at, I can gauge where I'm at as well. And so that's the positive thing is we actually did [talk together] – [it] took us two hours of talking but we talked.*

In this account Tony's responses were more tentative and not knowing, and he made room for other understandings. He indicated his account was how he had experienced the events, that he did not know if this was the same for Miranda, and he developed the *interest* in her experience he had shown earlier in the counselling meeting, and he echoed my question to him by inviting Miranda to offer her view on what he considered to be a "positive development". And Miranda emphasized some of the positive aspects of them dialoguing about what was happening.

An effect of foregrounding Miranda and Tony's collaborative actions to produce this exception to the problem and of them witnessing themselves collaborate in this way, and perhaps of my approach of slowly deconstructing their experiences through turn taking, was that Miranda and Tony storied and reproduced these relational practices and understandings in our research conversation.

Jim           What are you thinking about that segment?

Miranda      You go first [...].

Tony           No that's all right. I'm just picking up things like [...] considerations and...and to be considering the kids more in terms of what they're going through and creating a pleasant house, really, for them to live in.

Jim           What about for you, Miranda?

Miranda      What I got from that is ... how everything builds up to the conflict time, you know? And when things are escalating it's actually, I think, good to sort of stop and take steps. ...so probably a good idea if we sort of concentrate more on watching the signs and knowing what they are, and dealing with them before it's too late...

Jim            What sort of signs, Miranda?

Tony performed consideration in sharing the conversation and he appreciated their “consideration” for each other and their children. Miranda developed the possibility that she had named that they might talk together in order to resolve conflicts to include talking about together “watching the signs” of conflict and “dealing” with them together.

In response to my small questions designed to help Miranda and Tony identify what was working for them, Miranda continued to build this account of their collaborative approach by storying other examples of times that they had recognised the signs when “tension is building up” “in the house” and between Miranda, Tony and their children. In Miranda’s account the “tension” is externalised and occurs between all family members, and together they work to address it:

Miranda    And so he’s [Tony’s] been coming to me all the time, sort of saying “I have to talk about this before it becomes an issue” ... and I think for us, we need that as a family as well and also between the two of us, so that we can bring these things up and talk about them before (pause) and it’s sort of a joint effort, I’d say.

In the next chapter, I describe how the family collaborated in order to address the problem of Tony’s “anger management”. While traces of the binary of Tony managing/not managing his anger was still present, Miranda and Tony’s focus had not only moved to more collaborative territory, they were aligned as co-researchers of signs of potential problems and of their influence over whatever they might decide those problems to be at that moment. Before doing so, I offer

the following illustrations of some more steps Miranda and Tony took as users of, and commentators on, our research methods.

## **Taking up more agentic positions as commentators on and users of the research methods**

In chapter 4, I described how, following K Crocket, Drewery, McKenzie, Smith and Winslade's (2004) suggestion that research participants be invited to take up more agentic positions in research conversations "as commentators, or even theorists" (p. 64), my research method included inviting participants to take notes during our meetings, and to use those notes to shape our counselling and research. Miranda and Tony often not only took up such invitations they also began, without waiting for particular invitations, to make observations from different places and times in the wider experimental apparatus and to record their observations not only about our work together but also about how they conducted themselves outside our meetings. From these positions they noticed and offered commentaries on some of my contributions to the counselling and on their responses to those contributions which might otherwise have gone unnoticed, and not been storied or acted upon. In the following example, Miranda offered this evaluation not only without any prompting from me, but also when she thought that our meeting might end before she had a chance to comment:

Miranda Just the other thing, before we sort of quit watching the video as well is, what I got more this time, was the questions you [Jim] ask and the direction it's going 'cause I think at the time you're [meaning her and Tony] thinking about what you're saying and you don't really hear as much of your [Jim's] comments and the words you actually have used. And we're finding we're using

more of the strategies you actually suggest and stuff but watching it as well, [we] can sort of see it.

Miranda observed that, with my help, she and Tony were no longer positioned in an unsafe conflict-producing binary of good person/bad person, and that they could work through conflicts with each other and with their children:

Miranda We were just talking and saying it's good the way you don't feel like we are attacking each other and we can express quite a lot of stuff here but it doesn't feel like he's the baddie, I'm the goodie or something like that; so like you said it makes us feel this is a safe place where we can actually talk because, probably just the way you [Jim] also handle everything, we can explore them [the points of conflict] and all that. But yeah so we can, I myself could see and really appreciate that as well.

Tony Absolutely the strategies you're bringing to us, they are actually working...I think this process is helping us to both grow... And it's also helping the kids, I think the kids, like Gregory, we're starting to use that strategy with Gregory, we're starting to talk to Gregory about some things and Brendan about some things as well and they're starting to be able to adopt some of the stuff we're learning as well so there's a positive going on for the whole family. We just need to keep on keeping on, I think.

Unfortunately, as our meeting was drawing to a close I did not ask which strategies in particular Miranda and Tony were referring to. They may have been referring to the strategies that our deconstructive enquiries brought forward, like noticing the warning signs that tension was building and talking together, and to the method of these enquires which they had been stepping into, and which positioned them more as co-researchers than as adversaries or as *goodies and baddies*. They may also have been referring to the practical stress management strategies drawn from popular literature (Davis, Eshelman, & McKay, 1982;

Wilson, 2000) that we experimented with, such as breathing techniques which Tony employed to try to reduce his physiological arousal when he was flooded with emotion and distressing memories. Also Miranda's observation that the way I "handle everything" so that they can "explore points of conflict" may have been a reference to, and to some degree an effect of, and a performance of, the hospitable, collaborative, deconstructive approach to co-research with video that I facilitated.

The effectiveness of these deconstructive enquiries using video and their repositioning and externalising effects made it safer for me to co-research our counselling and research meetings in order to address any *warning signs* or *tensions* which might be problematic for Miranda, Tony and their children. For example, when, as I said I would, I returned to Miranda's potentially disrespectful performance of her experience of Tony's position and her questioning of why he was still in their relationship, Miranda indicated that she was not concerned about Tony *festering* in response to her remarks:

Jim            So what do you think about it now that you spoke up about that...?

Miranda      I had some worries but I thought better that now rather than wait for it to fester and just get it over and done with, basically. For me I find once it's out, it's out and I'm not having anything else to sort of twist around in my head for days on end so...

Miranda's observation demonstrated a movement from when it was safer for her to remain silent, to how Tony's acceptance of her experiences that were different to his made it a safer and "better" option for her to engage in exploring her worries with him. Importantly, this repositioning of Miranda and Tony as co-

researchers of their interactions helped Miranda to dialogue with Tony about her concerns, even when she began by voicing them according to familiar inhospitable practices of coupledness. And Tony noted that by together using the deconstructive strategies that he and Miranda were less vulnerable to letting their emotions run away with them:

Tony        We're able to take a dispassionate, separate view of it as opposed to leaping into the middle, trying to have this discussion in the middle of an argument which doesn't particularly work terribly well.

When Miranda and Tony looked back over all of our meetings from the vantage point of our final meeting in this study, they offered the evaluation that our collaborative approach had provided them with a method to safely work through potential problems and in the event that they could not safely do so on their own, they could leave these conversations for discussion and video review at our next meeting:

Miranda    It made it easier for us to actually wait for the next session ...we could mull on them [problems] because we knew next time we'd be revisiting the stuff in that session as well. And so it made it more ...relaxed.

I imagine they could expect that I would attempt to do them and their situation justice by facilitating a hospitable, careful, slowed down, even-handed, externalised and collaborative deconstruction of whatever problem they brought to our counselling meetings. This confidence in our co-research was an effect that Hinemoa and Wiremu also spoke about. Hinemoa talked about feeling that whatever she and Wiremu said, and whatever state they were in, I would find a way to "safely" and "constructively" help them though it:

Hinemoa I've always felt comfortable that no matter how we landed in this [counselling] space, you [Jim] had this intuitive sense of where we were at emotionally and how we were feeling...and you were able to respond to us in a manner [that] ... didn't exacerbate whatever we walked in with that day...I like the way that you work because I feel like you create a nice safe space for everything to be just what it is and it's ok... I remember coming one day and I was really, really pissed off with Wiremu, and I'd just had a scrap [argument] in the car (laughs) and this space is nice (indicates the room), and we came in, and...you never ever gave us instructions about how we were to behave and not to behave at all. It just was ok. ... I think we had a very brief talk about how all our work together would happen at the beginning and that was it basically.

Wiremu Mmm. Mm.

Hinemoa It's like having trust and faith, eh? In each other that whatever the circumstance, we can and we will get through it.

Wiremu We'll be alright and [we'll] get through it.

I imagine that my "manner" without instructions to them, that Hinemoa referred to, and which gave Miranda, Tony and Wiremu confidence was a product of my growing confidence that with this hospitable and collaborative method and with the video record to support our co-research, I could calmly facilitate deconstructive enquiries that would safely engage us in a process that would do their situations and their hopes justice. And like Hinemoa and Wiremu, Miranda and Tony's comfort and confidence in this method, particularly when used with the video material, encouraged them to enter in to an ethic of research in which they used video to the extent that they took up the practice of imagining how they might appear on video and making notes to aid their research of their day-to-day lives as well as of our meetings.

### *Imagining oneself as a subject of research using video*

Miranda and Tony remembered and imagined their everyday interactions in the language used to describe video replays and as if their thoughts and actions were “playing” out on video:

Tony        One thing that came out of that - watching that video last time was how self-obsessed and self-focused I was and so I tried to turn that around to some degree.

Jim         In the “turning it around to some degree”, what helped you hang onto that idea and take some action at the time?

Tony        It was just having it [the video] playing through my head [in order] to turn it around, really.

As Hinemoa had done, Miranda distanced herself from her thinking and she took a more contemplative position, in which she researched her thinking and actions as if they were being recorded on video. She then used this virtual record to check if her thinking was “based on reality” and fitted with her moral position:

Miranda    When you *fast-forward* [emphasis added] yourself on what you’re saying you realise most of the stuff you say is not actually based on reality ... And so when you’re at home during the week and things are running through your head you can sort of analyse those things running through your head and say that’s just emotional gabble ... when those words are playing around in your head you can reorganise them to actually make sense and in the process you find that you’re actually changing the way you think about stuff.

The positions offered by video co-research supported Miranda and Tony to employ metaphors associated with video replay and to revise their positions and presuppositions in the light of their values and hopes. They took up different positions in order to observe what they were *actually* saying and doing on video,

what they noticed they had done at home in the light of having seen themselves on video, and how they imagined they might appear if their actions were being videoed for review:

Miranda I heard him [Tony] say a little bit last time about looking at himself on the tape and seeing him so self-focused but now when he says it today I can see where during the week he's actually put himself out and dealt with whatever has to be dealt with. I didn't know it [the video replay] had that sort of impact.

Tony She's right in what she's saying. I can realise things that I've been doing wrong and what I'm saying and I can see her point and she's (pause) she takes a very much more – watching her on the video - she takes a very much more selfless, non-focused on herself, more focused on the kids and the family as a whole, approach whereas all I'm doing is focused on myself the whole time.

When Tony offered a commentary on the video record by appreciating Miranda's focus on their children and contrasted this with how he had appeared, he distanced himself from the familiar negative identity conclusions such an observation might usually produce, and he demonstrated that he was taking a different and preferred moral position to that which he had taken when we first began this project. In identifying his actions as being morally "wrong" Tony might be considered to be performing a practice of confession in which he both confessed and redeemed himself by demonstrating and having his knowledge of himself accepted and his values upheld. An effect of this practice of confession was that Tony avoided the positioning that had resulted when Dave confessed to acting aggressively and authoritatively and was found to be lacking in self-knowledge and self-esteem.

## *Research and the practice of taking notes*

Miranda and Tony supported their observations using video by taking up the research practice of literally taking note of information that might support their preferred ways of being as a couple and as a family:

- Jim           What had you noticed Tony that was “getting better step by step”?
- Tony           Just a number of little things I sort of noted during the week that had sort of (pause) I reacted well to, or I reacted differently to, and there had been a better outcome because of it.
- Jim           Did you have a note of them, Tony?
- Tony           Yeah I made some small notes...[reading from notes] “Saying sorry to Gregory and dealing with...instead of dealing with my issues, dealing with his first”.

In this example, I employed narrative therapy “landscape of action questions” (White, 2007, p. 78) in order to bring forward accounts of what was “getting better step by step” and to discourage the kind of note taking, both metaphorical and literal, of the other’s failings that is a familiar practice for couples. Tony also oriented his reporting to this focus on what was getting better. He went on to describe how having fun with the children had helped him “reclaim some of that silliness” that existed outside of, and countered, his annoyance at their children. Miranda also consulted her notes to give an account of an incident she had noticed that she considered evidence that Tony was handling his annoyance better. In this incident Gregory was playing with their phone and he dropped it. Miranda had noted that Tony was understanding towards Gregory when he would “normally” have “jumped down” Gregory’s throat. She had also noted that while in the past Gregory would not usually have taken responsibility, and this would have escalated into a dispute, on this occasion Tony gave Gregory a chance to

apologise, and Gregory did so. Miranda's description made visible the extent to which Tony and Gregory's responses were shaped by and shaping of each other. Miranda went on to express her surprise at how Tony "looking at himself on tape" had "had that sort of impact" on Tony's relationship with Gregory. When I asked Tony to evaluate these developments he also indicated the significance of having seen himself on video:

- Jim           And how do you think you'd gone with that, Tony?
- Tony           That's why I was making notes or mental notes during the week about things and because I was able to recognise that one step further was an important step to take.

Tony's response also indicated that he was continuing to employ a metaphor associated with incremental progress: he had stepped into evaluating those *steps* that, little by little, took him further along his preferred way of being. Prior to taking up these research practices, Tony had reported that he found it difficult to notice these sorts of developments.

In order to thicken this dialogical account, I invited Tony to apply these co-research practices to the territory of his and Gregory's responses to each other's responses:

- Jim           So what made it possible for you to notice his [Gregory's] state rather than focus on your own annoyance?
- Tony           It was just generally focusing - trying to focus not on myself, trying to take the focus off myself, trying to (pause) trying not to be self-centred, really.

Again, our repeated repositioning in the wider experimental apparatus brought forward an understanding that what we measured was influenced by the focus of the particular apparatus we were using at the time. The language Tony employed

showed something of this positioning with his reference to his “focus” on some of the dialogical territory illuminated in our videoed counselling meetings. In this instance he had employed this deconstructive and dialogical method in order bring in to focus something of the interaction between him and Gregory and he had been less focussed on himself and what he had imagined Gregory’s negative intentions towards him might have been.

When Tony’s answer identified what he had not done, I employed a deconstructive approach by enquiring about the other half of the binary absent/present; what he had done to promote his preferred way of being with Gregory:

- Jim            So did you kind of remind yourself about that?
- Tony          Yeah, I had a few key words that were running through my head all week long and I was just (pause)
- Jim            What were they, Tony, is that all right to [ask]?
- Tony          “I can cope”... “Consider the children”.

My deconstructive enquiry brought forward that in the heat of the moment Tony was telling himself what he had noted down when he first saw himself on video: “I can cope”, “consider the children”, and which he had been repeating to himself over the week. In taking this position Tony was moving away from the common patriarchal practice where men centre their own experience and expertise (see Dickerson, 2013).

Similarly, with the opportunity to literally review her own actions, Miranda stepped into the practice of questioning how her previously taken-for-granted strong feelings and thinking might be problematic:

Miranda I think things that stood out is when I lashed out a couple of times... And I think watching it in the following a session ...it's not that the feelings don't matter but sometimes you feel strongly about something but you throw the logic out the window because you're feeling something and it's important that when you are in an emotional state, probably not to [be] thinking in absolutes probably because as soon as the emotional thing passes then you can actually see things a bit more logically.

Our collaborative enquiries had widened from an individualistic focus, which had briefly foregrounded arguing over the binary of whether Tony's actions truly constituted managing his anger or not, to together eschewing absolutes that polarised their positions in favour of deconstructing any territory that Miranda and Tony felt might give them more influence in their family life according to what they valued.

### *Summary*

In this chapter I illustrated how I called upon deconstructive strategies to place my presuppositions about the problem and its correct alternative, its solution, under erasure (Derrida, 1976, p. 60). In the process of co-researching the problem and its alternatives I deconstructed some of the taken-for-granted individualistic therapeutic practices of care for the self which were in play, and I began an exploration of the collaborative and dialogical territories absent but implied by these most visible or most taken-for-granted understandings.

Influential in this shift was our positioning as co-researchers using video technology. Video technology showed the three of us in interaction and along with

the practice of co-research it had the effect of distancing Miranda and Tony from the strong feelings of the moment and some of the familiar negative interactions and identity conclusions that might have otherwise been immediately available to them. Our video co-research provided Miranda and Tony with the space and time to consider and deconstruct the externalised diffractions produced by our wider experimental apparatus in a more relaxed and hospitable manner, and from different places and times in order to collaboratively produce more just outcomes. Another effect of our positioning as co-researchers using video in this wider experimental apparatus was that the video entered Miranda and Tony's consciousness to the extent that they came to understand their thinking and actions, including outside our meetings, in the light of how they had appeared in those videoed meetings, and as if their thoughts and actions were being, or might be, played out and reviewed on video. They took up a practice associated with research, that of taking actual and mental notes to record significant developments. The focus of this note-taking included Miranda and Tony's views on their own thinking and actions, their ongoing collaborative work to address a problem, their children's contributions to potential solutions and some of the contributions I made to our co-research in our meetings.

In the following chapter I describe how we employed these practices of co-research with video to amplify, extend and sustain these dialogical developments.

## Chapter 11. Supporting dialogical developments

In the previous chapter I described how I had been developing a practice of co-research with video which employed video as a research tool, as a text for deconstruction, as an aid to imagination and reappraisal and to position Miranda and Tony as witnesses to and chroniclers of their preferred ways of being as a family. These co-research conversations safely brought forward and deconstructed stories about how Tony and Miranda exerted influence over what they called Tony's anger management. At the same time these deconstructive co-research conversations better positioned Tony and Miranda to safely work together to make their family safer.

In this chapter I describe how, Miranda, Tony and I extended our co-research with video into the wider dialogical territories that might support the production of more influence over Tony's so called anger management problem. In foregrounding these dialogical territories, I do not want to destroy the idea that addressing men's violence requires those men who act violently to take personal responsibility. Rather, as deconstructive theory suggests (Derrida, 1981), I want to undermine this binary of personal and other responsibility for one's actions and to deconstruct and draw upon both traditions of thought in order to promote safety and justice. In this work I draw upon the work of others who have taken a more relational perspective towards violence and conflict.

Kenneth Gergen (2009) invited us to:

abandon the view that those around us cause our actions. Others are not the causes nor we their effects. Rather, in whatever we think, remember, create and feel, we *participate* in relationship. (K. J. Gergen, 2009, p. 397)

Gergen (2009) proposed that “relational responsibility in action” (p. 365) might address the question “How can *we* [italics added] proceed in such a way that ever emerging conflict does not yield aggression, oppression, or genocide – in effect the end of meaning altogether” (p. 365). I address Gergen’s (2009) question by continuing to position Miranda, Tony and myself as co-researchers of their practical-moral understandings and their discursive relational-responsive participation around anger management in order that they might co-produce preferred forms of relationship. This relational approach allows me to address the contextual and historical issues that are implicated in Tony’s so called anger management while at the same time supporting him to identify something of what we are up against when we try to co-construct respectful relationships and to stand with others against these disrespectful discursive practices. Like Dickerson (2013), I argue that this collaborative deconstructive and dialogical approach positions men in an honourable project and is better suited to avoiding the kinds of potentially dangerous blaming and defensiveness that our enquiries to demonstrate Dave’s so called “authoritative tone” and “controlling” actions produced.

I also draw upon the work of Colorado, Montgomery, and Tovar (1998) who addressed domestic violence as a community issue and positioned family and community as both supporters and witnesses of respectful relationships.

By amplifying private conversations to include families, friends, teachers or any others who may enrich the process, we make a political decision to address domestic violence as a community issue. At the same time, an audience of community members becomes available to witness and authenticate the construction of narratives that foster respectful relations. (Colorado et al., 1998, p. 14)

I describe how I built on my experience of working with Hinemoa and Wiremu and their whānau and community in order to use co-research with video to produce and amplify relational-responsive developments in: Miranda and Tony's relationships with each other, their children and their community; to position Miranda and Tony as an appreciative audience to these developments; and to widen this appreciative and supportive audience and to counter a particular individualising effect of the effects of violence through counter practices of "remembering, conversations" (White, 2007, p. 129), and "taking it back practices" (White, 1997a, p. 132) which included Miranda and Tony's children and Miranda's family of origin.

### *Video and the contributions of children*

In the previous chapter I described how our practices of co-research had brought forward accounts of Miranda and Tony's love for their children and of Tony beginning to consider them more. Here I describe how I used the video record and Miranda and Tony's imaginations of what the video might depict in order to recruit their children as an appreciative audience:

Jim            So what do you think the children have been noticing? Do you think they've noticed any of these developments this week?

Tony           (pause) I don't know.

Had I been working with Tony on his own Miranda's experience would not have been available when Tony, perhaps predictably given that he would have most likely been used to centring his own experience, could not imagine their children's experience. Miranda had become very attuned to their children and their relationship with Tony in her efforts to protect them from Tony's angry outbursts:

Miranda I think they do [notice these developments] because we spent a lot of time together this weekend, more than we have [in the past]...And even though Gregory had a new PSP and stuff he spent quite a lot of time talking to you [Tony] about it. Normally they sort of go for some time of peace and quiet. But even when we [Brendan and Miranda] pulled a puzzle out he [Gregory] came and sat next to you.

An effect of Miranda's alertness was that she was in a position to bear witness to a performance of Tony's preferred identity and relationship as a father. Miranda went on to give further examples of developments in Tony's relationship with their children. Witnessing Miranda's account of these developments prompted Tony to provide an account of how he had contributed to some of the developments in their children's lives and in his relationship with them:

Tony One of the other things [that has made a difference] is because of [me] really involving myself in Gregory's hobby and interest and going above and beyond the call of duty to be involved and to enthuse along with him in his interest.

In the recent past Tony might have related to both his children from a position more like that of Tony's father. In Tony's relationship with his father a father's "duty" was to take a position of authority with his children. In contrast to this authoritarian view, Tony was adopting some of our hospitable co-researching strategies in responding to their children. In teaming up with Gregory, Tony used his own previously "unreasonable" actions as a salutary example:

Tony And [I] drew some pretty extreme examples including using myself as an extreme example and saying "Is that reasonable?" And he goes "No, it's not reasonable [what you did dad]"...So I was capable of talking that through and he was very responsive to that as well. So, you know, getting closer to him enabled me to chat about some difficult things as well.

I then amplified this dialogical account by inviting Tony to imagine Gregory's experience of these developments and to offer a commentary that could be researched when we watched it at our next meeting:

Jim            So do you think he's got more of the idea that you were together in opposing whatever you would call it, temper, in favour of reasonableness?

Tony           Yeah I think so... he can see that both of us can work together through issues and help and support each other through those things.

With Miranda and Tony as witnesses in mind, and with the possibility that this account might lead to a "taking-it-back practice" (White, 1997a, p. 202) where Tony might acknowledge the contributions Gregory had made to these developments, I sought to amplify this moment of movement.

Jim            Gosh! That sounds quite different to the way it was before.

Tony           Yeah, there's quite a bit of difference there. And I'm just hoping we can keep on growing closer like that, because if he can be a voice of reason in my storms and I can be a voice of reason in his storms, that would be useful.

Tony's poetic acknowledgment of Gregory as a "voice of reason" in the "storms" of his life was testimony to the influence of children in their parents' lives, and also to a migration in Tony's identity from a father who was primarily a patriarchal and disciplinary figure to a father who has a close relationship with his sons to the extent that they can support him and he can learn from and support them.

### *Community Support: Women's Refuge*

Seeking support is a significant act of resistance to violence (Wade, 1997), and one that female partners and mothers often need to carry out in secrecy so as to

avoid the possibility that their partners will take further violent actions to prevent others knowing about their abusive actions.

An effect of our safe, collaborative co-research with video was that Miranda and Tony were positioned to be alert to steps that they might take together to expose and resist violent practices and the conditions that support these practices. One of the steps that they took was that Miranda enrolled Gregory and Brendan in a Women's Refuge course for children who witness, or are subjected to, family violence. Our ethic of safe and hospitable co-research supported Miranda to speak with Tony about this, and Tony to agree that Miranda had "made the right judgment call" and to appreciate that she was "capable of figuring it out" without him putting "his two cents in".

A dialogical understanding suggests that Miranda would have read some cues in Tony's actions that told her that he might be in a position to handle her resisting an effect of violence by breaking with the secrecy that was necessary in the face of the threat of violence. I anticipated that naming these cues might make visible how Miranda and Tony co-produced this unique outcome and that a deconstruction of these events might support their positioning as standing together against violence:

Jim            So Miranda, what was it like for you, broaching that subject with Tony? Were you worried about how he would react or did you know that he would trust your judgment or (pause)?

Having practiced these dialogical questions for some years since this meeting, I would prefer to ask a safer more specific relational-responsive question that avoided a potentially problematic focus on Miranda's worries and avoided

constructing their situation in terms of the paired binaries of worried/not knowing and not worried/knowing. I might have asked, “What did you notice Tony doing that told you it was safe enough to broach this subject?” However, as I will describe later, Miranda’s naming of her “tinge of panic” as she spoke up had an unexpected effect when Tony watched this segment on video at our next meeting and he was shocked to see that Miranda and his children were afraid of him. At the time Tony reaffirmed his identity as a father who wants the best for his children and who does not want them to suffer now or in the future:

Tony        At the end of the day it’s what’s best for the kids. I mean, if they’re going to (pause) you know, they’ve had some pretty bloody tough things to cope with and they need some help. I mean, I wish when I was a kid that I’d had some course or some counselling to go to, to help me cope with the situations I’d grown up in.

I chose to shape a positive receiving context for this dialogical investigation at this point by first bearing witness to this exceptional development.

### *Counsellor as witness*

Bird (2000) has suggested counsellors have a role as witnesses to the developments in their clients’ lives:

In connecting with another person’s experience, we act as witnesses. We stand beside and engage with people (clients) as they find ways to understand, describe, and feel the experience while telling and retelling, remembering and re-remembering. (Bird, 2000, p. 30)

I was moved by this conversation about these developments and I noticed that in being moved I had lost something of my usual presence of mind to the extent that I worried I might not attend sufficiently to the storying of these developments. I

made this effect of their conversation transparent in order to witness these developments and also to encourage Miranda and Tony to join me to fill in the gaps in this exceptional story:

Jim I'm sort of (pause) I feel so moved by that, it's hard to think of the right questions. Because I've been doing this a long time and I've never heard anyone talk about that sort of a conversation the way that you have. That you (pause) stood for what you thought was best for the children and spoke to Tony that way about it Miranda, and trusted him with that news that you might have expected he would behave badly to. But instead, Tony, that you could put yourself in the children's shoes and trust Miranda's judgment, I mean (pause) I just (pause). You have to help me fill in the gaps about how that could be possible, that the two of you would do that.

My decision to bear witness to these developments and to emphasize the gaps in their account by indicating them in my pauses was also influenced by knowing that we could watch this conversation on video at our next meeting. I anticipated that Miranda and Tony would have more time to notice and fill in those gaps and that their witnessing my witnessing of their preferred performance might support their performance of respectfully doing their best for their children.

I also added another layer of diffraction to this conversation by inviting Miranda and Tony to evaluate the significance of these developments (see White, 2007) so that they might witness, review and reconsider our in-the-moment commentary of this performance when we watched it on video at our next meeting:

Jim This is extraordinary, isn't it? I mean, are you thinking this was quite a significant thing, Miranda?

Miranda Yes, I think it is eh?

Tony Yes.

When Miranda and Tony agreed this was a significant achievement for them I moved to breathe life into this account so that it might constitute a performance that might live in their imaginations. Bird (2004) spoke of the importance of “using the imagination in the therapeutic relationship” (p. 198) and in particular of a therapist using his or her imagination as a “therapeutic resource” to “support the development of questions that create a different context” (p. 196). To this end I imagined the conversation other parents might have had, or avoided having, about their children’s attendance on this course.

Jim            I was just thinking; I was wondering to myself whether there would be any other children on that course whose fathers would have thought it was a good idea for them to be there.

Miranda      Yeah, I don’t [think so] - ‘cause that’s a very touchy thing for families, yeah.

Tony           I think probably one of the reasons why the Women’s Refuge picks the kids up and take them to school is so the father doesn’t get to find out that the kids are going to that course.

Miranda and Tony’s responses located them in an understanding of their family as exceptional in that they speak about and address difficult things that might often be avoided. I then sought to amplify this conversation further by recruiting more witnesses and contributors to the survival of this practice of teamwork for the sake of their children

### *Supervisors as witnesses*

As our conversation was being videoed and would be available for my supervisors to review I could not only invite Miranda and Tony to imagine what my supervisors might say if they were witnessing these steps, I could also recruit my supervisors as an audience who could view these developments documented on

video and in a transcript and who could pass on their responses to Miranda and Tony through me:

Jim I'm thinking about my supervisors, when they get to see the transcript and see what you've done, I can imagine they'd be really moved by that as well.

In making this connection to a future and imagined appreciative audience I positioned Miranda and Tony to consider their interactions from other appreciative perspectives:

Jim So the love for your children was a really important motivator?...

Tony Yeah, exactly ...It's an honourable thing to be doing and, you know, every family should recognise that they've got problems – I don't know any family that doesn't have problems – and every family should recognise they've got problems and do everything they can to deal with those problems and if somebody's doing something constructive, no matter who it involves, then that's a good thing... If somebody wants to take that as a negative, well, that's their problem, not mine.

From this appreciative relational-responsive perspective I could invite Miranda and Tony to look forward to seeing themselves interacting on video:

Jim And the fact that Miranda, you could speak about it, and that you could deal with it like that, Tony, that is extraordinary. I'm looking forward to us watching this video.

(Jim and Miranda Laugh).

An effect of my invitation to Miranda and Tony to take up some of my responsibilities to fill in the gaps in their account and to co-research these developments was that Tony offered an account of how I had contributed to the way he had handled this situation:

Tony        You [Jim] had a saying [about] “difficult situations [they are] an opportunity to discover a different way of looking at it”, or you said something like that.

Tony had drawn on this understanding that difficulties were opportunities to separate from the known and familiar in order to understand something of how he had avoided responding to Miranda’s proposal as if it was an unjust attack on him. Oriented to discover a different way and to research how they produced this development, Miranda and Tony went on to describe further developments. This meeting ended with Miranda and Tony feeling “positive” and Tony reaffirming his commitment to taking notes in order to keep his “own good advice” in the forefront of his mind, and to “work on [these notes] during the week”. In this moment, I took Tony to be using the term “own good advice” in order to distinguish his current advice, which had been produced in conjunction with Miranda and me, and his children’s voices of reason, from that advice that he had formerly taken-for-granted and which had not served him and his family well. As I have previously noted, a deconstructive approach would suggest that the term *own good advice* be placed “under erasure” (Derrida, 1976, p. 60), on the understanding that it may need further deconstructing if it has the effect of binding Tony to certainty regarding his own judgment and undermining collaboration in the co-production of justice through deconstruction.

## **Video reflection with an imagined audience**

When, at our next meeting, I replayed this conversation about the Women’s Refuge course in order to foreground the developments we had produced and co-researched in our counselling, we explored the perspectives offered by my

supervisors' responses and Miranda and Tony's accounts of their children as witnesses and supporters.

When I explained to Tony and Miranda that when I had watched this excerpt with my supervisors they had been appreciative and curious to know more about what made it possible for Miranda to speak to Tony about the course, Tony noticed an effect of his actions that he had not previously storied:

Jim           What do you think it took on Miranda's behalf not to keep it secret but to do what was best for the children and talk to you about it, Tony?

Tony          My actual reaction is; I didn't realise that she was that frightened of me to think that she would have to keep anything secret from me.

Positioned as a researcher using video in a team of co-researchers which included my supervisors, Tony considered why they were curious and appreciative of Miranda's actions. From imagining my supervisors' experiences of Miranda's actions Tony began to discover and appreciate something of the effect of his actions on Miranda. I had not enquired about Miranda's fear of Tony directly because she had not named her experience other than as a "tinge of panic", and I did not want to make this experience more visible unless she elaborated on it. In taking this ethical position I was adapting Andersen's (1995) practice of not commenting on clients' body language as he took the view that persons "should have the right to *not talk about* all they think and feel" (p. 21). Unfortunately, by speaking of Tony's "knowing" as if it were true that Miranda was frightened I somewhat undermined my intention to avoid focussing on Miranda's fears:

Jim           So knowing that she was that frightened, what do you think it took, Tony?

I would have preferred to ask a question that preserved Miranda's right to disclose as much of her experience as she chose to and not to have it interpreted for her by two men. Something like: "Given that from your point of view and my supervisors' points of view, it seemed that Miranda had taken a significant step what do you think it took from her?" may have been safer and more respectful of Miranda's sovereignty over her feelings.

Nonetheless, positioned as a fellow co-researcher, Tony continued to appreciate something of what had gone into Miranda's speaking up without being captured by the binary of "goodies" and "baddies" that had been in play previously in which Miranda's expression of fearfulness might have implied that Tony was the "baddie" for causing her fears:

Tony        It took a huge amount, obviously, to confront me with it. It's probably why she told me in such a manner it felt like [I should] not say anything [to object]. I'm starting to get it and I'm starting to get that there's been (pause) that there is a real fear, there's a real underlying fear that comes through.

Tony's response indicated that the "manner" in which Miranda addressed Tony positioned him in a way that he felt he could not say anything. It may have been useful to deconstruct what is was about Tony's experience of Miranda's approach that got him feeling like he should not say anything. For example, did he feel like he couldn't say anything because he felt what she was saying was right, and/or that if he said something it would make matter worse?

However, an inevitable effect of engaging in conversation is that there are many such instances which go un-storied in the flow of conversation and in the time available. We were nearing the end of our meeting, and Tony had not paused

before going on to name an impediment to his understanding of Miranda's experience:

Tony        Which as I said, it surprises me because I'm not really (pause) I mean, I was pretty severely beaten when I was a kid and ...this is so mild in comparison and to hear that people are so affected badly, I'm affecting the kids and Miranda [and they are] are so badly affected by what's gone on, it is surprising; and I'm learning, I'm hearing it, I am hearing that that's what's happened and I'm hearing that it doesn't matter if I'm [upset] If I raise my voice to get heard or whatever, that, that's really affecting people. I'm hearing that.

At this point we were nearing the end of our counselling meeting and as part of my routine practice of co-researching my participants' or clients' experiences of our counselling, I asked Miranda and Tony if they were "alright to go away and talk about these things and it not cause [them] difficulties". They both agreed that they were. Tony asked Miranda's opinion and he gave his opinion tentatively:

Tony        I think ... we're starting to, as a family, discuss issues and feelings and situations and recognise good and bad behaviour and deal with it as a family and be more open with each other without being vindictive or nasty.

He then provided the following account of a time when he and Gregory had collaborated in order to perform an exception to familiar patriarchal practices of care of the self and others.

### *Teamwork with Children*

Tony gave an example of how he had listened to his son Gregory and Gregory had helped Tony understand some of the effects of his angry actions. In this example,

Tony stepped into Gregory's experience to the extent that Tony voiced Gregory's part and his appreciation of Gregory's contribution:

Tony        Gregory said to me ... "How can you expect me to behave well when you behave badly like that?" He wasn't being nasty; he was being informative. You know, he didn't say "You're a horrible dad, you're just a prick and an asshole and a bastard and you should just piss off and I don't want anything to do with you" and, you know, "because look what you do all the time" and he didn't lash [out] at me like that, like he has done. And that's the stuff I've taken offence to. All he did was he told me something important ... and he tried to make me see what I've missed.

Tony appreciated that he and Gregory were employing more respectful and collaborative practices in order that Tony might see important things that he might have otherwise missed had he continued to foreground his own experience of the moment based on his family of origin experiences and practices. An effect of Tony's moves to understand Gregory's experience was that he could imagine and voice Gregory's experience whereas, as I noted above, when Tony had been positioned to attend to his own experience, he had not been well positioned to imagine their children's experience. As a consequence, Miranda had often had to represent their children's experience, and been positioned as *for* the children and one of the "goodies" *against* Tony's "baddie". Tony's example was also an illustration of how, in his words, they might establish an ethic of care where they might "be more open with each other without being vindictive or nasty".

As our meeting was coming to an end to further align them with these protective collaborative practices of care, I moved to invite Miranda and Tony to consider acknowledging Gregory's contribution to their preferred ways of being a family.

### *“Taking it back” practices with children*

I proposed to invite Tony to perform a kind of “taking it back” (White, 1997a, p. 202) practice for Gregory. In this instance, as a father, I thought Tony had a position of authority and a duty of care, to acknowledge Gregory’s contribution to Tony’s parenting of Gregory and to reaffirm his position that Gregory and Tony can be “voice[s] of reason” in each other’s “storms”:

Jim            So does he [Gregory] know how important it was that he’d spoken out in that way and not made it a personal attack? I mean, would he have been surprised to hear that he was a part of this conversation in this way, do you think?

Tony           I think he would be. I think we need to go back and tell him.

Jim            What do you think about that, Miranda?

Miranda      Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

As testimony to the extent to which Tony had taken up the positions offered by an ethic of co-research, before I could ask about taking this information back to Gregory, Tony had suggested this practice himself.

### **Using re-membering conversations and video to address the some of the effects of violence.**

As I noted in the previous chapter, as might be expected with any migration of identity from problematic territories, it was not a smooth and singular transition that Tony, Miranda, Brendan and Gregory made from being a family where Tony’s anger and “lashing out” was a predominant feature to the territory where they were a family where safety, care and fun thrived. Despite Tony’s own “good advice” to himself when he was calm, he often regarded Miranda or their children’s negative commentaries on his actions as an intolerable telling off.

When Tony experienced their actions in this way he often remembered the violence he had suffered as a child as a result of his father's abusive actions and he found that he might act as if they were treating him in the same unjust way his father had treated him. An effect of Tony remembering his childhood experiences, and perhaps of the centring of men's experiences that is produced by patriarchal discursive practices, was that Tony's experiences often became the focus of conversations and produced what he had described as a "self-obsession". This focus foregrounded Tony's experiences and obscured his understandings of Miranda's and of their children's experiences, and had him poorly positioned to consider what might be fair to them.

In the following discussion I demonstrate how I used "re-membering conversations" (White, 2007, p. 129) with video to recruit a supportive and imagined audience to Miranda and Tony's preferred ways of being as a family, and as a form of "definitional ceremony" (White, 1997a, p. 93) in order to reaffirm Miranda's identity and location in a family tradition of exceptional mothers and fathers who valued respectful and caring relationships and to support Tony to imagine himself into his preferred identity in this tradition as an exceptional father who protects his family and learns from them.

In counselling meeting three, I introduced a "re-membering conversation" (White, 2007, p. 129) by amplifying a conversation centred on Miranda's family of origin. Tony and Miranda had been talking about how Tony's mother had been very critical of them when she accompanied them on a family outing. Tony considered that his mother and sister "constantly blamed him for their problems" and that his father "never" told Tony "I love you" or said, "I'm proud of you". Tony

remembered that as a child his father did not say more than five or six words to him at a time unless he was “ticking” Tony off, and Tony emphasized that “ticking off” including physically beating Tony.

I heard in Tony’s words his heart-felt desire for his sons to have a different relationship with him than he had with his father. I invited Tony and Miranda to consider how they had dealt with Tony’s mother’s criticisms and what their hopes for their family told them about their family that was different from Tony’s family of origin and that might be helpful for them to know. And I speculated if having conversations about this difference might have provided them with some protection against reproducing those problematic ways of being as a family. Tony responded emphatically with “Oh, it would have, definitely. It would have definitely”.

When, rather than developing this conversation about how different Tony’s family was from his family of origin, Tony’s memories of the violence he had been subjected to came to the fore and he began to recount some of the traumatic events he had experienced as a child, Miranda employed an ethic of co-research by tentatively speculating about the effects of Tony’s childhood:

Miranda     Because the thing I feel is once he’s [Tony’s] been around his family of origin he sort of tends to deal with us in the same way. He transfers all those things onto us.

Miranda avoided the familiar binary positions of making a claim about the truth of what was going on for Tony and positioning him as wrong. She did not pause to allow a debate about the truth of her wondering which might have reinstated a focus on Tony’s childhood experience. Instead, Miranda picked up the co-

research theme I had suggested of co-researching alternative family traditions and which Tony had agreed might provide them with some protection from reproducing his abusive family of origin traditions:

Miranda And our family is a unique and individual kind of family ... because I know growing up in an [indigenous] African society, children don't speak to their parents. But we [my siblings and I] spoke to our parents. [Tony] he sees it as being told off, but for us I remember telling my dad [saying] "Don't pick me up late because when you pick me up late this is all the things that are going on", and at the time I was upset because he'd come late and it was raining so I didn't say it in a very good way but I remember we got home and after my Mum had given us a cup of tea and stuff and we were ok, he said, "I really didn't like you talking to me like that in front of your friends and the other children ... it doesn't do good to a man's ego". He said it that way, in a joking way but I got it. And so from then on I tried, even though I was really upset, to tone it down and then say later on when I've had my cup of tea and go back and say "Dad". But it's a lesson that's stayed with me for ages.

Miranda invited Tony into the territory that they both wanted their family to more fully occupy by describing their family as "unique" and different from families where parents and children do not relate well to each other. In contrast to what often happened when Tony focussed on himself and saw his children's expression of discomfort with him as a telling off as if he was the child and they the parents, Miranda avoided beginning with a criticism of Tony and she offered a dialogical understanding of her and her father's positions and experiences which acknowledged the importance of mutual care when addressing a problem. These practices of care included appreciating the effect of others witnessing such a

conversation, softening criticism with humour, toning down one's response and choosing the time to respond.

Miranda encouraged Tony to remember the differences between these practices of care and his family of origin's practices of care and their own family's practices of care:

Miranda I need him to understand we are not his family [of origin], we care for him and we've shown that over the years, because I know in his family they never talk to their parents – but for us when the kids open up and talk and when I say something it's not ticking you off, it's just - that's how we are feeling, you know,

Miranda located their children's speaking up in the same tradition of helpful speaking up that they had followed when she raised the matter of their children attending the course at the Women's refuge, and which she and her father had followed. In her encouragement of Tony, Miranda emphasized the relational-responsiveness of these interactions by outlining how they might continue to shape each other's responses in their family:

Miranda and if the sensitivity comes back you'll find that the sensitivity [goes] both ways. And if you also learn to listen when we are just saying something then we don't have to...go over the top. [if you don't react] it gives me a window to come back and say "I'm so sorry" and I think with the kids it's...for me it will be really good if you can transition that our family is a safe place, it's a place of growth, it's a place of nurture.

This repositioning of them all in traditions of collaborating to produce a safe and nurturing family was evident in Tony's heart-felt response.

Tony        Those are lovely little stories which I probably need to hear more of because I need to assimilate some of those things and I don't know those examples, I don't have those examples in my own life to follow, I don't have anything like I can follow.

To support Miranda's move to locate Tony in her family's respectful tradition and Tony's implicit plea for examples to "follow", I asked Tony if he wanted to follow Miranda's father's example. He replied, "Oh, absolutely that would be great". To help Tony imagine himself into Miranda's parents' example I enquired about the start of his engagement with Miranda's family of origin's ways of being.

Jim        Miranda's family is quite different to yours in that she actually grew up with those kinds of ideas. So did you have a sense of that when you met Miranda?

I had in mind a dialogical understanding that if Tony had been attracted to these respectful practices then this indicated something about those practices and what Tony accorded value to.

Tony        Yeah, absolutely... I was so taken by the mother's wisdom and by the father's sense of fun and by both their deep love and compassion for people ...and Miranda's got the wisdom of her mum and she's got the love and the wisdom of her dad ... And, you know, Miranda's an amazing person and she really, really interacted well with people and I fell in love with her obviously but I mean, it was what I saw in her family that really blew me out of my tree. I mean, I wanted to marry into that.

Although Tony's enthusiastic response amplified his appreciation for Miranda and her family and his desire to be part of a tradition of "deep love and compassion for people", the power of his childhood memories again drew him to provide more accounts of his suffering.

In the light of Miranda's observations of how Tony's experiences of the violence he suffered as a child could take over their conversations and conversations between Tony and their children, I invited Tony to join me in evaluating the effect of talking about these events, in order that he might be better positioned to decide whether it would be helpful to deconstruct them in this moment:

Jim            I suppose I'm wondering too about the time that's spent on - no matter how accurate that is - on the unjust, disrespectful ways that your family treat you, whether at this stage that has a negative effect.

Tony            Definitely.

In asking Tony about the effects of his family of origin's disrespectful practices "at this stage" I wanted to separate from the idea that the correct approach for all situations was not to attend to Tony's experiences of being subjected to violence. However, at the last moment I cast this enquiry according to the familiar binary of negative and positive effects. In this instance I invited Tony to consider whether his conversation was producing a negative effect. I would have preferred to have asked about how we might together decide whether to have this conversation at this point, and how we might evaluate the extent to which this conversation was addressing their hopes for this meeting. In this way I might have left room for the possibility that it was both helpful to have these stories witnessed *and* to prevent them from intruding into family life.

### *Amplifying histories of "fun, love, respect and joy"*

Tony went on to speak for over seven minutes about his heart-felt appreciation for Miranda and her family of origin. He described meeting Miranda as "a miracle" that had occurred when he had "almost given up on getting married". He spoke of

his admiration for the way Miranda's father brought his community together despite growing up in a family where alcohol was abused. Tony connected his father-in-law's stand against alcoholism with his own stand: Tony had grown up with a father who abused alcohol and Tony had fought alcoholism by attending Alcoholics Anonymous. Tony reaffirmed that his attendance at AA had helped him to empathise with their children so that he supported them attending the Women's Refuge course. Tony traced the history of Miranda's exceptional family back to Miranda's mother's father who had broken with some problematic "traditions and beliefs" despite great danger to himself and his family.

The weaving of these family histories located Tony in a strong tradition of standing for love, wisdom and compassion and gave him membership of an extended family that provided inspiring examples, which he connected with his own achievements. This performance of a preferred history strengthened Tony's identity as an honourable and compassionate man of principle in a long line of honourable and principled parents. This extended account chronicled numerous previously neglected events of Tony's life, which contradicted the identity and memories produced by the abuse Tony had suffered.

I then positioned Miranda as a witness to Tony's performance of their preferred family identity by asking her about her experience of Tony's account of her family history. Tony reaffirmed their desire to "be a family of fun and love and respect and joy" and Miranda spoke of "enjoying one another and being with one another".

With the prospect of Tony and Miranda watching this conversation on video in mind I voiced some of the effects our conversation had had on me and might have on my family, so that Miranda and Tony could witness their influence in my life. By performing this witnessing and a “taking-it-back” (White, 1997a, p. 132) practice of my own I hoped to widen the audience to their migration of identity from a problematic family to a family with a long and honourable history of influence in the face of problems. I also intended this “taking-it-back practice” as a documentation of their influence on a counsellor whom they had consulted and an alternative to their previous experience of counselling as an adversarial process in which they were invited to face the truth of their failure to address what they had called Tony’s problem.

Jim            I really appreciate you talking about that [the way you and your father spoke together], Miranda...the imagining of that and bringing [it] to life ... And straight away I think, next time something happens with my daughter I’ll try and remember that.

I extended my account to include a brief summary of their new history. My intention was that this brief statement might serve to document and amplify this conversation in ways that others might bear witness to and authenticate. In referring to the process of chronicling their story I positioned Tony and Miranda to notice and record events that fitted with an history of what they accorded value. In positioning Miranda and Tony in this way I hoped to replicate something of Kamsler’s (1990) approach with women clients who experienced sexual assault in childhood. Kamsler (1990) sought to position her clients “to go beyond the oppression of the dominant, pathologising stories they have about themselves” as an effect of being recruited into the abuser’s self-serving accounts of their actions and motives “so that they may begin to have access to new, empowering stories about their own resourcefulness and survival” (p. 10):

Jim I was imagining two meetings ago, about whether there were any other fathers who had children at the Women's Refuge course who would have supported their children going there? There's another story, which is the story of the two of you rescuing your family life from this shadow of this abusive way of being and the remarkable things that go in to that, you know? I can imagine... your sons telling their children, "Your grandfather [Tony], although he was brought up that way he moved away from it". And it's like you were saying that Miranda's grandfather moved away from it, he moved away from it and he was the kind of man who had the honesty, like you've been talking about, to face what it was that was happening. He and your grandmother searched for help.

I emphasized imagination, in order to encourage Tony and Miranda to develop the "sense of self" and "inner life" that White (2004b, p. 71) found contradicted the effects of abuse and connected people to their preferred identities. I referred to "honesty" as that was a value that Tony had identified as valuable at the beginning of our co-research. I again positioned myself as occupying a privileged position in witnessing their performance of this alternative story:

Jim Those are very significant things to story and (pause) they give me goose bumps just thinking about it because if you're in that story, if you're located in that story when the going gets tough, then that's likely to have a very different outcome. ... That's an extraordinary thing. It reminds me what a privilege it is to be engaged in this kind of work that the two of you are [doing].

Having invited Miranda and Tony to imagine future generations appreciating a tradition that went back several generations, I invited Tony to complete this narrative of past and future by offering a commentary on the present - his and his father's place in this inter-generational work. Tony dramatically and

imaginatively distanced himself from the abusive traditions carried on by his father by saying that he felt he was a “universe” of change away from the “planet” his father was on.

### *Researching and Documenting an alternative family history*

At the video review meeting that followed this conversation, and prior to watching the video, Tony had taken up the position I had offered him as a performer and chronicler of the family’s respectful and nurturing traditions. He was enthusiastic about rewriting their history and “chronicling” events that had occurred since our last meeting that fitted with their preferred and alternative history and “family story”. In this story Tony re-membered Miranda’s mother and the way that she had included him in this honourable story:

Tony        When Miranda’s mother came over [to New Zealand], we sat down around the table and she told us the whole story and then brought me into that story and said “You also have left your family” [as Miranda and her grandfather had done] – because I’d moved from Hawkes’ Bay up to Auckland – “You’ve left your family, left your environment, made it on your own, got out there and done things” and so she built that story and then brought me into it as well and saying “You’ve carried on the tradition of the families”. That was really rewarding.

Positioned as a researcher and a performer of these family traditions Tony brought to life these accounts by imagining and voicing Miranda’s mother’s appreciation of his part in these developments. In the time between our meetings Tony had enthusiastically taken up the narrative project I had introduced in our previous meeting of weaving past and future developments in order to reclaim preferred family stories.

Tony        It's actually really interesting: the linking of a vision with the history of a family. It's sort of like linking of the future vision with a history actually makes the vision more real because it shows a lineage from where you've been to where you're going.

In anticipation of watching the video excerpt of them describing some of these family traditions Tony went on to elaborate on this vision, of "carrying on a tradition" that Miranda's father started and how he was feeling "quite connected with the family, quite connected with her ancestors and history". Tony remembered himself as a person who was "being associated with values ...love and kindness and strong commitment and wisdom and people who are visionaries who make a difference, [and who are] family".

And in between our meetings these connections with their preferred family history had also sustained Miranda:

Miranda    I think of my ancestors, obviously parents and grandparents, [who] had a vision and a dream for their kids to have a better life and I know that [it] comes down to that it's driven me, I won't be the generation that takes it all back again [to what it was, alcoholism and violence]... This week I felt a lot better remembering that.

This animated conversation occurred in anticipation of us watching the video excerpt from the previous session. After we watched the video replay, Tony and Miranda talked enthusiastically for another 15 minutes about what they had witnessed. Tony and Miranda had taken up *my strategies*, as they called them, of counselling and co-research to the extent that at this point I could step back and allow them to practice these strategies in the ways they might do at home.

Tony was “really interested to see” how Miranda and I had brought his focus back to the positive “different pathway” when he had begun to speak of his traumatic childhood.

Tony        It feels to me like a major turning point, it feels like we’ve gone from focusing on historical negatives into historical positives; and in the process we’re rediscovering our vision and a more positive outlook towards the future.

Positioned to anticipate seeing themselves on video and to co-research, chronicle, imagine and perform their preferred family life, Miranda noticed that she was nodding a lot when watching the video.

Miranda    ‘Cause when you mentioned that my children will be telling the story, they’ll be telling their grandchildren, you know? [I imagined our children telling their children about] The grandfather [Tony] who came from an alcoholic household, who was able to [change that]. So there are a lot of positives, and just looking at that, it gives us the hope.

I thickened this weaving of past and future by asking Tony what he thought of the idea that I had raised and that Miranda had taken up, that Brendan and Gregory might in the future be talking about Tony in the same way that Miranda had spoken about her father. Tony replied that he “would dearly love that to be the sort of thing to come out of Gregory and Brendan’s mouth”.

The video replay reminded Miranda “we actually do have a good foundation and as a family ... we actually have a solid foundation which we actually just need to hold on to”. Miranda and Tony built on this foundation by chronicling recent developments. Miranda reported that “this week we’ve been able to talk a lot about the family without the bad feeling”. Tony noticed a time he got over his

feelings about his family of origin and he did not take them out on his own family, when “that’s usually been something that’s taken months, literally six to eight months to get over”.

One consequence of their migration to these new identities was that they looked at those family members who acted out disrespectful practices in a different light.

Miranda and Tony did not want these family members to accompany them on this migration without reviewing the contribution they might make. In the same way that persons can be re-membered to the club of one’s life, persons can have their memberships to one’s life downgraded or revoked. White (1997a) used this approach when he assisted a client to “downgrade” the “membership” of her father in her life so that “his voice on matters of her identity would cease to have a hearing” (p. 49). An effect of Miranda and Tony stepping into their preferred individual and family identity was that they noted that some of the family members to whom they had extended hospitality had not reciprocated and had even done harm to Tony and Miranda’s preferred ways of being. When I invited Miranda and Tony to review the place of some of these family members in their lives, they resolved not to allow any disrespectful practices or disrespectful voices to have a place in their family. While, out of respect for all of the parties’ privacy, I have not included those accounts, which identify particular family members, this separation from relationships and practices that might support disrespect was an important step in Tony and Miranda and their children sustaining and supporting reciprocal relationships of care with others in their community.

## Summary

In this, and the previous chapter I have shown how interweaving narrative practices of co-research with video review supported Miranda and Tony to safely work together to address justice in relation to what Miranda and Tony called “Tony’s anger management problem”. These deconstructive and narrative processes helped us to defer our judgments, to better avoid unsafe polarising binary positioning, to widen our understanding of and influence over the problem, and to recruit supportive and influential audiences. In this deconstructive dialogical co-research, the problem was hospitably addressed in the terms that Miranda and Tony offered and connected to wider discursive practices and experiences of patriarchy, violence and abuse.

In this chapter I built on the previous two chapters in order employ a whānau development approach to narrative co-research, which employed narrative practices, such as re-membering conversations and definitional ceremonies, alongside relevant literature and research. I argue that this dialogical focus using video has the potential to increase the safety and effectiveness of counselling with couples where emotional violence is a problem. I drew on the lessons learned from my work with Dave and Lolita, and Hinemoa and Wiremu in order to weave a safety net, which included multiple strands, multiple voices, and multiple perspectives. The strands of this safety net included employing video to re-position and recruit Tony and Miranda as appreciative co-researchers, both in the moment, and of their videoed performances, of how they and their children might work together to make their family life more what they hoped for; safe, loving and fun. These practices of co-research promoted a multi-vocal co-production of safety and fairness in which Tony recognised Miranda’s wisdom and courage and

took up these practices of co-research to reposition and work with his children and Miranda to make their family a safe and fair place, one in which: Miranda spoke out against “bending over backwards” to prevent or accommodate Tony’s angry outbursts; Brendan proposed that there was “no excuse for meanness”; and Gregory and Tony were positioned as “voice[s] of reason” in each other’s lives. Together they worked to read the “signs” when problematic practices were intruding into their family life and together they supported alternative practices. I argue that the deconstruction of some practices of care for the self (Foucault, 1987) and my putting “one’s own good advice” and “conscience” under erasure (Derrida, 1976, p. 60), to indicate that one’s advice, while taken as belonging to one’s self is always discursively produced, helped produce this “multivocality” and a form of “decolonised reflexivity” (Martinez, 1996, p. 89). Martinez argued that a “decolonised reflexivity requires risky border crossings of cultural, ideological and subjective positions” (1996, p. 89). In this work I facilitated a collaborative deconstruction of family members’ positions and stories, including Miranda’s and Tony accounts of what they imagined their children might say, and we introduced the voices of Miranda’s African family, and of my supervisors, to enhance practices of collaborative care for the self and care for the other. The voices brought forward, including Tony’s, when he voiced his experience of childhood violence, were subject to deconstruction in order that the parties might decide how much weight to give them at any time in order to address their hopes and values.

In this project I employed video to: document these and other developments, including the effect of these developments on me; to position Tony and Miranda as an appreciative audience to their preferred developments and identities, and to

recruit a supportive audience in the form of my supervisors. I used an effect of video recording, that Miranda and Tony imagined seeing themselves on video, and I amplified (see Colorado et al., 1998) this effect by inviting them to imagine an audience and community who would support non-violent practices, including my supervisors and those who might read this research, in order to extend these practices of reflexion and co-research into Miranda and Tony's everyday lives. In order to strengthen these safe practices, I used re-membering conversations with video to support these preferred developments and identities so that Tony and his family reclaimed understandings of themselves as continuing a long tradition of resisting violence and of safe care and closeness.

In my findings thus far I have demonstrated some of the difficulties that arose when I took the position of concluding what the taken-for-granted discursive practices were, and what the correct understanding or just alternative story should be for the couples, without adequately deconstructing my own position. In the next chapter I provide an account of how my attempts to do justice for Lolita and Dave in relation to matrimonial property influenced me to develop and adopt the deconstructive analysis I have outlined so far.

## **Chapter 12. Co-research with video in order to address fair sharing of property and income.**

“Deconstruction, while seeming not to ‘address’ the problem of justice, has done nothing but address it”. (Derrida, 1992, p. 10)

“Deconstruction is justice”. (Derrida, 1992, p. 15)

In this chapter I show how an understanding of the ethics of co-research and of a Derridean (1992) understanding of deconstruction as justice might be employed with dialogical understandings in order to address how Dave and Lolita might share their relationship property and individual finances. In this chapter I focus on both how Lolita and Dave shared their conversation and how they shared their income and property.

Although this chapter is the last of my findings chapters, and the counselling and research it depicts occurred just over a third of the way through my data generation, in many ways it represents what was, for me, the beginning of a development of what Derrida (1997) referred to as a “deeply deconstructive frame of mind” (p. 74). This deconstructive frame of mind shaped my practice for most of my work with my participants and it has informed my analyses of all of that work, and my discussion in the following chapter.

One of the reasons Epston (1999) developed his practice of “co-research” (p. 139) was that the knowledge available to him had proved ineffective in enhancing his understanding or alleviating the suffering of the children he was working with. Dave and Lolita’s conversations about sharing their income and property provided a similar experience for me. It was when I found I could not think of what a fair solution might look like for Lolita and Dave, that I began to recognise that I had

been largely employing co-research as a means to help my clients to discover something along the lines of what I considered just. When it became obvious to me that I did not know enough about their destination to guide them using “disguised instruction” (Bird, 2004, p. 353) I felt compelled to more fully adopt the ethic of research which requires a researcher to avoid constructing their research so that it produces the kinds of results that prove the researcher’s point (Anderson, 2004). In this instance, I began my own research by looking further into what the law had to say about couples’ property and income sharing. This research, which may in part have been shaped by some hope that I might still find out what Lolita and Dave should do, led me to re-read Derrida’s (1992) writing on the “force of law” (p. 3) and to deconstruction as a practice to “address’ the problem of justice” (p. 10).

In this chapter, I show how deconstructive enquiries might address justice using two general strategies of deconstruction (Derrida, 1992): the interrogation of legal texts that examine the history and effects of property and income sharing arrangements, and the reading, both in the moment and from different times (some years later) and places in the wider experimental apparatus, of the texts of conversations with Lolita and Dave, including the “traces” (Derrida, 1976, p. 65) of alternative readings.

I argue that the ongoing processes of deconstructive enquiry, alongside video review, better positioned Lolita, Dave and me to address justice in relation to how they shared their property and finances. In making this argument, I am thinking of Derrida’s (1992) suggestion that:

a deconstructive interrogation that starts...by destabilizing, complicating, or bringing out the paradoxes of values like those of the proper and of

property in all their registers, of the subject, and so of the responsible subject, of the subject of law (droit) and the subject of morality, of the juridical or moral person, of intentionality, etc., and of all that follows from these, such a deconstructive line of questioning is through and through a problematization of law and justice. (p. 8)

Such a deconstructive enquiry repositions me to defer my judgements and to displace the kinds of “oppositional logic” (p. 8) which might have seen me attempt to determine who might rightly occupy the dominant place in the binary of right and wrong. From this position, justice for Lolita and Dave is not dependent on me producing a narrative that simplifies their complex situation to the extent that my bifurcation questions will produce a clear and correct answer. Rather the ongoing processes of deconstructive enquiry positions us to collaborate in order to review and reassess what is fair from multiple perspectives.

### **Justice and multivocality**

By our fifth counselling session, Dave and Lolita had been reporting that they were treating each other with more respect. They reported that they were less likely to “label” each other and they had spoken of a tenderness and spaciousness in their conversation. Lolita felt her “inner world actually had a place” in our conversations and that she was “given more space to talk”. Both Dave and Lolita felt that they had regained a “quality of conversation” that they had not experienced since the beginning of their relationship.

Despite these dialogical developments, Lolita voiced a concern that Dave often withdrew from collaboration around their finances:

Lolita I’ll raise the issue and raise the concern, this concern it’s having for me [and] you’ll often put me off. [You will] either tell me to wait

for a response [from you] or (pause) [on one occasion] you just didn't answer me at all and I said, "Are you not going to answer me on that one?" and you were like, "Yeah, that's right [I'm not going to answer you]".

Lolita went on to give examples of times Dave had withdrawn from collaborating with her and how the "repetitiveness" of Dave's pulling back from their relationship in this way "damages something for [her] in the relationship". Lolita called upon our experience of using White's "appreciation of difference" exercise (1986a, p. 11) in order to point out that Dave's withdrawal from collaboration and the terms he used to describe her, "righteous ...loud, opinionated" and "judgmental" were disrespectful and unfair and that his actions prevented a fair resolution of her concerns.

While I had supported Lolita to work through the first two steps of White's (1986a) appreciation of difference exercise – naming the problem and how it affected her - crucially, I omitted the third step in White's (1986a) exercise, which would have entailed asking Lolita about her specific "hopes for change and how [she] would like these hopes to be acted on" (p. 12). White (1986a), proposed that the expression of these hopes often moves a couple into the more collaborative territory of their shared goals and away from the familiar negative and painfully reactive territory of the problem.

At the time, my understanding of White's (1986a) exercise cast it a process whereby the members of a couple reproduced or *recollected* their positions in order that they might appreciate each other's views. This cast to my enquiries often invited familiar polarising discursive practices in which person's positions

were stabilised, simplified and reproduced according to what they considered to be persuasive and defensible:

Jim So what's your recollection...?

Dave ... I suppose that...yeah, how do I start? In the sense that Lolita has sometimes interest in diagnosing situations.

In the absence of an orientation towards how they might both act in order to fairly work out their finances, Dave appeared to take up a familiar position which involved defending himself from what he read as an attack on him. This position included Dave deciding that not talking about the matters that Lolita wanted to address was the best way to care for their time together:

Dave I didn't want to discuss it on the night because I thought it was the first night away of three nights away and it's likely to cause some friction and we've both had a couple of wines, I felt tired and by that stage felt irritable so I didn't feel like discussing it because I thought it didn't need to escalate any further than that.

Dave provided very few openings for me or Lolita to interrupt and to deconstruct his position. Dave then restated his justification for withdrawing from the conversation on the grounds that Lolita's enquiry was designed to demonstrate how he was not measuring up:

Dave What I hear is not a genuine inquiry into what's going on but I hear that what I've just done somehow does not measure up with how you would see it or how you would have done it. So therefore I go, "Na!".

An effect of this reproduction and re-collection of familiar discursive practices was that Dave tightened his justification for withdrawing from conversations with Lolita on the basis that he was performing a practice of care for himself and her.

Through this interpretive lens he read Lolita's position as an attempt to control him, while she saw his withdrawal as an attempt to control her:

Dave You seem to think you have the right to know everything about... what's going on for me... aren't I allowed just be inside me and see what's happening for me. It's ... because you're not in control are you?

Lolita Yes for me it's definitely a power and control thing, definitely. I know because I feel so disempowered in my position.

At the time I was tempted to take a position for justice that inadvertently reproduced some of these hierarchical practices of care for the self. I found myself assessing the merit of Lolita and Dave's arguments and coming to my own conclusions about these. I assumed that because I could see no evidence that Lolita was diagnosing Dave, then Dave's justification for withdrawing from their conversation must be invalid. This position incorrectly presupposed that I had in fact heard the first and last word of this dialogue. Furthermore, I thought that Dave putting himself in the position of deciding what Lolita's motives were, and making the unilateral decision to reduce the "friction" for both of them by ending their conversation, in truth constituted patriarchal and controlling actions. I thought that Dave's claim to financial privacy also stopped collaboration to resolve Lolita's concerns and had the effect of silencing Lolita and leaving her in the dark and vulnerable concerning their finances. I thought that Lolita did have a right to know what Dave's financial position was because without knowing this she could not know if their arrangement was fair.

However, I did not take up this position of attempting to show Dave that he was wrong, for two reasons; firstly, as I did not know what would be fair for them I felt I could not take a position of certainty on that matter, and secondly, because

such a hierarchical practice of care had already proved problematic for Dave and Lolita when Lolita attempted to prove that Dave was aggressive. At the time I was beginning to form the argument that taking positions based on conclusions reached prior to deconstructive co-research tended to tighten the complex network of presumptions that restrict change (see Bateson, 1980). Also, it seemed to me that when the parties to such conversations were positioned as adversaries then the “contradictions” (Bateson, 1980, pp. 158–159) that Bateson suggested contributed to changes in these networks, were often read more as indications to tighten any loopholes in one’s argument and less as reasons to loosen or relax the network of presuppositions of which they are a part.

As I knew that we could review this conversation on video I tried to restart this conversation by beginning a more deconstructive enquiry focussed on their hopes for how they might address the financial concern that Lolita had raised. In doing so I hoped Dave and I in particular, might be better positioned to defer our conclusions and familiar patriarchal practices of care which at times invited us to inhospitably bind ourselves to our own conclusions about the truth of the matter at the expense of respectful collaborative enquiry. Looking back, I might say that I was trying to place under erasure my understandings of feminist texts that addressed patriarchy, and to draw on them. As Derrida (1997) suggested when speaking of deconstructing natural science, a deconstructive approach maintains:

The sneaking suspicions that something may be wrong with what we currently believe, while keeping a watchful eye that current paradigms not be taken dogmatically, that something else, something other, still to come, is being missed. (p. 73)

An effect of me wrestling with concepts of fairness in the moment, was that I asked about Dave and Lolita's concepts of fairness in relation to their financial matters. However, like me, without sufficient "scaffolding" (White, 2007, p. 289), they did not know what fairness might look like at this level of abstraction:

Jim I suppose it goes back to that conversation we had at the start when you were talking about finances and getting married ...do you have any ideas about what would be [a fair and...]?

Dave No, I don't, I don't Jim but...

My subsequent reading of Dickerson's (2013) analysis of patriarchy in couple counselling suggests a reading of Dave's response as an example of "the centred position of privilege that men inhabit, so that women's experience is not heard and unattended to" (p. 111). With the benefit of this reading I might have asked Dave why he had answered my question by elaborating on what he did not know before Lolita and taken time to speak, when this time might have been made available to see what she knew, and for the work of discovering what we might know together. In posing this question it would be important to not only defer conclusions about Dave's motivations, (which could be, for example, a move like Hinemoa's "getting the ball rolling"), but also to maintain a dialogical view of Lolita and Dave's conversation as potentially shaped by patriarchal discursive practices and by material-discursive emotional flooding.

In the moment, while Lolita was also not well positioned to offer principles of fairness at this level of abstraction, she did offer a trace of where our enquiries might begin.

Jim So what are your ideas about what it [your financial arrangements] would look like if it was, you know, if you had some principles or ground rules to stick to? What do you think would be fair?

Lolita It's hard to come up with that on the spot.

A deconstructive inquiry suggests that in indicating her difficulty “on the spot” Lolita is also indicating the possibility that there are other *spots* where it may not be so hard for her. Two spots that the usual styles of deconstructive enquiry suggest relate to Lolita's experience of fairness/unfairness and what more historical texts might offer concerning fairness with regard to financial matters. The first style of deconstruction might begin with the times and places that Lolita experienced a sense that things may not be fair in relation to their financial matters. The second might begin with an interrogation of the texts that lay out the legal principles in play and which describe some of the issues at stake.

In what follows I present some legal perspectives relevant to Dave and Lolita's project to produce a fair financial arrangement.

### **A legal perspective to fairness in couples' relationships: knowledge and voluntariness**

Since 2001 New Zealand law has treated unmarried partners, including same sex couples, much the same as married couples once they have lived together for three years (Atkin, 2008, p. 794). “In New Zealand ‘relationship property’ is divided, usually on the parties' separation, according to a prima facie rule of equal sharing” (Atkin, 2008, p. 795), unless such a division would be “repugnant to justice” because of “extraordinary circumstances” (*Property (Relationships) Act 1976*, 2001 s.13). The 2001 amendment to the Act empowered the court to grant “compensation for economic disparity” (*Property (Relationships) Act 1976*, 2001

s.15 & s.15a) and “in effect to award unequal division, most likely in favour of the party with the least property” (Atkin, 2008, p. 796).

In determining a fair settlement the court retained the power to set aside an agreement made by the parties on the grounds of “serious injustice” (*Property (Relationships) Act 1976*, 2001 s.21J). This provision enabled the court to “query the fairness of an agreement in terms of *both* [italics added] the way in which it was obtained and its provisions” (Atkin, 2008, p. 810). In such legal tests of procedural and substantive fairness, procedural fairness includes both “voluntariness” and “knowledge” (Brod, 1994, p. 255), “the highest good faith and fair dealing” without “duress and undue influence”, and the “full disclosure of all material facts bearing on the agreement (particularly each party’s financial resources)” (Brod, 1994, pp. 256–257).

Dave and Lolita were trying to arrive at a just sharing of their incomes through an unequal division of their separate and disparate incomes while at the same time trying to allow for the kinds of factors that a Court might take into account in order to determine a fair settlement if they had separated. In what follows I analyse Dave and Lolita’s transcript according to these legal tests for procedural and substantive fairness.

Lolita had indicated she did not have sufficient knowledge of the criteria for making fair financial arrangements, and that she could not voluntarily remedy this situation:

Lolita What’s fair, what’s fair and equitable in a financial arrangement... that’s the part of things I’m not so good with and ... I’ve said “Should we go to a financial advisor and have a look at where

we're going financially?" and ... your response always has been, "No. No, no, we don't need to speak to anybody".

Lolita's account of Dave's response indicated that he was making a unilateral decision that *they* did not need to speak to anyone else – a concerning utterance in that, if accurate, overrode Lolita's wishes and was indicative of controlling actions aimed at avoiding independent accountability.

In addition, an effect of their current financial circumstances, which included Lolita earning significantly less than Dave and their proportional income sharing arrangements, was that Lolita was largely dependent on Dave to fund independent financial advice. That many women share Lolita's predicament (Brod, 1994; Graycar & Morgan, 2005; Marcus, 1987) signals that this territory should be a focus of deconstructive enquiry in order that Lolita and Dave might have the opportunity to avoid some known obstacles to justice which might otherwise operate unaddressed. The cost of expert financial and legal advice is a significant barrier to parties obtaining the legal advice that might give them the knowledge necessary to come to fair financial arrangements. And it is those (usually men), who wish to protect their greater share of wealth and earnings from being distributed to their economically weaker spouse (usually a woman), who most often initiate pre-nuptial arrangements (Brod, 1994; Graycar & Morgan, 2005; Marcus, 1987).

One of the major factors inhibiting pre-nuptial agreements was that such negotiations increased relationship tension, sometimes to the extent that the agreement or the relationship was abandoned (Fehlberg & Smyth, 2002). Lolita's account of Dave's negative response and of him withdrawing from such

conversations indicated to her that pursuing this matter might threaten the viability of their relationship. And for Lolita, as for many women, she would likely be worse off financially after separation. Because in such conversations they were not equally vulnerable to the effects of disengagement, the voluntariness of Lolita's position was compromised.

Dave's solution to Lolita's precarious financial situation was that Lolita earn more: "You just need to earn more money, simple. That's it. You just earn more money, Lolita". While earning more money would certainly change Lolita's financial position, some of the relevant legal literature suggests that taking such a position might be unjustly unrealistic and not likely to be a simple matter. Firstly, women are less likely to be paid as well as men (Graycar & Morgan, 2005, p. 404), particularly where such work reflects the devaluing of caring occupations compared to business skills (Charlesworth, 1989; Graycar, 1995). Lolita was in a caring profession and it was unlikely that she could easily obtain work that was better paid. Secondly, Dave's advice did not take account of how Lolita's care of him and of their extended family had disadvantaged her and advantaged him. In this respect Dave's position reflected some of the common themes in the prenuptial agreements that were disputed in the courts.

The widespread undervaluation of women's work as homemakers and carers; the failure to recognise how women's non-financial contributions assist in the acquisition of financial assets and enhance their husbands' earning potential, at the same time as they diminish the woman's own earning capacity; the failure to recognise the unpaid work that many women do in their husbands' businesses and on farms; the fact that women are overwhelmingly responsible for the care of children after divorce ...the failure to see women who work outside and inside the home as carrying a double burden or as working a double shift; and the failure to include in the pool of property to be divided all the assets. (Graycar, 1995, p. 12)

And finally, Dave's advice for Lolita to become more financially independent might be seen as a product of the prevalence of the practice of prioritizing the economic goal of making women self-reliant above recognizing and facilitating family care (Laufer-Ukeles, 2008, p. 61).

There is ample evidence that women as well as men, tend to undervalue non-financial contributions (Graycar, 1995, p. 19). Despite people's best intentions, none of us lives in a "gender neutral" and "gender free" society (Marcus, 1987, p. 55).

Even if premarital agreements are drawn by prospective spouses and enforced by lawmakers without an intent to discriminate against women, and even if the terms of enforceable premarital agreements are gender-neutral and are applied equally to men and women, the overall enforcement of these agreements inevitably disadvantages women as a socioeconomic group. It is this disadvantageous, disproportionate impact on women (as compared to the impact on men) that is the disparate impact that constitutes the sex discrimination inherent in almost all premarital agreements. (Brod, 1994, p. 280)

A deconstructive approach informed by these research findings might have explored the higher paid jobs that were available to Lolita and how much they paid, the importance Dave and Lolita gave to enjoyment of their jobs, and what effects Lolita taking a higher paid job might have on their life style.

Another effect of Dave's suggestion was that it indicated that further negotiations were unnecessary as the only and simple solution was that Lolita earns more money. In response to this closing down of space and individualising of the problem, I made space for Lolita to continue this conversation by inviting Dave and Lolita to apply their experience of appreciating respectful ways of speaking to this situation:

Jim I suppose what I'm wondering is, you were talking last time about the kind of process, you know, that there'd been a more respectful process in talking about issues, less defended and less critical.

And I moved to support an externalisation of the problem as the absence of guiding principles which might support them to voice their experiences in order to produce a fair multi-vocal process and a fair voluntary outcome:

Jim So I suppose that's why I wonder if it brings us back to, if you don't have a clear idea about what the principles are [that you negotiate according to] then you're left with – no matter how good your communication skills are – you're left with this problem all the time, having to renegotiate it and for either of you being offended by the fact that it's even being raised because there isn't something that you can say authoritatively "We agreed on this and that's your problem and you fix it".

In response to my attempt to re-establish our externalising co-research, Lolita continued with her account of what she was up against in negotiating a fair arrangement. Significantly, Lolita began with an account of a particular time and place when she felt financially disadvantaged. This continued our move away from discussing why they hadn't collaborated in order to reach a settlement shift and towards collaborating in order to test their positions against some material facts.

### ***Pressure to share property equally***

Lolita described how she had come to share her investment in what was then her house early in their relationship and before any legal requirement to do so:

Lolita What happened for me back at the beginning of the relationship, coming together and forming a unit, was that I brought to the party everything that I had. So, like, that was my capital investment there, it was like whatever I had in the home that I owned I then

brought that to the relationship. So my earning and my financial viability in that relationship has been problematic since that time and for me what happens from where I stand is you [Dave] still have the luxury of making autonomous decisions like that, that involve reasonable sums of money and you can make that stand of “This is the decision I’m making, I can afford to make it, I’m making it, end of subject”.

Perhaps Lolita’s naming of the some of the particularities of her experience and my call to them to both to reposition themselves and each other more hospitably invited Dave to adopt a more enquiring position:

Dave So what’s the problem, the fact you don’t have that autonomy to make those [decisions] for yourself?

Although Dave’s tone suggested that he might have been employing a different tactic to counter Lolita’s position rather than making the kind of “genuine enquiry” he asked Lolita to make, as part of a deconstructive approach I chose to defer taking up the position of instating the oppositional binary of genuine not genuine. When I had taken this position with Tony managing his anger/not managing his anger this had positioned him and Miranda as adversaries. This positioning had also cast Tony’s actions as uncomplicated and obscured the possibility that he was both managing his anger and not managing his anger. When I applied this deconstructive analysis to Dave’s utterance I was better positioned to read his actions as both inviting Lolita to put forward her position in order that he might counter it and as destabilising the usual positioning around who was acting unfairly sufficiently for us to continue our co-research. At the same time, I was aware that such oppositional positioning had, as I described in chapter 8, undermined the steps Dave had taken in considering that his actions might be controlling and authoritative.

I also draw support for taking this position of deferring my judgment of Dave's position from Dickerson's (2013) poststructuralist approach to working with couples:

Because we acknowledge that we live in a patriarchal culture, we are aware that issues of power and privilege are the effects of patriarchy (see also Taylor & Vintges, 2004). Recognizing the problem this way rather than blaming *him*, *her*, or *them*, the narrative therapist is less apt to judge and more attuned to listen for other aspects of the relationship that are preferred, that perhaps lie alongside patriarchal influences. (p. 103)

Bearing Dickerson's (2013) analysis in mind I might be better positioned to resist taking up a familiar patriarchal practice and positioning myself to underline Lolita's position and by doing so to risk reproducing the defensiveness that often accompanies restating a binary position, and which often positions a counsellor as on one person's side against the other.

Furthermore, as Dickerson (2013) goes on to say:

We each hold multiple intentions. Some are fore-grounded (e.g., male privilege) and take on immediacy within a specific cultural context. They are punctuated by patriarchal discourse. However, one is never single minded. Poststructuralism offers a view of self as multi-storied. (p. 112)

This position made it easier for me to resist reading what I saw as what Dave was really intending and to defer my judgement, reassured by the knowledge that our deconstructive enquiries were likely to better address justice and promote hospitable collaboration, than some of the decisions I might make in familiar binary terms. This approach included putting "under erasure" (Derrida, 1976, p. 60) Dickerson's (2013) suggestion that "one is *never* [emphasis added] single minded" (p. 112).

At the time, I was also reassured by the knowledge that if Dave's position and my response to it proved problematic, we may be in a better position to address this when we re-viewed the diffractions of this conversation from different times and places in the wider experimental apparatus when we co-researched the video record.

In the space provided by this relaxation of some of the usual practices of oppositional logic, Lolita responded by tentatively outlining her understanding of how she might have disadvantaged herself financially in giving herself and her property to Dave in an expression of what seemed to her to be the appropriate emotional commitment:

Lolita That somehow I brought whatever I had to bring to the relationship ...really early on and since that time we've lived separately, I guess, in a financial way, a business way, that kind of way. That we've carried on cohabitating alongside each other, raising our children which we kind of said we would do but perhaps I disadvantaged myself by bringing everything I had into the collaborative pot right back then, rather than holding that while I walked alongside you. I don't know. But it's a hard one.

Lolita was indicating that early on in their relationship she had adopted the approach of sharing equally with Dave. Dave was in a poor financial position at that time, and then when his financial position improved they had shifted to a proportional arrangement. Lolita suggested that an effect of this change was that Dave had gained half Lolita's property while she had not shared equally in the higher income that she helped put him in a position to earn by making her house available for Dave and his children. Also, by stressing that this was a "hard one" Lolita indicated that this was not a simple matter to decide and that she had not

reached a conclusion about it. Her position invited Dave to join her in addressing these complex matters.

When I enquired about Lolita's expectations of fairness, she identified some gendered discursive practices that had undermined the voluntariness of her decision:

Jim So did you have an expectation, Lolita, that when you put everything you had into that, that Dave would do the same?

Lolita Maybe. It may not have been conscious at the time, but maybe. I know I did feel a bit pressured when we bought the house because you [Dave] said, "The children and I are uncomfortable, it feels like it's your home and you run it and things are the way you want them to be". And at that stage I really clearly said, "Everything here belongs to all of us". I made it our matrimonial property, I said "What I have is yours, what is here is ours", right through to the investment in the property, the capital. Yeah. And that was because I did feel pressured so I was hearing what Dave was telling me so I wanted to make it a level playing field. So at that time I wasn't really thinking necessarily about separateness and I guess too I had some idea that I could live side by side with him and remain independent and look after my two children.

A dialogical deconstruction of this text might begin with the words spoken prior to the first words of the conversation offered by Lolita as contributing to her experiencing pressure: why did Dave consider it a source of discomfort that Lolita's home would feel like her home and that she would "run" the home she had provided for him and his children? A deconstructive strategy might involve exploring the presence of comfort implied in discomfort. Why was discomfort and not its trace, comfort, storied? Had Dave talked with Lolita about his appreciation of Lolita for providing this opportunity for him and his children to live together

with her children in greater comfort than might otherwise have been the case? If comfort was not adequately represented in this account, why was this? I might have employed the deconstructive strategy of reversing the binary of gender in this line of inquiry by exploring Lolita and Dave's dis/comfort with and expectation of property sharing and of authority over the household if their positions had been reversed. Would Lolita have expected Dave to share his property and authority under the same circumstances, and would Dave have experienced such a proposal as potentially disadvantageous to him and his children?

Similarly, if I had employed a deconstructive approach to "pressure" and not pressure, I might have instituted co-research into what had stopped them from working together to avoid Lolita feeling under pressure to divest herself of her property rights and authority in her home. What stopped them from collaboratively producing some household rules that everyone thought was fair? And what prompted the property sharing arrangement so soon when Lolita and Dave's property, and debts, would be equally shared by law if they made no change to their financial positions and their relationship had lasted more than three years? Did Dave consider cautioning Lolita about unnecessarily divesting herself so early in their relationship, and if not what stopped him from doing so? How did they decide that the solution to Dave's and his children's discomfort was that Lolita should comfort them? What compelled Lolita to take such a significant step so early in the relationship? How was it that Lolita and Dave came to think that Lolita giving up her entitlements was creating a level playing field? If Lolita had attended to her experience of pressure as a sign to be alert to disadvantage, what might she have done differently?

As I showed in my work with Tony and Miranda and with Hinemoa and Wiremu, a dialogical approach to justice requires that the children affected by their parents' actions have a voice or are at least considered in their parents' decision-making regarding what is fair. Dave had represented his children's discomfort. A dialogical deconstructive approach might consider Lolita's children's dis/comfort and the effects on their relationships of being on an equal footing in their own home with Dave and his children so early in their mother's relationship with Dave? If these presences and absences; comfort and discomfort, pressure and not pressure, Dave's children and not Lolita's children, and these gendered reversals in position had been storied, how might this have influenced Dave and Lolita's understandings of what was a just arrangement for everyone?

My purpose in offering these deconstructive possibilities is not a practice of care for the self and other using "disguised instruction" (Bird, 2004, p. 353) to bind Lolita and Dave and a reader to the correct understandings or solution as identified by me, but rather to illustrate a practice of justice which is both a product and a process of ongoing multi-vocal collaborative deconstruction which involves "destabilizing, complicating, or bringing out the paradoxes of values" (Derrida, 1992, p. 8).

At this time these deconstructive strategies were not as available to me. However, an effect of the space provided by our more general deconstructive approach to co-research was that Dave and Lolita stayed with this conversation and engaged in less of the more familiar positioning of argument and counterargument. Lolita went on to make links between her current position and the position of many other women.

Lolita I feel really...I feel disadvantaged in a way I've probably heard [other women] feel disadvantaged in not being the main breadwinner or not being the biggest contributor. So I have certain areas of decision-making completely removed from me.

Lolita's view is well supported by the voices of researchers of matrimonial property relations. Women who remarry or enter into de facto marriages may have to make compromises that men would not have to (Brod, 1994). Lolita had provided both a personal account of the pressure she experienced to relieve Dave and his children's discomfort by compromising her financial position and she referred to the disadvantaged position of women who are not the main breadwinners in couple relationships.

If Lolita had not made this wider connection, then the deconstructive strategy of reading the texts of relevant research might have prompted me to instigate an enquiry informed by the possibility that as a woman it was likely that Lolita's position would be compromised. If Lolita had not spoken of feeling pressured, I might have asked if she felt she had been disadvantaged by doing what she felt was the right thing or normal thing to do. Also the prevalence of this gendered positioning offers an interpretation other than and more than simply that her position was produced by individual shortcomings, such as her lack of assertiveness, or being too loving, or not earning enough. A consideration of the taken-for-granted operation of gender offers possibilities for co-research into how both Lolita and Dave might have been positioned without the opportunity to make more informed and more voluntary decisions about how they might address the problem of sharing their property and finances.

Dave responded to Lolita's contemplation of this territory by giving an account of how he had been positioned:

Dave The strange thing being, Lolita, is I appreciate ... the time that you did give to that [caring for the children], that's not unappreciated...

Dave followed up this appreciation of Lolita's past contributions with an account of how he felt disadvantaged by their current arrangement:

Dave I also feel disadvantaged being the predominant breadwinner because I feel I have to fight for any decisions I make with my discretionary income because ... that causes you grief ... [and] part of the grief ... is nothing more than ... "I haven't got a new [hat] and I want and I can't get, so you can't have it either". And I suspect that those arguments towards me ... wouldn't even get a breath of air if you were earning another \$200 a week in your hand and you didn't feel a sense of not being able to do that. The problem is not the fact I can, the problem is the fact that you can't. But that's not my responsibility. It's not. Because we've already negotiated and agreed on x amount of dollars that I contribute go to the household. You contribute a lesser figure because you earn less. We end up equivalently each week with about the same amount of discretionary income to spend on what we wish as a result of that.

The connection that Lolita made with the experiences of other women, and Dave's reference to other predominantly male breadwinners, helped me understand their responses, as Dickerson (2013) suggests, more as taking place in a context of patriarchal discursive practices and less as evidence of their blameworthy personal and gendered failings. In particular, these understandings of how men and women are positioned according to patriarchal discursive practices, allows me to place Dave's response under erasure and to address his response as if it was, to some extent, an effect of patriarchal discursive practices, in which men take up positions

in which they centre their experience and authoritatively claim to know what is right (Dickerson, 2013). In these patriarchal practices, if women are not silenced and instead name something of their experience, men may see this as an attack on their competence and authority, and defend themselves in ways that often constitute an attack on their female partners. (Dickerson, 2013).

Something of these familiar patriarchal practices may have occurred when, unlike Lolita's careful account of her own experience of the situation, in Dave's account he claimed to know the entirety of Lolita's experience and that her sense of the problem was "nothing more than" her "grief" at not having as much as Dave.

Dave's position of authority foregrounded Lolita's apparently mistaken experience of their situation without throwing light on those particularities of their financial arrangements that Lolita had wanted to know more about. Dave's account had not clarified how he had arrived at the conclusion that he ended up with that they both had "about the same amount of discretionary income".

Stepping away from this narrative of Dave and Lolita's counselling conversation for a moment, I offer an illustration of an alternative approach, which I have identified as a result of writing and rewriting this thesis. Drawing on the work of John and Julie Gottman (2011) and their colleagues and using the material feminist perspective I described in chapter 3, provides several options for how I might address Dave's responses to Lolita's responses. If I understand Dave's responses as intra-actions in the wider experimental apparatus constituted by our material-discursive positioning in the counselling room, and in their lives, I can better appreciate the options available to us. I might address the possibility that Dave's responses are a response to what he experiences as a threat. I might begin

a deconstructive enquiry by referring to our practice of using White's (1986a) appreciation of difference exercise by reaffirming that it is important to me that they both feel appreciated, understood and respected. I might name my concern that Dave might feel that something important to him is under threat, and that Lolita may be concerned that she will not be in a position to address what is important to her. Bearing in mind the Gottman's (2011) approach to what they, following their colleague Paul Ekman, called emotional "flooding" (p. 119), I might suggest that we take a break for a moment. Calling on Barad's (2007) analysis I might suggest that we take this break by moving out of our place in the counselling room in order to change our positioning in the wider experimental apparatus. Barad (2007) describes how, when tensions developed between Bohr and Heisenberg during their intense discussions regarding what came to be unknown as the uncertainty principle, Bohr went skiing in Norway in order to "collect his thoughts" (location 5822) and Heisenberg "retreated to Helgoland to escape a bout of hay fever" (location 5822). In the time apart they both found the break in their intensive discussions to be "very productive" (Barad, 2007, location 5822).

Most of my counselling, and the counselling work for this research, takes place in a lounge-like room at my workplace. From this lounge there is a long hallway which runs past a bathroom and toilet and into a kitchen. This kitchen, and the private outside courtyard it connects to, overlook a valley and both have views over rooftops and out to the sea. While not a skiing holiday, I have found that offering some hospitality to clients in Dave and Lolita's position, may provide opportunities for us to literally step away from and potentially to resist, some familiar patriarchal oppositional discursive practices associated with common

experiences of counselling, and for us to, around a kitchen table and over a cup of tea while looking out over houses to sea, to reduce stress to manageable levels that don't impede clear thinking. These physical relocations which offer hospitality also seem to sometimes help to reorient my clients and me to more hospitable deconstructive enquiries and to produce diffractions and positions that were not so available when we were located in a particular intensely focussed and often oppositional material-discursive space.

This analysis also helps me appreciate that perhaps Lolita was experienced in managing these common patriarchal interactions centred around underlining and defending and to notice that in this moment, Lolita ignored Dave's position on her experience and she sought his agreement to continue to carefully position them in an ethic of co-research in order to address *their* shared problem of fairness in their financial arrangements:

Lolita Can I ask this question, I'm asking this honestly because I don't know the answer to it, is like proportionately, like percentage-wise of our earnings, how much do we put into our relationship?

Dave What do you mean, like historically, like financially?

Lolita had begun this conversation by referring to the historical and gendered conditions that had disadvantaged her in particular and other women in general. Our deconstruction now moved to the specific text of their financial arrangements.

### ***The impossibility of fair shares without full disclosure***

In order to calculate the proportion of something in relation to the whole one must know the whole. Both Dave and Lolita were self-employed and their incomes and expenses fluctuated each month. Hence, in order to determine if they were each

paying the proportion they agreed upon they needed accurate and ongoing information about each other's monthly incomes and expenses.

Lolita What's the percentage that we - because you're talking about discretionary income which is what's left out of that, so how much proportionately percentage-wise of our income do we put into that? How much of a percentage do we...?

Dave I don't know; we did work it out at one stage. I don't know, I'd have to work it out. I don't know.

Jim So do you both put the same amount into the...?

Dave No.

Jim It's a proportional thing?

Lolita Yeah, I put less, significantly less than Dave but I don't know what percentage of my earnings that is and what percentage of his earnings because...

Dave Well, I can tell you... [gross annual incomes - omitted for privacy] So I put in a total of seventy per cent, two point six times what you put in, but I don't earn two point six times what you earn. Ok?

Dave's responses contained some logical contradictions in content and process. He had strongly stated that they made fair and proportional contributions to the household which left them with "about the same amount" of discretionary income. However, when Lolita asked about the percentages of their contributions and discretionary income he had indicated that he did not know, and he interrupted when I began to enquire about the amounts that they each contributed to the household. Dave then produced specific proportions of 70 percent and 2.6 times gross annual income when in his previous response he had said he did not know those proportions. These specific percentages also referred to the last financial year, which may not have reflected their current positions.

Dave had said that that their incomes and expenses fluctuated so that some weeks they both struggled to find the amounts they contributed to the running of the household. Without seeing weekly income and business expenses, including business expenses that might be counted as contributions to the household, for example a proportion of household expenses coded as a home office expense, Dave and Lolita could not determine what was fair. And while Dave knew all about Lolita's finances, she did not have the same level of knowledge of Dave's finances:

Lolita And I guess the other thing is like there's very little about me that Dave doesn't know. He knows about my business, where my business is at, he knows a lot about that, he knows a lot about me, so I don't feel like I've had those closed areas...what you [Dave] were saying before about "You [Lolita] think you have to know everything about me and you don't have to". I feel like you [Dave] do know everything about me. So even that feels lopsided for me. I feel I'm more dependant now than I was in the beginning.

Lolita could not know if their financial arrangements were fair.

### ***Calculating proportionality in principle***

If Lolita had full knowledge of Dave's financial position then we might have been in a position to apply Derrida's (1992) second "style" (p. 21) of deconstruction by investigating Lolita and Dave's calculations of proportionality in the light of relevant relationship property law and historical analyses of the effects of this law. For example, the evidence that women tend be harmed by premarital agreements that preclude equal income sharing because of the gender gap in earnings (Brod, 1994, p. 241) might prompt an investigation into whether Lolita had been disadvantaged by having given up an equal share in their property in return for a non-equal income sharing agreement. Some theorists argue that joint income

arrangements should take into account both taking care of children and “the spouse’s economic gains and losses (including opportunity gains and costs) that accrued during the marriage” (Brod, 1994, p. 284). In New Zealand law the children supported by the caretaking parent do not have to be children of the two parties and could be children from previous relationships (Atkin, 2008). Hence, if a New Zealand court was considering Dave and Lolita’s financial arrangement, Lolita’s care for Dave’s children as well as her own children would be a factor in determining whether she had made a “substantial contribution” in caring for his children (Atkin, 2008, p. 809).

Calculating the value of a care-taking’s parent’s contribution is a problem that has troubled many courts when determining what a higher income spouse should pay his or her former partner on separation (Laufer-Ukeles, 2008). Laufer-Ukeles was concerned that reaching such settlements calculated on these childcare arrangements and their consequences “freezes the parents’ lives at the time of divorce” (2008, p. 65), and can therefore produce a settlement that does not accurately reflect the costs to the mother or the benefits to the father of her childcare.

These common legal considerations regarding the calculation of income sharing might produce lines of enquiry such as how Dave and Lolita came to move from the more typical arrangement of equal shares, which Lolita initiated so early in their relationship, to an atypical proportional arrangement that can often disadvantage the person with the lower income. If, for example, one person had insufficient income that month would Dave and Lolita adjust their contributions for that month or would the person with the lower income that month have to do

without while their partner had discretionary spending? And how would such a situation affect their relationship in the light of their commitment to equality?

Other lines of enquiry informed by legal precedents might explore the weight Dave and Lolita might give their care for each other's children, and whether their current proportional arrangement reflected the value of this care over time, and to what extent Lolita's sharing her house with Dave and his children had effected what he might otherwise have paid in rent?

To ask such questions in a style consistent with deconstruction requires a counsellor to put under erasure and to defer and destabilise any conclusions at least until the territory has been explored from multiple perspectives. At the time I was assisted in this stance by not having a position of certainty available to me.

### **Video review: more possibilities for addressing justice**

When we reviewed the video record of the ten minutes of this counselling session up until when Dave said that if he thought Lolita's inquiry was not genuine he would say "Na!" to continuing the conversation, Dave and Lolita appreciated how collaborative they had been up to that point. They reported they were able to watch the complete excerpt uninterrupted because of a respectful "spaciousness" in their relationship, which our conversation had supported. Despite not reaching a conclusion, both Dave and Lolita reported benefits in their relationship from that counselling session, including less heat in their conversations and more collaboration and Lolita said that there was "more space [for her] to be seen and heard" without having to defend herself. Lolita also gave examples of how Dave had been more thoughtful towards Lolita since the counselling session.

I was surprised at these effects because it seemed to me that there were a number of discursive practices in play that suggested that Dave and Lolita were not well positioned to collaborate in order to produce fair understandings and at the time they had not produced an alternative arrangement. Furthermore, some time after our meetings finished Lolita and Dave reported they had reached an arrangement which they both thought was fair. Interestingly, this arrangement apportioned more of their property to Lolita than the law might have been expected to have recognised. As Lolita and Dave negotiated this arrangement after the data generation phase of my research concluded, I cannot report the particularities of it here. However, both Dave and Lolita wanted me to indicate that they had reached a fair arrangement. I agree that this information goes some way to doing them justice.

I think this outcome was, in part, attributable to Dave and Lolita taking up a deconstructive approach that destabilised the adversarial, often patriarchal positions, which often dominated their attempts to address what might be fair. I think that this shift was in part also an effect of our knowledge running out. Like Epston (1999, 2004), when he took up the practice which came to be called co-research, neither Dave, Lolita or I, knew enough to resolve, or to convincingly claim to resolve, this complex situation. And for Dave and I at least, the knowledge that we were going to re-view this video, and that the transcripts of our conversations could be published and analysed and read by others, may have served to push us back from continuing with patriarchal approaches that positioned us as knowing, right and competent (Dickerson, 2013), when we knew we might be found to be ill informed or worse. In this respect the video may have acted both as a form of private conscience and a form of surveillance which made

our problematic strategies no longer a private matter which could be swept under the carpet if only Lolita could be persuaded that her experience was unique and an effect of some kind of personal failing, convinced that she was mistaken, or silenced by the threat of economic hardship.

Perhaps, in a similar way to the effect counting words had when Lolita said that she was no longer prepared to accept that she was loud and opinionated, our deconstructive enquiries with video made some familiar patriarchal practices more visible and less acceptable. At the same time these practices of co-research also better positioned Dave and Lolita to voice the complexities of their situation and experiences and hospitably and safely find ways of continuing to voice and explore their concerns and hopes. These practices laid a foundation for them to negotiate an arrangement which they both felt they had arrived at voluntarily and knowledgably – and with the help of others expert in such matters.

For me, these conversations marked a sea change in my counselling practice and in the shape of this research. In the next and final chapter, I attempt to arrive, for a moment, at a just appreciation of this movement and of the work that together, Lolita and Dave, Hinemoa and Wiremu and Tony and Miranda, and I did in order to address questions of justice in their lives.

## Chapter 13. Discussion

I begin this chapter by addressing my first research question: What does co-research offer couple counselling? I address this question first in order to illustrate that the hospitable, dialogical and deconstructive practice of co-research which my participants and I produced has benefits for practitioners and their clients, whether or not they also video their counselling. I then examine what video recording has to offer when used in conjunction with this particular practice of co-research. I conclude by building on the answer that I gave in chapter 4 to the question of how I might research my own counselling practice.

### **Hospitable, dialogical and deconstructive co-research**

It is a daunting and impossible task for me to fully do justice to the approach that my participants, my supervisors, and I have produced and to the effect that this research has had on my approach to counselling, and to the collegial support, supervision and training I have offered other counsellors. As dialogism would caution me against offering a mono-logical account and last word in this story, I offer the following stories which address some key aspects of this research, and which evoke other stories that might continue the dialogue that was vital to this project.

Epston (1999) developed the practice that he called “co-research” (p. 139) when he found he could not adequately understand or alleviate the suffering of the children he was working with. Co-research “brought together the very respectable notion of research with the rather odd idea of the co-production of knowledge by sufferers and therapist. (Epston, 1999, pp. 141–142). For me, there have been many moments when the co-research I facilitated with my participants using video

has indicated not only that my understandings were not sufficient to alleviate their suffering, but also pointed the way to more hospitable understandings and more collaborative practices that might do so.

The narrative of my PhD picks out some moments that illustrate these movements. One starting place for an overview of this narrative begins with my enthusiasm for the power of video to illuminate a common injustice where patriarchal practices dominate couples' conversational sharing and couple counselling. When I counted the words the video recorded of my counselling with Dave and Lolita, and presented this data as *the truth about Dave's speaking*, I had unwittingly reproduced some of these inhospitable, individualistic, patriarchal practices. Such practices often position members of a couple to locate the problem within themselves or the other and to partner up with their ideas of the truth at the expense of their partnership with each other. The ongoing practices of co-research and research that I outlined in chapter 4, helped me to learn from these experiences so that I was better positioned to recognise and accept Hinemoa's call to Wiremu and then to me to address these inhospitable practices. And by carefully co-researching their interactions, which the video made available, we came to more dialogical understandings of how they accepted or refused particular speaking positions in particular situations. Encouraged and guided by these practices of dialogical co-research with video I employed some familiar narrative therapy practices in order to extend this dialogical focus to include the influence and connections Hinemoa and Wiremu had with their whānau and community. Later, I called upon these experiences in order to support Miranda and Tony address questions of anger management.

Another crucial contribution to the development of this approach occurred when I noticed that the understandings I had to draw upon to inform my deconstructive approach to Dave and Lolita's financial situation were not adequate. When I found myself asking them questions about fairness that neither I nor they knew the answer to, I looked to improve my stock of analyses that might inform my deconstructive enquiries. My search for more information about what the law might say about fairness in their situation led me to read more about Derrida's (1992) second "style" (p. 21) of deconstructive enquiry and in particular to his writing on the law and his casting of deconstruction as a practice of justice. The first style of deconstructive enquiry addresses gaps between what is said and lived experience. It follows "traces" (Derrida, 1976, p. 65) of other readings in texts, it displaces the "oppositional logic" (Derrida, 1992, p. 8) of binaries and it interrogates the spaces between these binaries, in order to produce other possibilities for justice, possibilities which are kept alive by deferring conclusions and by placing accounts "under erasure" (Derrida, 1976, p. 60). The second style of deconstruction employs analyses of the more "historical" (Derrida, 1992, p. 21) texts that shape discursive practices. While all my work with the couples in my research employed this second style to some extent, it was my work with Dave and Lolita around their property sharing, which helped me to employ these more historical texts, not as the correct alternatives to those offered by my clients but as analyses that we might employ in order to address questions of justice.

I noticed that these shifts towards employing a dialogical and deconstructive approach to co-research as a practice of justice reduced conflict. My participants were taking up positions as co-researchers of our video records and of their lives more in order to address questions of how they might work together in order to do

justice, and less to find individual fault. As I reported in chapter 10, Miranda and Tony felt they were no longer positioned in a binary of *goodies and baddies* to the extent that they felt they could “explore” points of conflict in a more “dispassionate” and “relaxed” manner, “appreciate” the other’s view and “mull” over their differences and wait until the next meeting before revisiting those difficulties. Hinemoa and Wiremu found our co-researching approach made it “safe” for them and gave them the “space to ...be courageous and honest” without fear of what might happen after our meetings. As Hinemoa said, they felt that whatever she and Wiremu said, I would find a way to safely and constructively help them through it. The quality of these conversations, which were more hospitable than those I had facilitated when I first began counting words, prompted me to see what Derrida (2000, 2005; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000) and Durie (2001) had to say about hospitality. Consequently, I came to employ this form of deconstructive, dialogical co-research as a practice of justice and of hospitality.

The kinds of enquiries that I have depicted in this thesis often led my participants and me into what was for all of us, familiar, complex and emotional territory. This territory is as White (2007) suggested, frequently literally and figuratively “the *home* [emphasis added] territory of the problem” (p. 29). Territory in which people often respond heatedly, quickly, using oppositional logic and familiar and taken-for-granted strategies. The kinds of deconstructive enquiries and co-researching questions which I have illustrated above and demonstrated in previous chapters, helped to slow such quick and familiar responses. They worked to reposition me and my clients in more hospitable territories and as more dispassionate observers and co-researchers of discursive practices that may have

been so taken-for-granted as to otherwise have operated undetected or unquestioned.

Co-researching questions that invite clients to comment on the outcomes and processes of counselling are vital to narrative therapy practice and sometimes clients' comments, which may be given in the heat of the moment, can invite a counsellor into familiar personal deficit explanations and distress. I have found that a deconstructive approach to these responses not only helps me and my clients to continue to collaborate to work for justice and to affirm and shape our team work, this approach also offers me some protection against self-doubt and despair.

There have been a number of occasions on which I have imagined that I have been doing sophisticated and profoundly helpful counselling only to discover that the responses to my routine co-research questions have indicated that my clients have considered my line of enquiry wildly off track or laughably unhelpful. Sometimes, such comments catch me so off guard, or are so painful to hear that I might be so taken aback that I am transported into the sort of familiar and readily available discursive practices that John Gottman (2011) has described, and which involve me talking too much and defending myself against the idea that I might be the problem. In these circumstances I now employ the same kinds of hospitable, dialogical material-discursive and deconstructive practices that I developed through my work with the participants in this study and with my other clients. I often find it reassuring to reach for a bone carving that was given to me by a Māori woman who had found that our counselling work together had helped her to resist some colonising practices. This carving, which I wear around my neck

almost every day, means “Kia kaha”, be strong. In moments of stress, I place one hand around this carving and this material connection reminds me of my work with her. This gesture also helps me to breathe deeply and to calmly re-member her and others who have supported me and who continue to support me. From this place I often find I am better positioned to hospitably reconnect with the people I am hosting at the time.

An hospitable, dialogical and deconstructive approach also helps me to welcome such potentially painful expressions as indications that my clients are positioned in ways that help them to contribute to the shape of counselling: that like Miranda they might find it a better option to talk about their concerns in our meetings rather than let them fester or produce problems for them outside our meetings when they do not have my support to work through them. This deconstructive positioning helps me to continue to respectfully host our enquiries while doing justice to my hopes for our work together and to resist taking up the oppositional logic that might have me trying to demonstrate the common and singular counter arguments that they are mistaken and that I am in *truth* a good counsellor.

Outside of my counselling meetings I can also more consciously take up different positions in the wider experimental apparatus constituted by our material-discursive research. My supervisors and I can analyse the diffractions produced using Skype and face-to-face supervision in order to focus on doing justice to my contributions to my counselling work. We can together deconstruct these dialogical interactions in order to enhance my skills and knowledge while at the same time avoiding the binary constructs which suggest that a counsellor can be sufficiently skilful or knowledgeable enough to avoid any missteps or conflicts or

that missteps and conflicts are solely and simply evidence of insufficient skill or knowledge on the part of a counsellor. Throughout this research project, there have been innumerable, and often painful times, when my supervisors have alerted me to aspects of my research and counselling practices that they have been concerned about. These deconstructive practices have helped me to experience as less painful what is commonly referred to as negative feedback, to continue with the ongoing processes involved in learning and doing justice to this work, to myself and to my supervisors and my participants.

### *Co-research and hosting the other*

These material-feminist, deconstructive and dialogical practices have also opened doors to the identification and development of practices of hospitality that I might have otherwise overlooked. The bone carving that was given to me has often been read by clients as a cue that I might welcome expressions of Māori culture. I often find that when I am asking co-researching questions of my Maori clients about what has contributed to them entrusting me with their stories, they have indicated that they saw my bone carving as a sign that I might have an appreciation of Māori culture. And in response to my dialogical, deconstructive enquires about what else they have been alert to that signalled that I might be entrusted with their stories, they have often referred to the welcome signs in te reo that are on my front door (signs that were given to me by another client, in response to my co-researching questions about how I might better support her and other clients), or they might report that they have noticed my care to try to correctly pronounce te reo.

These co-researching enquires have helped me to shape aspects of my counselling practices that I might not otherwise have attended to. Some clients have appreciated me coming out to warmly welcome them, and now I am more likely to keep an eye out for and come out to greet new clients when I see them arriving at my office so that they might be saved the embarrassment of going to the wrong building. Others have noted my care in offering them glasses of water (an act of hospitality that Dave suggested I offer, in response to one of my co-researching questions) and clients have often reported that they feel safer when I explain that my position is that “the problem is the problem” (and when I acknowledge that sometimes it is helpful to think of the other person as if they are the problem), and that my purpose is to work with them to do them justice. These clients’ alertness and responses to these cues and my responses to their responses, might be understood as Durie (2001) suggests as a kind of “marae encounter” (2001, p. 72), a process, involving duties of hospitality and calls and responses that make meetings safe. And, as one might expect when employing a deconstructive dialogical approach, I am reminded that there is no singular explanation or last word regarding the meaning of these signs of hospitality. Some clients who have wondered if I wear my carving as part of a performance of political correctness have also been positioned hospitably enough to question my motives for wearing it, and to be reassured by its provenance and meaning to me. And others have asked me to my hide my bone carving from sight while they are meeting with me as it reminds them of distressing experiences.

When I have been asked to remove or hide my bone carving, it has been the idea of hospitality that, despite my misgivings, has moved me to honour these requests. On the first occasion when I was asked to cover or remove my bone carving, I left

my counselling room in order to carefully place it in my office. Leaving my counselling room and walking down the hall to my office helped me to literally reposition myself and to defer my judgment as to whether removing my carving was *the right thing to do*. As I carefully placed my carving on my desk, I was troubled by the thought that I was dishonouring this gift. I imagined other more knowledgeable, more assertive and less doubting counsellors might have explained the importance of this deeply cherished gift, this toanga, and perhaps left it proudly on show. I wondered if it the person who had honoured me with it might see my taking it off as me giving in to a colonising practice.

My duty of hospitality reminded me that I was hosting the person in my counselling room, and that this person had also entrusted me with stories that called me to treat her with care and respect and to hold the possibility that perhaps her speaking to me about her fears about my bone carving was another act of resistance to some of the silencing effects of abuse, and as part of her exercising an unaccustomed right to voice her preferences, and as an honourable response to my hosting of hospitable, deconstructive and dialogical co-research.

And when I took this moment to place my bone carving on my desk two of the things that protected me to some extent from familiar negative identity conclusions were: White's (1988b) "the problem is the problem" (p. 4) mantra, and the theory on which it was based and Foucault's analysis of the "modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects" (Foucault, 1982, p. 777). White's (1988b) mantra helped me stop this flood of doubt and to avoid continuing with what my reading of Kahneman (2011) tells me might be my "fast" and familiar thinking habits (p. 13). My reading of Foucault's (1982)

analysis helped me to contemplate how I might be making myself subject to an expert normalising judgment concerning the correct way of being a counsellor in relation to clients, without enough care of this relationship with this particular client, and to thereby resist this “mode of subjectivation” (Foucault, 2000, p. 264) by affirming my duty of hospitality to her.

I was also supported in taking this hospitable position by my reading of Derrida’s (2000, 2005; Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000) deconstruction of hospitality, and in particular my understanding that I might be host to a client’s hopes, and that the limits of the hospitality I could offer would be determined by law and codes of ethics more than by my presumptions about what might be normal practice for a counsellor. I also find it helpful to think of such moments as part of establishing the conditions for what Davies (2014), in her analysis of the Reggio Emilia approach to listening to children, called “emergent listening” (p. 21):

Emergent listening is not a simple extension of the usual practices of listening. It involves working, to some extent, against oneself, and against those habitual practices through which one establishes “this is who I am”. (Davies, 2014, p. 21)

I note that this movement away from the situation in which I was asked to cover my bone carving, and down the hall to my office and to another location which I associated with hospitable deconstructive practices, informed the possibilities I offered in the previous chapter, where I suggested that relocating tense counselling conversations to my office kitchen might provide a break and sustenance, and move the counselling conversation into a different and more hospitable context. I note this here in order to show this reflexive aspect of my research method and counselling practice in action.

I have also often found this hospitable and deconstructive approach helpful in addressing some difficulties which commonly occur in couples counselling. When people are positioned according to familiar oppositional logic they may read what I consider to be my careful, appreciative and respectful deconstruction of the other member of the couple's experience as an intolerable sign that I am agreeing with and taking the side of the person to whom I am listening. Furthermore, I have found that when I am focused on carefully listening to one member of the couple, I am not so well positioned to notice signs that the other member of the couple is experiencing this part of the conversation as unfair. When I do notice their distress this may be at the point when the person observing my conversation with the other, interjects in a way which invites both members of the couple to abandon careful, respectful, deconstructive enquiry in favour of more familiar oppositional practices. In these circumstances, I find it difficult to influence the shape of the conversation until one or both parties can stop themselves, or be dissuaded by the other or by me, from reacting in familiar problematic ways.

Compounding this difficulty is that I find it easier to de-escalate conflict by carefully listening to and deconstructing what one person is saying. In this one-to-one conversation I am better placed to deepen my understanding, appreciation and respect of the person to whom I am attending, with the effect that they often calm down and are in a position to think more clearly. In one-to-one interaction where I am positioned as a co-researcher there is less likelihood of a conflict of purpose as it is primarily my own obstacles to emergent listening which I must address.

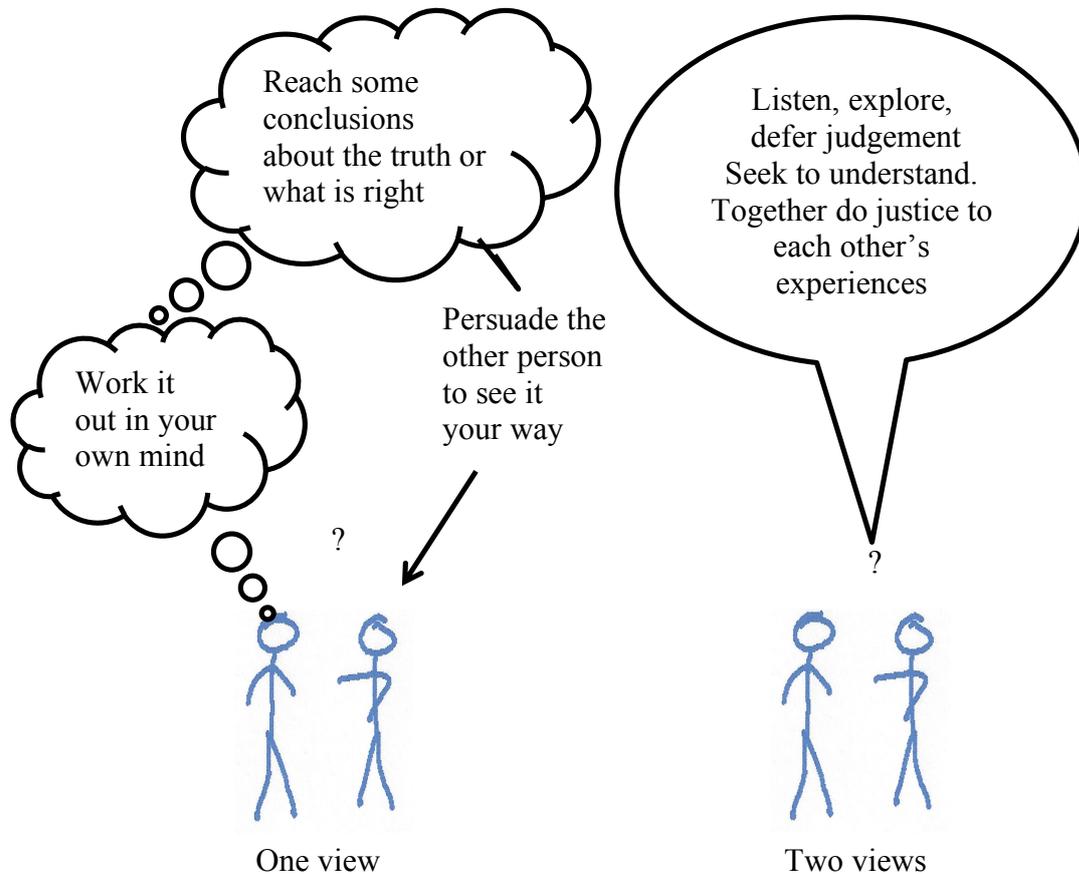
However, when there are two clients, their hopes and experiences may be in conflict and they may not be well equipped to defer their conclusions, or handle their strong feelings. I have found White's (1986a) appreciation of difference

exercise influential in providing a structure that couples can use to remind themselves that my listening is not agreeing and they will both have turns to speak so that we may together do justice to their situations and their hopes.

*Appreciation of difference: a structure to support collaborative deconstructive enquiry*

These kinds of difficulties with counselling couples led me to undertake this research. In turn this research led me to adapt and employ White's (1986a) appreciation of difference exercise as a method of deconstructive enquiry in my counselling with couples, and as a tool which couples can employ to help them to produce hospitable co-researching conversations when I am not there, and as a lens that they can use in order to review and shape their conversations. Part of this modified exercise is illustrated below in figure 8. (The complete modified exercise can be found in Appendix B.2). When using the appreciation of difference exercise, the couple follow the approach outlined on the right hand side of the figure. When I present this illustration to the couple I stress that I am not suggesting that one approach is right and the other wrong. Together we often discuss examples of when these two different approaches have served them well.

# Two approaches to problem solving



Everything will be solved when the other person sees it my way	Co-research of each person's experiences of the problem and their hopes for a solution
Develop and implement a solution on my own	Teamwork to do us justice
Argument - counter argument	Deconstruct, develop
Attack - defend The other is the problem, or I am the problem	Speak of own experience <i>The problem is the problem</i>
Recruit people who support my view	Consider other viewpoints
Focus on the truth, authority	Focus on appreciating the differences
Produces feelings of being misunderstood, unappreciated and disrespected: Distance	Deepens understanding, appreciation and respect: Feel closer

Figure 8: White's (1986a) Appreciation of difference exercise. Modified, Depree, 2015

In this modified exercise couples are invited to position themselves as co-researchers whose purpose is to address the question of how they might do their situation and their hopes justice. I have found that when couples understand that our purpose is to address the question of justice for both of them and that this process will involve careful co-research without jumping to conclusions, or blaming, or the attribution of personal failings, this repositioning supports them to hold on to the idea that they will get their turn to be understood, appreciated and respected. Furthermore, as this exercise is treated as an ongoing process, this offers the members of the couple some reassurance that they will not just have an opportunity to put *their* view and have it appreciated, but that together we will engage in an ongoing process of co-research in order to co-produce accounts that they might conclude, at that time and with the information available to them, do them justice and which they can revise in the light of new information. This emphasis on deconstruction produces this appreciation of difference exercise as other than a familiar opportunity for people to take turns to rehearse or vent their honest experiences and viewpoints. Positioned according to this deconstructive process I have found that couples are less likely to reproduce the kinds of oppositional logic and individualistic positioning with which they are familiar. Using this exercise, I can make explicit that my position is to invite and welcome clients' doubts or discomfort and to co-research these experiences on the understanding that to ignore them is to risk one or both of the members of the couple feeling misunderstood, unappreciated and disrespected, and to risk omitting information that may be vital to adequately addressing questions of justice in relation to the couples' situations and hopes.

Furthermore, by giving my clients copies of White's (1986a) appreciation of difference exercise and helping them to use it, they can take positions as users of a deconstructive method. When I discuss this exercise with the couples, I invite them to use it both as a structure for speaking together and as a means to assist their co-research so that they are better positioned to decide when, and to what extent, what they are doing is working for them. So, for example, members of a couple struggling to refrain from interrupting the other may be invited to give a brief account of what it is that they are standing for in speaking up, what makes it difficult for them to hear the other out, and what their hopes are for how we might fairly proceed. Should we, for example, take time to address these concerns now or should we defer them while the other member of the couple finishes their account? Again, this decision-making might also be the focus of deconstructive enquiries, such as, "How would we know that addressing your interruption of your partner's account in this moment was not part of the problem of sharing conversation fairly?"

Often the couples I have seen quite quickly reach a decision about how they might address such difficulties, based on their experience of their relationship and their understandings of how to best proceed. A member of the couple might say, "I'm ok for him to speak now if it helps him get it off his chest, and the next meeting I will finish my turn". Sometimes such a move to give up one's turn in order to help, can be sufficient for the person struggling to listen, to reposition themselves to listen, safer in the knowledge that that they will get a fair hearing, and that together we will address their concerns.

Where members of the couple find it difficult to make space for the other's experiences to be co-researched, then this might lead to us deciding to have some individual meetings so that each person can voice their concerns without doing harm to the other, and to develop some strategies to help them defer their judgments and manage their alertness to the possibility that they might be done an injustice.

I agree with White's (1997a, 2002) argument that when counsellors and their clients think that it should be a relatively simple matter to overcome problems then they are underestimating what they are up against and overestimating their power to influence this. Hence, I am not arguing that a deconstructive and hospitable approach to co-research will eliminate such distressing conflicts in couples counselling. I am arguing that I have found this casting of co-research as an hospitable, dialogical practice of justice offers positions that reduce the likelihood of such conflict and provide ways of understanding and resolving such conflicts which do not involve the attribution of debilitating personal failings, for both clients and counsellors.

### **Requirements of a practice of deconstruction as justice**

If as Derrida (1992) suggested, "deconstruction is justice" (p. 15), what then are the requirements of such a process? With deconstructive theory providing an understanding that a decision cannot be based on "infinite information and unlimited knowledge" (Derrida, 1992, p. 26) and that the justness of a decision is "not absolutely guaranteed" (Derrida, 1992, p. 24) what are the necessary requirements of adequately addressing justice in couples counselling?

I have argued that justice must be multi-vocal, that a counsellor must be particularly careful about ending a particular deconstructive enquiry if one member of the couple has doubts and concerns about the fairness of this inquiry. This is not to suggest that counselling must continue until all doubts are gone, or that counselling can eliminate such doubts, rather the deconstructive enquiry might shift to what are the sticking points in this line of enquiry and what steps might best address these sticking points, and how we might decide that we have exhausted that line of enquiry for the moment.

A dialogical approach also suggests that it will be important to co-research couples' experiences of the experiences of other affected parties who might attest to the justness of the couple's actions. In chapter 9, I showed how I recruited audiences to, and supporters of, developments in Hinemoa and Wiremu's lives in order to do justice to their hopes of improving their couple relationship and family life. Wiremu and Hinemoa described how their children felt safer, and how they and their son changed their interactions and relationships. In chapter 11, I showed how I recruited imaginary audiences to, and supporters of, developments in Tony and Miranda's family life through re-remembering conversations. In chapters 10 and 11, I showed how Tony and Miranda recounted how their children commented on what they saw as problematic actions from both their parents, and how they collaborated with Tony and Miranda in order to support Tony to handle his strong emotions, problem-solve in a respectful and fair manner, and live up to their hopes of being a loving family who have fun together.

However, ensuring that multiple voices are heard is not in itself sufficient to address justice if we understand that our experiences and our expressions or our

experiences are discursively produced. For example, as I described in chapter 7, Dave and Lolita's honest assessments of how they shared their conversational time were shaped by gendered expectations of how men might dominate conversations with women to the extent that there were many times they were certain that they had shared the conversational time equally when my word counts showed that this was not the case.

Therefore, in order to address justice, co-research must deconstruct the discourses in play in the speaking positions represented or implicated, and interrogate the intra-action of the material-discursive. For example, Tony and Miranda's and Hinemoa and Wiremu's children's experiences were called upon and deconstructed and not just accepted as if their experiences reflected the honest truth about their parents' relationships. I argue that this kind of deconstruction is necessary in order to avoid the familiar kinds of situations that Hinemoa and Wiremu, and Tony and Miranda referred to where children are conscious of the conflict between their parents and often propose gendered solutions, such as requiring their mother to be more compliant with their father in order to keep the peace. As I will describe in the next section, video technology provides a material text that is invaluable in assisting couples and counsellors to check the extent to which their experiences are based on material evidence and on what they imagine or remember to have happened.

As I became more adept at facilitating deconstructive co-research, the couples were better positioned to, as Crocket et al (2004) suggested, act as "commentators" (p. 64) on, and "theorisers" (p. 64) about, their interactions and to act as users of discourse analysis. Our deconstructive co-research also supported

Lolita to name her concerns at the way women in general were disadvantaged in relationships with men. In addition, the evidence I collected from feminist critiques of the processes and outcomes of matrimonial settlements, helped me to shape my deconstructive enquiries and to help Dave consider other readings of Lolita's position. These processes supported Lolita and Dave to produce a property settlement that they were in a position to decide might be as fair as they could manage both in process and outcome with the information they had.

This practice of hospitable, dialogical and deconstructive co-research, which I have described, can stand on its own. It offers more to the practice of couples counselling than I could have imagined. So much so that I would have been content if this was all I had learned. However, my experience suggests that when video recordings are used in conjunction with hospitable, deconstructive dialogical co-research, this has the potential to significantly enhance the practice of couple counselling.

## **Video and co-research**

When I was attending a workshop Michael White was offering, a participant said something along the lines of, "There are moments when counselling is so difficult I wish that Michael White would come into the room and help me". This is something I had also felt many times, and I was amused and delighted to hear White reply, "Me too" (personal communication, August 14, 2004). Similarly, a participant in Gossman and Miller's (2012) study of counselling students' experiences of using video, referred to video as "the third person in the room" (p. 28). Now, when I am facing difficulties in my counselling practice, I want to bring that third person into the room in the form of video technology - provided that

*person* practices hospitable, deconstructive and dialogical co-research and seeks to do justice with, and for, me and my clients.

MacDougall (2006) suggested that most of the effort of filmmakers goes into the process of “putting the viewer into a particular relation to a subject” (p. 6). In my video making, an effect of the deconstructive approach to co-research which I facilitated was that I came to put most of my effort into positioning us as hospitable, deconstructive, co-researchers of the externalised, dialogical text of the video record. The practice of hospitable, deconstructive and dialogical co-research I have described has gone a long way to helping me to support couples better, although not so far as to eliminate the distressing difficulties so common to couple counselling. By employing video technology according to these co-research practices my participants and I were better positioned to avoid familiar uses of the technology that seek to produce evidence of personal or performance failings.

As the couples in my research and I became more skilled at co-research, I came to see the video record as an both an artefact of our co-research, as disclosing a particular material-discursive reality on which we could base our deconstructive co-research, and like the “third person” (p. 28) Gossman and Miller’s (2012) counsellors’ referred to, who shaped our counselling and co-research, and sometimes our lives outside the counselling room.

We could view the video record at different times and in different places using different lenses in order to illuminate and deconstruct the relationship between these records and our meaning making. The deconstructive lenses we used to read

the video record from different times and places in the wider experimental apparatus made available new territories, such as that of the dialogical territories of ourselves in interaction. In effect the video record provided a “guardrail”, a “protected” (Derrida, 1976, p. 158) text, which made less available those readings that were not founded on the particular material-discursive diffractions which were captured on video. Our orientation to the discursive-materiality of these artefacts of our counselling conversations supported externalising conversations and reduced conflict between the participants. It discouraged disagreements between us regarding the material facts and often prompted us to question our familiar accounts of what was happening. It pushed our conversations into deconstructing the so called self-reflections and “realisations” which frequently accompanied comparing the video record to our stories of what had happened. In this way, video provided a technology which facilitated, and was located in, Gurman’s (2010) “fourth and current phase” of couple counselling. Locating myself in this phase supported me to position myself as a collaborative scientist-practitioner who integrates technology, postmodern theories, research and clinical practice in order to, as the ethic of co-research suggests, generate knowledge and practices that are of service to my clients.

As I noted in chapter 5, the work of putting my participants and me into an hospitable co-researching relationship with me and then with the video began prior to our undertaking this research together. I put considerable care and effort into positioning my potential participants so that they might play active parts in these counselling and co-researching processes and in shaping our relationship with the video technology. The participants in my research all reported that they

had consented to being videoed because they already had significant experience of my approach to narrative therapy co-research.

Their experience of our positioning to hospitably deconstruct externalised problems may have contributed to their readiness to comment on what they saw as their own problematic contributions to their relationship difficulties when they observed themselves on video. For example, Hinemoa saw the video record as an “opportunity to step outside yourself and hear yourself”. When she first took up this position as an observer of herself on video she was struck by what she saw as her *not stopping and listening* to Wiremu. And after watching themselves argue about what the problem was, Tony and Miranda changed their positioning regarding what Tony came to call his “self-justification”. These were significant changes in positioning that seemed to arise spontaneously from the participants observing themselves interacting on video. I have suggested that these *realisations*, as the participants often called them, might have been supported by the ethic of narrative therapy co-research that I had facilitated and that we had co-produced.

With the benefit of the video record we were better positioned to take up positions as co-researchers and researchers, as we could subject the record of our counselling conversations to fine-grained analysis, to examine in detail this material-discursive text and to use this relatively “objective” text to examine to what extent the stories we had constructed rested on this form of material-discursive reality. Having the video record as the subject of our co-research positioned us to together, as Dave said, be “huddled around” the video monitor in order to hospitably address the situation depicted in the video excerpt and to

address the question of how we might realise his and Lolita's hopes. This foregrounding of meticulous deconstruction of particular and externalised interactions supported us in engaging in externalising conversations, and in deferring our conclusions. This process was also supported in that the video excerpts that we reviewed were themselves artefacts of counselling conversations which took place in an ethic of hospitable deconstruction. And for the most part I chose these particular artefacts for their potential to assist us in addressing justice. Furthermore, we *observed* these artefacts of hospitable narrative co-research through lenses of deconstructive dialogical enquiry from a different time, often a week after the counselling conversation and sometimes a month after the original event. The video technology enabled us to distance ourselves from the moments depicted and to replay, pause, rewind and fast forward those past events.

An effect of this positioning of the couples as observers and deconstructive researchers of these artefacts of their interactions was that they reported less heat in their interactions. As I reported earlier in this chapter and in chapter 12, the couples reported that there was more collaboration between them. Lolita reported that there was “more *space* [italics added] to be seen and heard” without having to defend oneself. Miranda and Tony reported that they could “explore” points of conflict in a more “dispassionate” and “relaxed” manner, and “appreciate” the other's views.

In this respect the video record when combined with co-research supported us to position ourselves with the kind of “‘cool’ engagement” (White, 2007, p. 29) that White had envisaged when writing about “the early phases of externalising conversations” (p. 29). The external video record supported a cool co-researching

engagement in that we could occupy new positions in the less familiar territories of the playing field provided by the wider experimental apparatus in order to focus on the so-called and often irrefutable “facts” and those facts included new and unfamiliar territories of the self in interaction. The view of the self in interaction which video provides is one not usually observed by one’s self and often not addressed. We cannot usually see our own facial expressions, and we cannot see how we appear to others from the same viewpoint that they see us. Consequently, our accounts of how we appear to and interact with others are only partially based on observation and so they are perhaps to a greater extent based on the familiar stories we construct using our imaginations and our memories, which are similarly shaped by discourses.

In chapter 7, I described how, when I reviewed a video excerpt of Hinemoa and Wiremu’s counselling conversation, I had noticed what I took to be a potential unique outcome that occurred when Hinemoa stopped speaking and she offered Wiremu an opportunity to speak. When I showed this video excerpt to Hinemoa, she made sense of this in binary terms: if she had not stopped herself then Wiremu must have taken drastic action to stop her. She attributed her actions to Wiremu putting his hand out to stop her speaking. Using the video record, we were in a position to test Hinemoa’s revised account of how she stopped speaking. When we replayed the video excerpt again, Hinemoa and Wiremu together revised the story of their conversational sharing on the basis of the video evidence that Wiremu had subtly indicated that he wanted to speak and that Hinemoa had been alert to these cues and to sharing the conversation.

Using the video record as a foundation for our deconstructive and dialogical co-research we produced more readings of how Hinemoa and Wiremu were positioned in their conversations: how Wiremu gave Hinemoa invitations to speak which she was alert to and responded to, how Wiremu withdrew from speaking at times, and that his withdrawal sometimes positioned Hinemoa as the one with the problem of not sharing their conversation as she spoke more in order to engage him in conversation. As we continued our co-research Hinemoa also identified gendered and cultural practices, which positioned her as the one to initiate and maintain conversations, to “get the ball rolling” in order that she and Wiremu and their children would get “maximum benefit” from the opportunity to talk together.

The couples enthusiastically took up this positioning as co-researchers. They began observing themselves as if they were on video. They used the video in order to help them evaluate their own behaviour according to their values and preferences. As Hinemoa and Wiremu explained, they moved away from using video to “out” the other, and towards leaving the other to come to their own realisations about their own behaviour when they saw themselves on video. The participants extended their positioning as participants in video research and researchers by employing the video as a form of externalised “conscience” to the extent that they imagined themselves as being on video and they researched their experiences even when they were outside of our meetings. They took notes, including on smart phones, not only in our meetings but also of their interactions outside of our meetings. And they began to analyse their observations in order to do their situations and themselves justice using more of an ethic of hospitable deconstructive and dialogical research. And they included my questions in their co-research focus. For example, Miranda and Tony noted how our co-research

with video had an effect of helping them better attend to the “strategies” that I offered them and they also took up some of the deconstructive strategies that they saw me employing in our counselling and co-research and they applied these to their relationship and family life.

Likewise, I moved from my initial focus on video’s power to illuminate problems and I came to revel in the possibilities of using video in conjunction with narrative therapy maps: as a record of unique outcomes, to recruit supporters and audiences to preferred developments (whānau, communities, my supervisors, potential readers of this research), and to collaborate with the couples in order to employ video as a technology to aid hospitable deconstructive enquiries. As I noted in the previous chapter, Dave’s and Lolita’s participation in hospitable co-research may have also been at times shaped by their awareness that the video record and transcripts of our counselling and co-research conversations might be seen by a wider audience. In this respect the video may have had some affect as a form of gaze which encouraged them to act in ways that they felt might be more in accordance with what that audience might regard as fair and respectful.

I found myself both looking forward to re-viewing our video records with the couples and with my supervisors, and on my own, and concerned about how I might appear to a wider audience. In the first instance, I often found myself wishing we could just stop the current conversation and watch an excerpt straight away rather than wait for the next meeting. When I was counselling without video I came to regret that I did not have video to call upon when things got difficult or to celebrate unique outcomes. As Hinemoa said when speaking of her and Wiremu’s experience of having faith that I would handle whatever they talked

about, I found myself feeling more confident that the couples and I would find our way through any difficulties when we had a video record to deconstruct.

Employing material feminist theory (Barad, 2007), I could more deliberately use video technology as part of a wider experimental apparatus that included me and my participants as both the focus of research and as researchers. I could adjust my positioning in order to produce different diffractions. I could review the records of a counselling meeting on my own with the space and time to slow down and replay our interactions and to consider different readings of what might be useful. I enjoyed stopping the video and taking a book from my shelf, or opening an article, in order to read something that might shed some light on what I had been watching. And I looked forward to putting some more distance between myself and the heat of those counselling conversations by mulling over multiple views of that situation while I walked in a very different terrain – from the altitude of the tree covered hill and the sea-level of the beach near my home and office. In these moments of watching the video at my own pace and in mulling it over on a walk, I made space for the kind of “slow thinking” (Kahneman, 2011, p. 13) which engaged what I had read and experienced and which supported my understanding and helped me to consider what I might contribute to *our* proposals for further co-research when the couple and I next met, or when I sat at my computer to write this thesis.

The materiality of the video record also allowed supervisors a complementary position in the co-research team. Using the video record, in effect my supervisors could step into a virtual version of the counselling room. They could join the team as fellow co-researchers, who could also replay and deconstruct the same video record that was the focus of the counselling co-research meeting with even more

distance from the heat of the moment-by-moment counselling conversation and its demands for rapid decision-making. The video record also better allowed supervisors to take up roles as supporters or audiences to a couple's preferred developments in their lives, as I showed in chapter 10, when I passed on my research supervisors' appreciation of and questions about how Miranda came to enrol her and Tony's children in a women's refuge course.

In these respects, it would be co-research with video and the possibilities that it offered that would step into the room to rescue us when the going got tough. At the same time, the gaze of the video could also make things tougher for me in my position as practitioner/researcher.

## **Researching my own counselling practice**

In many ways much of what I outlined in chapter 4 when I discussed my method has addressed my research question of how I might research my own practice. The ethic and practice of narrative therapy co-research shaped my practice of therapy as research. It was this narrative therapy practice, and that my research offered them the opportunity to have free counselling, that influenced the couples in deciding to join my research. And our practice of co-research using video shaped my research and therapy and my selection and understanding of the theoretical tools I came to rely upon.

In this section I want to speak of what it has been like researching my own counselling practice. In her account of practitioner research, Linnell (2010) spoke of how in her practice of narrative therapy "familiar such as Foucault and Derrida had entered the therapy room, making visible and deconstructing its dominant

assumptions and practices so that it, and she, could never be the same” (location 633). White (1984) had been in the room with me for some time. When I was learning narrative therapy I had a photo of White on my wall so that when I was struggling with my performance of narrative therapy I might better re-member his unfailing support of me (M.K. White, personal communication, December 5-9th, 1988) and imagine his voice reassuring me that “it is not the person who is...the problem. Rather it is the problem that is the problem” (White, 1988b, p. 4) and reminding me what I was up against, and encouraging me to support myself. My own practitioner research using video had brought Derrida and Foucault, and Bakhtin and Barad, and my supervisors into my counselling room in ways that they hadn’t been present before.

Bringing such sophisticated theorists into the room with the couples and me and White (2007) helped me to notice as Linnell (2010) had, some dominant assumptions and practices. I became more aware of some longstanding roommates who favoured individualistic and modernist conceptions which focussed on discovering the truth of what was really going on and who encouraged me to stand up for these truths by using patronising and disguised instruction with my clients. White (2007) and my newer roommates gained considerably more access and influence when my research opened the door for them and they helped me identify some of the things that were problematic about my old roommates’ views.

My research invited these new roommates to make themselves at home for the duration and to extend their influence. As I have noted, the roommates and practices my study introduced into my counselling room brought many precious gifts. And my research project also brought the examination.

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgment. It is a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify, and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them (Foucault, 1984, p. 197).

As I described in chapter 6, this visibility, surveillance and examination produced by my research of my counselling practice for a PhD had both a debilitating and an extraordinarily helpful effect. It is a lot to ask of couples and counsellors that they expose themselves to video recording, and to the possibility of being subjected to a normalising gaze intensified by the knowledge that this material is going to be subjected to fine-grained critical analysis and potentially by a wider audience. As I described in chapter 7, it is tempting, as I did when I counted Dave and Lolita's words, to be enthused by the wealth of information available in the video record, and to run with the identification of multiple instances of what is going wrong. And it is a lot to ask of clinical supervisors to witness excerpts of counselling that may be reproducing the problems it seeks to address. And perhaps it is even more to ask of research supervisors to witness problematic counselling and research practices when they have a responsibility to shape a PhD candidate's work into something that will meet the requirements for that qualification.

I have learned a lot from my supervisors pointing out inconsistencies in my writing, thinking and practice. Being exposed to PhD level critique of my own counselling practice was at times enormously hard and enormously rewarding. And I wonder if it would be possible for a PhD to be transformed into a more hospitable practice of collaborative deconstruction when it is cast as an examination.

This PhD roommate also took up a lot of room. In order to conduct PhD research on my own practice meant that I had to see enough couples in order to have a pool from which to draw participants. It was often difficult to find time for reflecting and writing as I had to remain committed to those clients who were not participating in my research. And I had to have enough clients to maintain sufficient income to meet my financial commitments.

At times I wished that I was just doing my PhD but often when I was despairing of being good enough to finish my PhD, clients past and present would say things that reminded me of the kinds of changes a hospitable practice of deconstructive co-research made possible. My counselling room contains many mementos that clients have given me in appreciation of my part in what we have achieved together. And as I described earlier in this chapter, I wear one of these gifts around my neck. So although my other counselling work often took me away from the PhD writing I ought to/would have liked to have been doing, those conversations with clients sustained me. When I felt under examination, White (2007), my new roommates, my clients, colleagues and supervisors could remind me that this was, in part, an effect of my being positioned and taking up positions in the discursive practices of deconstructive enquiry while co-producing a PhD. And they could support me to pay less regard to those familiar modernist roommates who might suggest my difficulties were proof of my incompetence and my lack of intelligence.

While this story of individual failings is familiar to me, and one which often attempts to re-enter the therapy room, as part of doing this PhD, I have reached a point in my practice where hospitable, dialogical, deconstructive co-research

using video is the most powerful thing I can do to support those who seek my help in counselling and to support myself. Since my meetings with my participants ended in 2009 I continued to use the research method I outlined in figure 3. Using this method of hospitable, deconstructive, co-research according to dialogical and material feminist theory, I continued to experiment with and hone the practices that emerged from my analysis of my work with Lolita and Dave, Hinemoa and Wiremu and with Miranda and Tony. For now, this approach offers me the kind of confidence that my participants referred to when they noted that they felt that whatever they brought to counselling I could help them to together safely find a way to address it.

At the same time deconstructive theory reminds me to be suspicious (Derrida, 1997) of this approach that I have taken such trouble in producing, and as Bakhtin (1986) cautions, not to install it as the “last word” (p. 170) on this work or on my work to come.

White (2007) has been a huge influence on my life and work and it is perhaps fitting that I conclude this chapter with some of his words that reflect my experience of my counselling work and of doing this research.

I have been fortunate in my choice of career. I have been invited to be with others in ways that are rarely available to persons in the usual run of life. I have been taken into territories of life that I would not have otherwise had the privilege of stepping into. I have joined persons in adventures in places way beyond those that had constituted the furthest horizons of my world. I have been encouraged to think outside the limits of what I would have otherwise thought. I have been warmed by communities of people I would not have otherwise known. For this I am more than grateful. In these journeys with others, I’ve had options to become other than who I would have been (White, 1997b, p. 106).

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# Appendices

## Appendix A Information for clients and participants

### A.1 Information for counselling clients

This information is provided to all clients as a pamphlet with photographs of me and a logo. The format has been changed and the graphics have been omitted for clarity.

Jim Depree  
Counsellor  
[Address phone number]

The Problem is the Problem - not the Person

Working together to find solutions that suit you.

#### **My Role**

My job is to support you to get the kind of solutions you want.

As long as what you want to do is legal and doesn't harm yourself or anyone else I'm right with you.

#### **My Approach**

I believe problems are the problem, not people, and not their relationships. I believe problems come about as a result of a combination of circumstances and people's sensitivity and loyalty to ways of thinking about and dealing with those circumstances which don't work for them. To put that another way if you were trying to bake a cake and the recipe you were using had a mistake in it then it doesn't matter how good a cook you are, or how good the ingredients are, the cake is likely to taste or look bad.

Then you, and others, might think you are a hopeless cook instead of realising it's the recipe which is the problem. I think we get recipes for life in a similar sort of way, some of which might not work so well at some times. I am interested in where the problem recipes come from, and how you get caught up in them so that

we can work together to come up with some alternatives which suit you.

### **What we do in meetings.**

It is important to me that we work together in a respectful way to find solutions that suit you. An essential part of this is creating the conditions where you can participate fully.

One of the ways I work is by asking questions. Please tell me if my questions seem to be on the right track, or if they are missing the point, or if you are in any way uncomfortable with anything I say. If there are any questions I ask and you think "why is he asking that?" you are most welcome to ask me. I am happy to explain and if you decide you would prefer not to answer that's fine. If you choose not to answer a question I don't see that as a bad sign, that's simply your right. If I put anything in a way which doesn't make sense to you, or you feel I am taking sides or trying to talk you into something, please do let me know. If there is anything you want to know please ask. Any question or concern you have is important to me.

The other things I might do are; with their permission and anonymously, talk about some other people's experiences in similar situations; or my own experience, or what's in some literature or research. This is so we can sift through the information that's available and you can decide what's helpful to you. It's not about me saying to you "you have to do this because someone else did it" or "it says to do it in a book".

### **Confidentiality**

Whatever we talk about is confidential. I don't pass anything on to anyone except my supervisor, without your permission or discussing it with you. This includes any meetings I might have with other members of your family. I cannot keep something confidential if I have been required to comment on it as part of my contract with you and a referring agency. Confidentiality will only be broken if keeping it would put someone's safety at risk. I will advise you if I think I need to break confidentiality.

It is normal practice in counselling for counsellors to talk with a supervisor about

their clients in order to monitor their work so as to continue to provide the best possible service. I may discuss what you say with my supervisor. Where possible I will not identify you or mention your name.

### **Reports**

I type reports if they are required. Reports will always be discussed with you first and you will receive a copy. If there are to be any exceptions to this, I will discuss this with you.

### **Record Keeping**

To be able to work effectively I need to take some notes during our meetings. This is not only to help me remember what we talked about but it is also an essential part of my professional accountability.

Anything I write down or record from my conversations with you is your property as well as mine. You can have a copy if you would like to.

My records will be securely stored. I will keep them for at least 3 years after our last meeting or final report before having them destroyed.

### **Fees**

If you have been referred by an Agency such as the Family Courts, or CYFs there will be no cost to you.

If ACC is paying for your counselling, there will be a charge of \$20.00 per meeting. If you are paying for yourself the cost is \$90.00 per hour including GST.

All fees are to be paid at the time of the appointment unless by prior arrangement. There is a surcharge of \$5.00 per hour for fees paid on invoice or late.

*If you miss an appointment or cancel with less than 24 hours' notice and this is not due to illness or emergency there may be a charge of \$40.00.*

*All fees must be paid prior to making another appointment.*

**Please note if we go over the hour this time will be charged for. I will let you know when an hour is up.**

### **Concerns and Complaints about Counselling**

If at any time you decide my approach doesn't suit you, you are welcome to stop and review the process or ask for another counsellor.

I am a member of the NZ Association of Counsellors.

If you have any complaints about anything I do, please tell me or the person who has contracted me to work with you. If you are paying for yourself, or you do not get any satisfaction from the person who contracted me to work with you, then you are welcome to contact the person I consult about my work:

Jane Harkness [phone number]

Or write to

Ethics  
The Secretary  
NZ Association of Counsellors  
[Address]

### **Appointments**

Please let me know as soon as possible if you need to cancel or change an appointment. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, someone else may be able to use that time if you can't. Secondly a missed appointment means lost income for me. If an agency is paying for your counselling it may mean less time available, or if two appointments are missed without notice it could mean the contract will be cancelled.

If you are more than 15 minutes late I will assume you are not coming. This may mean if you do arrive after 15 minutes I may not be available.

### **When you can contact me.**

I am often in appointments and cannot answer the phone so if you get my answerphone please leave a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Your message will only be heard by me.

**I am not available in weekends.**

**Something about me.**

I began my career as a Residential Social Worker in 1980. I then became a Social Worker, Senior Social Worker, Trainer, Community Social Worker and Family Therapist. I have taught Narrative Therapy at the E.I.T. Psychotherapy and Social Work programmes. I have had work published in a Social Work Text.

I have followed the approach which informs this brochure since 1985. I have been in Private Practice part time since 1989 and full time since 1992.

I have a Bachelor of Arts Degree, a Diploma of Social Work and a Master of Counselling with first class honours. I am currently studying for my PhD.

My wife Tania and I have three children.

## **A.2 Information for potential research participants**

### **Jim Depree's PhD research project:**

#### **Taping for therapeutic purposes in couples' therapy**

#### **Information for potential participants**

As you will know from our conversations or from the pamphlet I sent to you prior to our first counselling meeting, I am studying for my PhD at Waikato University. My research project is **"Taping for therapeutic purposes in couples' therapy"**.

#### **How this research project came about**

I am inviting couples who come to me for counselling to join me in a research project. To help you consider this invitation I have provided some information about my professional background related to this project. I welcome any further questions you might have.

A significant component of my private practice is working with couples seeking help with their relationship or separation. Over the years I have been surprised at the number of couples I saw who reported bad experiences with counselling, particularly around the counsellor making assumptions about what was happening in the couples' lives. Often the counsellor intervened in the couples' lives in ways that one or both of them found unhelpful and which seemed to them a sign that the counsellor was taking sides. When I asked the couples about these unhelpful experiences, I was shocked to find that I might have made similar unhelpful assumptions. Also I found that despite my best efforts I could easily find myself making the same mistake.

One solution to this problem was to build on the idea that "the problem is the problem, not the person" and team up with the people seeking help. So instead of the counsellor assessing and intervening, the counsellor would ask the kinds of questions that were designed to bring out the couple's knowledge. And to bring forward this knowledge in ways that not only increased the couple's understanding of each other's view of what was happening but at the same time laid a foundation of respect and appreciation between them and with the counsellor. It would be on this foundation that the counsellor/couple team could attempt to develop solutions. This process of team work became known as "co-research" in some counselling circles

An important aspect of “co-research” is that the counsellor asks the couple about whether the counselling itself is helpful and how it can be made more helpful. In this process of teamwork, the couple also get to ask the counsellor about why he or she asked particular questions.

As I got more interested in having these kinds of careful “co-research” conversations I noticed that sometimes people didn’t notice or remember accurately what they had said in the counselling session. With the clients’ permission I experimented with taping some counselling sessions so that we could go back to them to check our understanding of what had been said. In this way it was possible to get some accurate unbiased information about what was said, and for the people watching to be able to sit back and think more clearly about what was happening.

Then I read an article which involved couples reviewing videotapes of their counselling sessions. The couples in this study reported that their video review meetings could be as helpful to them as an extra counselling session. The author of the article, Stephen Gaddis, thought that in inviting the couples to be “research consultants” rather than “therapy clients” the couples may have had “more freedom to express their personal wisdom, perspective and expertise”. He also thought that the slowed down, pause-and-view process of re-viewing their videotapes with him may have enabled them to step back and observe themselves in new ways. This process gave them sufficient time to see themselves as separate from the problem while at the same time noticing things they had taken-for-granted and ways that they may have been contributing to the problem.

Also the study’s author found that the counsellors working with the couples reported benefiting from the feedback they got from the research meetings with the couples, including information about what the couples found unhelpful. This feedback enabled them to develop new questions and approaches. As a result, Gaddis suggested that a sole therapist might be a researcher with their clients one week and a therapist the next.

I am taking up his suggestion with the same hope that the research process will increase the understanding, appreciation and respect couples have for each other and give them an opportunity to step back from their situations and come up with some suggestions to improve the counselling meetings as well as solutions for the problems they are facing. I also carry the hope that this research project will be of benefit not only to couples and me as counsellor but also to those who read the study, such as other counsellors.

## What happens in the research?

My research project involves making audio or video tapes of some of my usual counselling sessions with individual couples. The next step is to make a tape of a meeting where I would review the counselling tape with the couple to learn more about their experience of the counselling.

- The research meetings are extra meetings to the counselling sessions.
- The counselling sessions will be the same and still include the questions I ask about how the session is going for you.
- The research meetings do not reduce the number of hours you have for counselling.
- There is no charge for the research meetings.
- The counselling sessions will involve the usual fees if there are any.

I suggest that you consider opting in to the research only after:

1. you have had at least one counselling session with me
2. this session and your other contact with me has given you some evidence that:
  - a. you are positioned so that you feel free to voice any concerns that you have, and
  - b. I have responded to your concerns in ways that demonstrate that you will be listened to, supported and safe.

The research process works like this:

1. If **both** of you indicate that you are interested in participating in the research project then we will meet to discuss the research project, including
  - more details about how it works
  - the format of research meetings and
  - the kinds of questions I might be interested in,
  - and any concerns you have.At the end of this meeting I will give you the research consent form and a reply paid envelope to take away.
2. When you have decided whether or not you want to join the research project:
  - you sign and return the consent form in the envelope provided.
  - If you decide not to go on to the research meetings counselling will continue as usual.

- If one of you withdraws from the research project the research meetings will not continue.
3. The research process will start with a normal one hour counselling meeting being taped (audio or video).
  4. The following week, or longer depending on our schedules, and before the next counselling session, we will have a research meeting of up to one and one half hours at which we will review the tape of the counselling meeting. I will make the tape available for you to review at my office prior to the research meeting if you wish.
    - You are welcome to bring your own notes to the research meeting and select parts of the tape that you wish to pay particular attention to in the research meeting.
    - The research meetings will involve
      - questions in more detail about how you found the counselling session,
      - any suggestions you might have for the counselling or
      - questions you might want to ask so that we can work together to make the counselling sessions more helpful to you.
  - If we need to cancel a research meeting for any reason you can decide whether the next meeting will be a research meeting or a counselling meeting so that your counselling meetings are not compromised by the time for research.
  - I will ask how these research meetings are working for you. I will review with you the amount of time we are taking for the research to see if it is sustainable for you or whether we need to renegotiate their duration and frequency.
  5. If you have indicated in your consent form that you want my counselling supervisor, Jane Harkness, to contact you she will phone you to:
    - See how the research meeting went before the next counselling meeting.
    - Check how the research is going for you and ask you about whether you have any concerns, including about withdrawing.

This step of including Jane is to make it as easy as possible for you to give feedback and withdraw from the project.

You can contact Jane to discuss progress or concerns until the end of the research project.

You will also be able to contact Jane if you want to withdraw from the research at any time. She will support you with your decision and talk to me on your behalf if you wish.

Jane's contact details are at the end of this form.

6. After the research meeting the next meeting will then be a counselling session, followed by another Research meeting.
7. This process will continue until the counselling ends or the time frame for this meetings phase of the research expires (up to five research meetings). At that point, I will invite you to have a final debrief and completion meeting. This will include confirming your authorisation of the use of your material for publication and presentations with the same protection of your privacy and identity. In any use I make of your material, I will first imagine that you are present to review and agree or not agree with what I am about to do. I will imagine myself as accountable to you for anything I write and say and act accordingly.
8. I will write up the counselling sessions and research meetings for the research project. You can choose a different name to go in the transcript and change some details about yourself, if this is necessary, to make sure that there is no information that would identify you.

I will give you copies of the research transcripts so that you can check them and make alterations as long as these do not change the conversation in ways that make it materially different from the tape. So you couldn't change the tape so that you said something quite different from what was actually said. Also you can't change things you did not say. Each person will edit their own speech. However, there may be particular pieces of the transcript that you do not want included in the research.

If you wish to see a copy of my final Thesis I will make a copy available for couples to read.

9. The same professional standards regarding care of notes applies to all of my notes and tapes from counselling sessions and research meetings.
  - All documents and tapes will be stored securely.
  - Tapes will be destroyed or erased once my doctoral thesis has been examined or if you withdraw from the project.
  - You may have a copy of my notes from meetings you attended.
    - You may have an exact copy of my hand written notes taken at the time,
    - or a typed version later.

- If the counselling is legally privileged these notes cannot be used in a Court or legal proceedings.
- The only people who will be able to see or listen to your tapes or to see the full transcripts are my supervisors; Jane Harkness, Dr Kathie Crocket and Dr Elmarie Kotzé. Their contact details are at the end of this form.

A flow chart of this process is included at the end of this document.

At any time, you can ask me to explain what I am doing and why I am asking particular questions. I am committed to being open, honest and accountable for anything I say and do in this research project. I am committed to putting your rights and ethical entitlements first.

### **Some of the other safeguards for this research project are:**

- I will send you a letter and reply paid envelope so that you have another way of letting me know if you are having second thoughts about the extent of your participation in the research. It will have options for you to indicate whether you want to continue or withdraw from the research project and or counselling.
- Throughout the process of counselling and research I will be working from a team work model. So I will not be thinking I know what is best for you. I believe this team-work model will make it easier for you to tell me what you are thinking or feeling.
- I am committed to the idea that problems are the problem not people. So whatever you say or do, I will not think less of you or think you are the problem. I will be supporting you each to team up with me and your partner to achieve your goals for counselling. While I am enthusiastic about this research and believe that it will increase the value of your counselling your experience of the counselling in relation to your goals are most important to me.
- I am anticipating about three couples will be enough for this project and I have planned to have enough time to allow me to start with new couples if some withdraw. So there is no pressure on you to participate if you feel uncomfortable about it, or to continue if you begin the process.
- If you decide not to continue with the research project, you can still continue with counselling. Or you can stop counselling also. If you choose to stop counselling I will help you find another counsellor if you wish.
- Throughout the whole process I will work on terms of and be accountable to the NZAC code of ethics and the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Regulations.

My supervisors for this research project are:

- Dr Kathie Crocket and Dr Elmarie Kotzé  
Department of Human Development and Counselling  
University of Waikato  
[address]

[phone number]

For counselling supervision, I meet with

- Jane Harkness  
[Address & phone number]

If having read this information you are **both** interested in knowing more about participating in my research, then I ask that you phone me on [phone number] to arrange a research project meeting. I will give you some more information at this meeting and answer any questions you have. I will not raise this with you again myself. This is so that I do not put any pressure on you to be part of the research project. It is very important to me that you are not under any pressure to join this research project or to stay in it if you find it isn't suiting you.

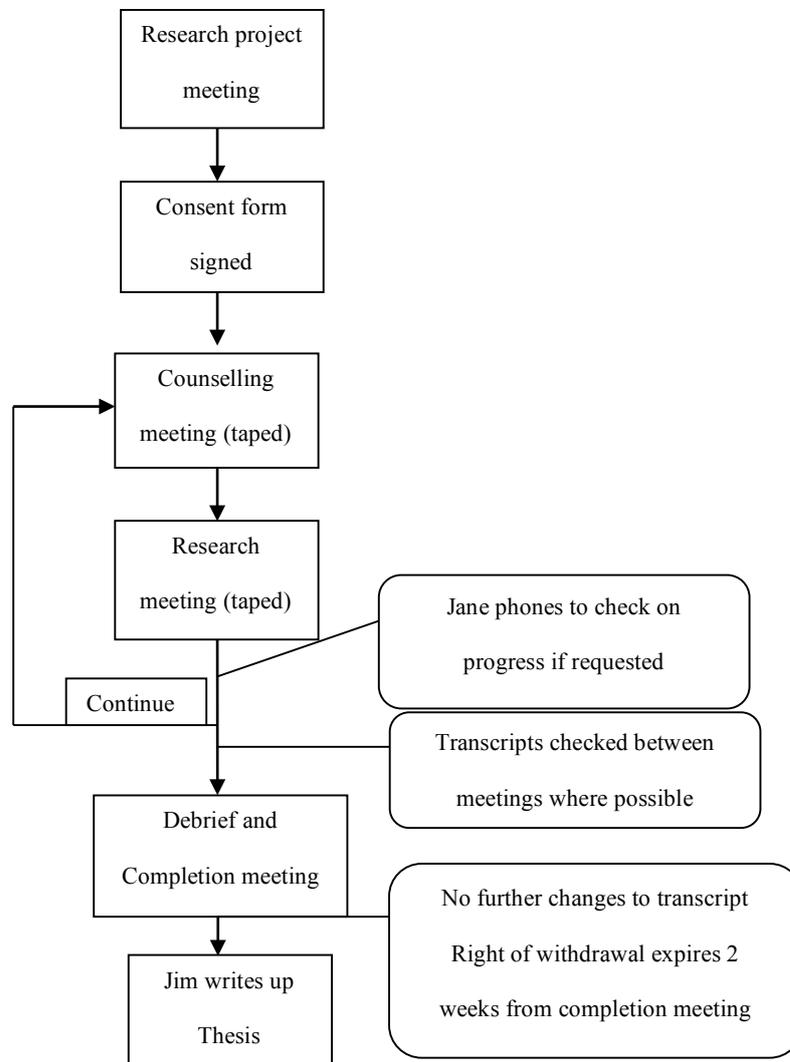
Thank you

Jim Depree

Counsellor and PhD candidate.

## Flow chart of meetings

All meetings involve one couple and Jim



## **A.3 Research consent form**

### RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

#### **Title of research:**

#### **Taping for therapeutic purposes in couples' therapy**

Researcher: Jim Depree

We have read and understood the information for participants.

We confirm that:

We understand this project is guided by the NZAC Code of Ethics and the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Regulations. Jim has offered information about how he will take responsibility to safeguard our rights and ethical entitlements.

We agree to the audio/video (delete any which do not apply) taping of our counselling sessions and research meetings. We understand that any records, including recordings, of our meeting will be kept securely and used for the purpose of this research project. We agree that the material as it is used in Jim's doctoral thesis may be published or presented at professional conferences by Jim.

We understand that not all of the material transcribed will be used in Jim's thesis.

We understand that we cannot use the transcripts of our conversations in any public context until Jim's thesis is presented for examination.

We understand that these tapes and our consent forms will be accessible to Jim's supervisors to enable them to hold Jim accountable to professional standards and

ethics and to provide safeguards for all participants. The supervisors will not reveal any identifying information about the participants to any other person.

Contact details for Jim's supervisors are:

- Dr Kathie Crocket (Principal Supervisor) and Dr Elmarie Kotzé  
Department of Human Development and Counselling  
University of Waikato  
[address]  
[Phone number]

Jim's counselling supervisor is

- Jane Harkness  
[Address & phone number]

We understand that we have the right to remove or alter identifying information from our transcripts but not change the conversation in ways that make it materially different from the tape in other ways.

We understand that we can ask questions at any time and that these will be welcomed.

- We would like Jane Harkness to phone us after our first research meeting to check how the research is going for us and to ask us about whether we have any concerns, including concerns about continuing with the research project.
- We do not want Jane Harkness to phone us.

We understand that there will be up to 5 research meetings of up to 1 ½ hours each.

We understand that we may withdraw from this study at any time until two weeks after our debrief and completion meeting. If we withdraw from the study, we understand that we only need to send Jim the completed withdrawal of consent form and that we do not need to provide an explanation for our withdrawal.

We understand that if one of us withdraws our consent neither of us can continue to participate in the study but that counselling will be able to continue if we choose this option.

We confirm that we have received the information we believe is necessary for us to give informed consent to participating in Jim Depree's research project and we agree to the terms as outlined.

Signed:----- Signed:-----

Name: ----- Name: -----

Date: ----- Date: -----

Any additions to this consent will be specified and signed below.

## **A.4 Sample questions of interest: Information for potential participants**

### **Questions of interest.**

#### **Information for couples**

This is some information about the approach I intend to take in our research meetings, including some of the kinds of questions I am interested in asking you. In practice I am sure that the “to and fro” of our conversations will produce interesting information and questions I could not predict. The information below is intended to give you more of a sense of what is involved in the research meetings.

#### **Introduction**

As we watch the tape please ask me to stop it any time something captures your interest.

If there is anything in particular you would like us to discuss, please let me know so that we can arrange how to spend the review time. We can work our way through the whole tape stopping at pieces that interest you or we can go to particular segments of interest to you.

In either case we can review how we are doing and renegotiate. I will keep an eye on the time and ask you how we are going at half an hour into the meeting and again at one hour into the meeting. There will also be up to 15 minutes at the end of the meeting to review the meeting itself and to summarise our discussion and to make suggestions about the next counselling session.

I will keep an eye on the speaking time we each have and raise this with you if the speaking time is not being shared equally.

I will also take responsibility to ensure that the conversation is conducted using respectful language.

## **The general territory of questions in the research meetings**

These questions indicate possible starting points for lines of enquiry. In practice these questions will be followed by responses which explore your responses, using the same co-researching questions that are used in the counselling conversations.

## **Your concerns in the meetings**

An example of how I intend to deal with your concerns:

1. Client I felt this question was unfair.
2. Jim: Can you tell me some more about what was it about the question that seemed unfair?
3. Client It seemed that you were taking her side when you asked me that question.
4. Jim I apologise for giving that impression. It's important to me to be fair. Can you tell me some more about what was unfair to you in that question? Do you have some ideas about how I could have been more careful with that question? Do you both agree that the conclusion we have reached about a better question is fair?

## **Research meeting questions**

### **Content: what we talked about in the counselling session.**

- Was there anything in particular that stood out for you in our counselling conversation?
- Were the things we talked about the kinds of things that you wanted to talk about?
- Were there things you would have liked to discuss that we didn't cover?
- What would you have liked to talk more about?
- Are there any parts of the counselling conversation that you felt were off the track?

### **Process: How we talked about it.**

- How do you think I did at making this a fair conversation? Did you feel I was taking sides at any times? Or did you feel I gave one of you more of a say than the other?

- How well do you think I did at appreciating and understanding your point of view?
- Did I give you enough time when you were distressed or did you feel hurried into answering questions before you were ready?
- What suggestions do you have about how I could improve my support for you?
- What were the effects of this counselling conversation on you and your relationship?
- Do you have any worries about anything that happened between you as a couple in this conversation, or that happened between the three of us?
- How has this conversation been in terms of increasing respect, appreciation understanding and safety between you?
- How are these research meetings working for you? Is the amount of time we are taking for the research sustainable for you or do we need to renegotiate?

### **Questions to guide the debrief and completion meeting**

1. What's it been like for you as a couple taking part in this research?
2. Is there anything in particular that stands out for you both about your experience of the counselling and research combination? Any particularly memorable moments?
3. What effect did the whole process have on your lives and relationships?
4. Would you recommend that other couples participate?
5. What would you change to make it better for them or if you were doing it again?
6. What would you want them or others to know about your experience of this project?
7. Are there any things you would say "Don't do this again" about?
8. How was the taping of the sessions? What effect did it have? How did it effect how you were in the sessions or afterwards? What sorts of things did it add or subtract from the experience of counselling?
9. What difference did the research meetings make compared with the counselling meetings?
10. Do you have some of your own questions?
11. Is there anything else you would like to say or for me or others to know?

## **A.5 Suspension of or withdrawal from research form**

### SUSPENSION OF OR WITHDRAWAL FROM RESEARCH FORM

#### **Title of research**

#### **Taping for therapeutic purposes in couples' therapy**

Researcher: Jim Depree

If you wish to temporarily suspend your participation in or withdraw from this research project, please use this form and return it in the envelope provided.

Please tick the boxes that apply.

#### Notification of concern

- I/we would like you to contact us to talk about the research project before we continue.
- I/we would like Jane Harkness to contact us to talk about the research project before we continue.
- I/we would like your University supervisors to contact us to talk about the research project before we continue.

#### Withdrawal from research

*A couple cannot continue in this study if one member of the couple withdraws*

#### Partial withdrawal

- I/we wish to withdraw from the ongoing process of the research but we are willing for the material already completed so far to be used for the purpose it was intended for and to be consulted about this.

## Complete withdrawal

- I/we wish to withdraw from this research project completely.

I/we understand that unless I/we note any exceptions on this form none of the information produced in our participation in this project is to be used.

I understand that Jim will be able to note in his research statistical information relating to our withdrawal. That is, he will be able to note the number of couples that withdrew from the study. Jim will not state a couple's reasons for withdrawing unless the couple consents to this or asks for this to be noted.

## Withdrawal from counselling

- I/we wish to withdraw from counselling.  
 I/we would like you to talk to us about this.  
 We would like you to provide us with information about how we might access more suitable counselling.

### **A message from Jim**

Thank you for advising me of your preferences. I regret any distress this project may have caused you and fully support your right to decide what suits you.

Jim Depree

Signed:-----

Signed:-----

Name: -----

Name: -----

Date: -----

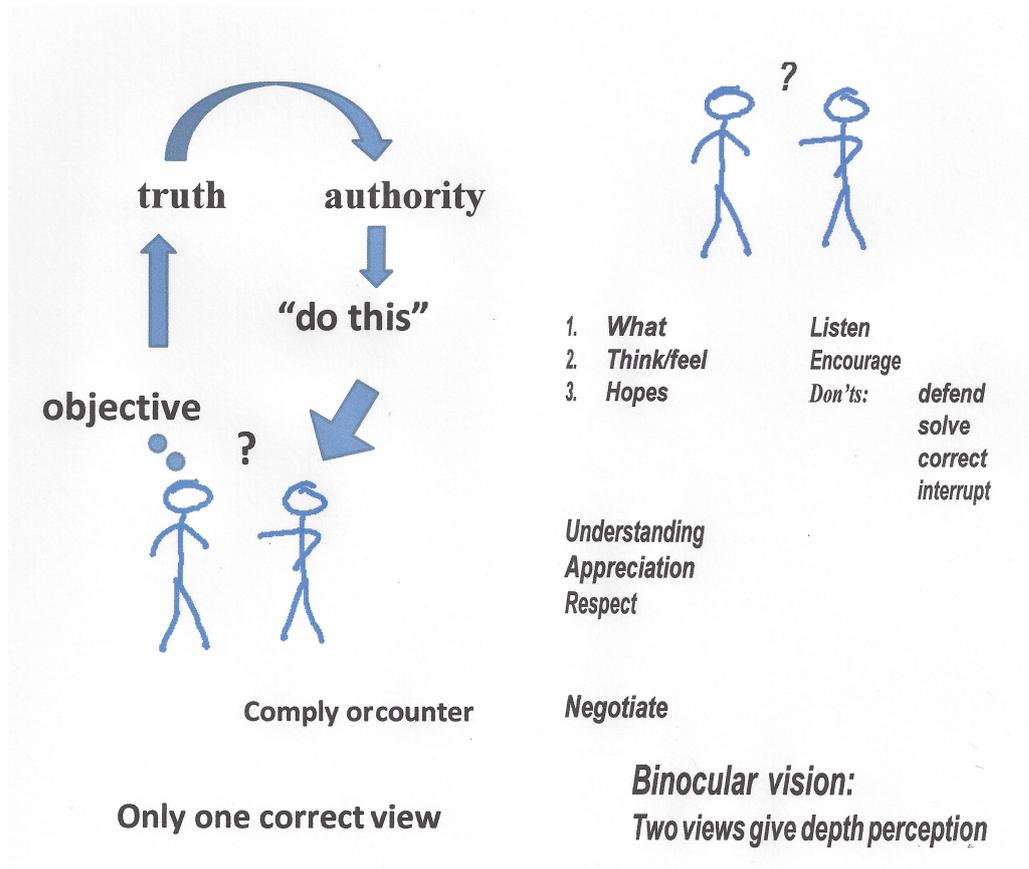
Date: -----

# Appendix B Appreciation of difference exercises

## B.1 As used with participants

### Two approaches to problem solving

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## **"Urgency for sameness" or "appreciation of difference".**

This exercise requires no agreement whatsoever apart from the agreement to do it.

Defending yourself will be unnecessary. Remember the problem is the problem, not you or the other person. You will each get your turn to speak and to be listened to, understood appreciated and respected. Listening, understanding, respecting and appreciating does not mean you agree.

If either of you is so convinced of your own view that you cannot listen to the other person's view, then you will be unready to undertake this exercise. This exercise is not about giving up your view; it is about exploring both of your views before coming to conclusions.

Do not try and use a reasoning approach. This is not about trying to reason with each other this is about understanding and appreciating each other.

This exercise has nothing to do with negotiating issues in your relationship. You will not be able to negotiate until you have established the right conditions. Negotiation arises from binocular vision. If you try to negotiate before these conditions are established you will, despite your best efforts, find yourselves locked into arguments which undermine your appreciation of each other and each other's points of view.

**This exercise is about binocular vision. It is about gaining a deep appreciation of each other's views and the differences between them. It is about getting in touch with each other.**

In this exercise there are 2 roles, **a** and **b**.

Each of you must have an equal turn at each role.

Make sure you set aside time when you cannot be interrupted and are free to have an in depth conversation.

Role A	Role B
<p>Describe what happened in a particular event and stick with "I" statements rather than "you" statements.</p> <p>Stick to what you saw. Do not tell the other person how they were feeling or thinking at the time.</p>	<p>In role <b>b</b> your job is to make room for <b>a</b> to express his or her views. Help <b>a</b> piece together what it was that they saw happening.</p>
<p>Talk about your personal feelings and thoughts in relation to this event.</p>	<p>Encourage <b>a</b> to explore his or her ideas, and feelings.</p> <p>Try to deepen your understanding of his or her ideas and attempt to explore them as if this was the first time you had heard them and you were deeply curious about them.</p>
<p>Talk about your hopes for change or resolution.</p>	<p>Help <b>a</b> be specific about their hopes and how they would like them to be put into practice.</p>
<p>If you notice that <b>b</b> is becoming defensive point this out.</p> <p>If <b>b</b> is unable to reassure you that he or she can cope with your point of view, and/or if you are unable to speak respectfully to <b>b</b>, then call the exercise off.</p>	<p>Reassure <b>a</b> that you can handle what he or she is saying.</p> <p>Check that you understand their point of view.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid defending yourself against <b>a</b>'s ideas. You don't have to agree with him/her.</li> <li>• Don't interrupt, or offer advice, or try and solve the problem.</li> <li>• If you find yourself becoming defensive or thinking that <b>a</b> or you are the problem, then call the exercise off.</li> </ul>

Do not try and reach a negotiated, reasoned solution. That will come next.

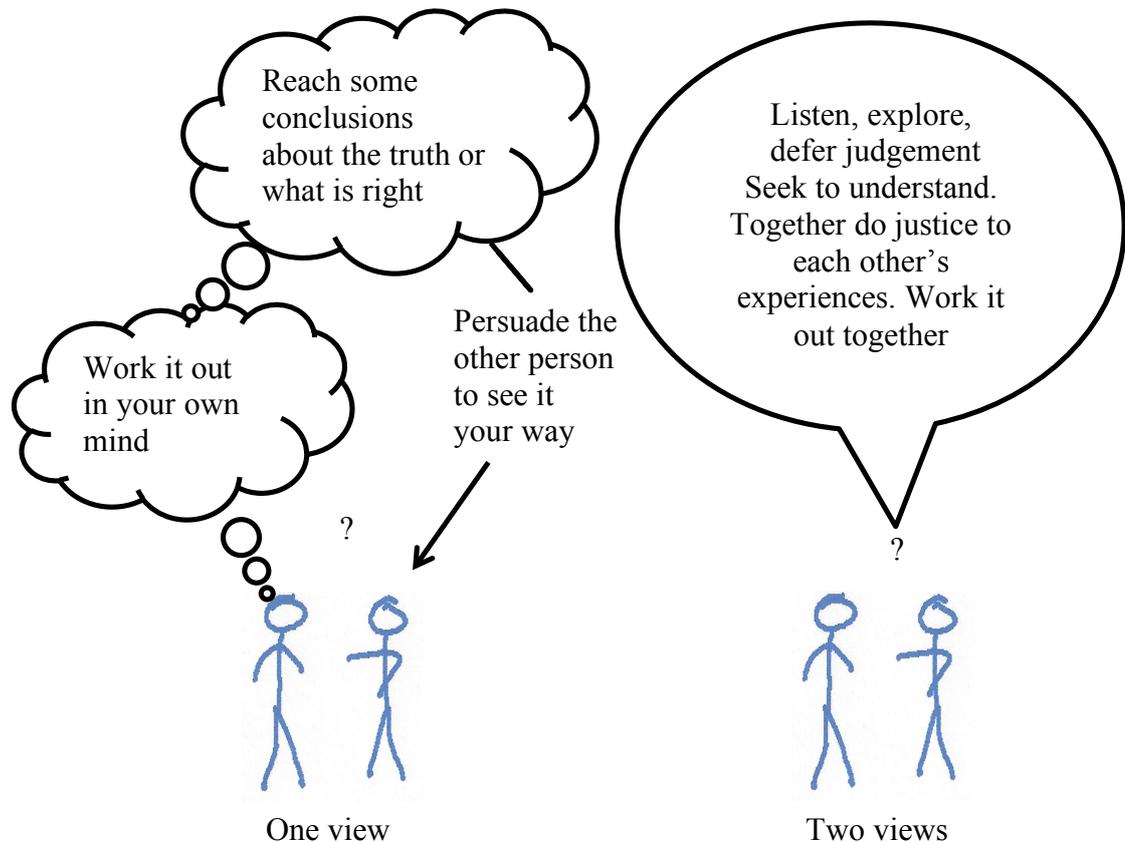
When **a** has finished his or her turn then swap roles.

Adapted from *Couple Therapy: "Urgency for sameness" or "Appreciation of difference"*;

Michael White, Dulwich Centre Newsletter; Summer 1986/7, pp11-13.

## B.2 Modified to emphasize deconstructive co-research

### Two approaches to problem solving



Everything will be solved when the other person sees it my way	Co-research of each person's experiences of the problem and their hopes for a solution
Develop and implement a solution on my own	Teamwork to do us justice
Argument - counter argument	Deconstruct, develop
Attack - defend	Speak of own experience
The other is the problem, or I am the problem	<i>The problem is the problem</i>
Recruit people who support my view	Consider other viewpoints
Focus on the truth, authority	Focus on appreciating the differences
Produces feelings of being misunderstood, unappreciated and disrespected: Distance	Deepens understanding, appreciation and respect: Feel closer

## "Urgency for sameness" or "appreciation of difference".

This exercise requires no agreement whatsoever apart from the agreement to do it.

Defending yourself will be unnecessary. Remember the problem is the problem, not you or the other person. You will each get your turn to speak and to be listened to, understood, appreciated and respected. Listening, understanding, respecting and appreciating does not mean you agree.

If either of you is so convinced of your own view that you cannot listen to the other person's view, then you will be unready to undertake this exercise. This exercise is not about giving up your view; it is about exploring and developing both of your views before coming to conclusions.

It is not about picking the other person's view apart in order to correct, destroy or discredit it. It is about deconstructing both of your accounts in order for you both to do justice to both of you and to do justice to both of your hopes.

Your aim is that both of you will feel understood, appreciated and respected. This is about carefully working together. It is not about venting or telling it like it is, or persuading. It is about co-researching.

This exercise is about creating a binocular view. The reason you have two eyes is so that you have depth perception. Putting your two views together in this way in your relationship gives you a deep appreciation of the problems you face and of your selves and your teamwork.

In this exercise there are 2 roles, A and B.

Each of you must have an equal turn at each role. Both turns must be about the same problem, as in order to get binocular vision both eyes have to be focussed on the same thing.

Make sure you set aside time when you cannot be interrupted and are free to have an in depth conversation.

This is a difficult exercise. Like any exercise you find difficult, go slowly and keep to what you can manage at the time so that you don't do yourself or the other person an injury. If you find you find it too difficult to stick to the exercise this may be a sign that you need some support and coaching. Don't take it as a sign that you are the problem.

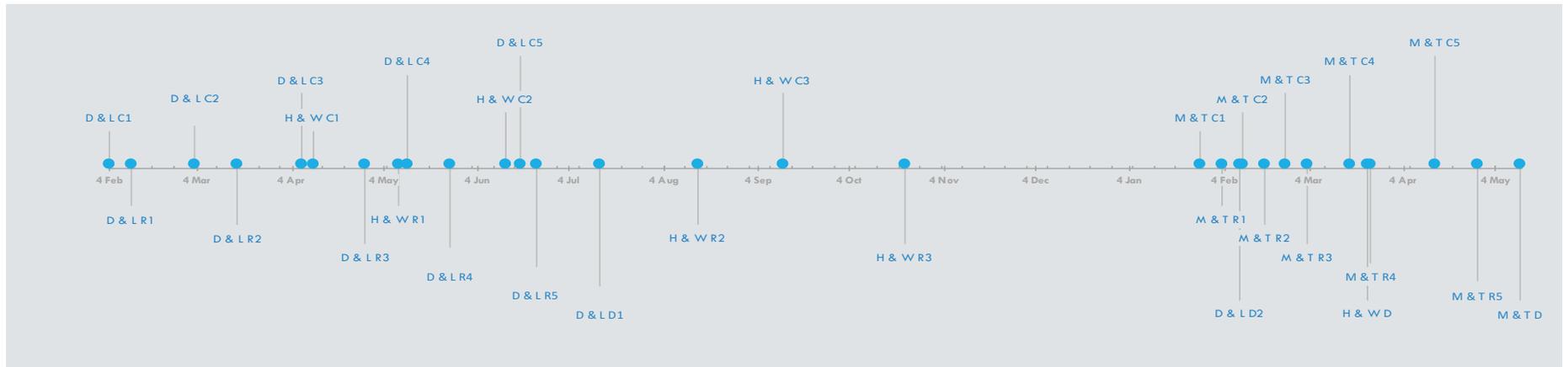
Role A	Role B
<p>Describe what happened in a particular event and stick with "I" statements rather than "you" statements. Stick to what you saw. Do not tell the other person how they were feeling or thinking at the time. Avoid personal attacks on <b>B</b>.</p>	<p>Make room for <b>A</b> to express and develop his or her views. Help <b>A</b> piece together what it was that they saw happening.</p>
<p>Talk about your personal feelings and thoughts in relation to this event.</p>	<p>Encourage <b>A</b> to explore his or her ideas and feelings. Try to deepen your understanding of his or her ideas and attempt to explore them as if this was the first time you had heard them and you are deeply curious about them. Don't take their experiences personally.</p>
<p>Talk about your hopes for change or resolution. Try to frame these in positive and respectful terms.</p>	<p>Help <b>A</b> to be specific about their hopes and how they would like them to be put into practice.</p>
<p>If you notice that <b>B</b> is becoming defensive point this out. If <b>B</b> is unable to reassure you that he or she can cope with your point of view, and/or if you are unable to speak respectfully to <b>B</b>, then call the exercise off.  Appreciate what it takes to put your view with respect and care.</p>	<p>Reassure <b>A</b> that you can handle what he or she is saying. Reassure yourself that respecting, listening and appreciating is a difficult and honourable thing to do.  Check that you understand their point of view.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid defending yourself against <b>A</b>'s ideas. You don't have to agree with him/her.</li> <li>• Don't interrupt, correct, or offer advice, or try to solve the problem.</li> <li>• If you find yourself becoming defensive or thinking that <b>A</b> or that you are the problem, then call the exercise off.</li> </ul>

When **A** has finished his or her turn, then swap roles in order to discuss the same issue.

Do not try and reach a solution until you have both had your turns.

Adapted from *Couple Therapy: "Urgency for sameness" or "Appreciation of difference"*; Michael White, Dulwich Centre Newsletter; Summer 1986/7, pp11-13.

# Appendix C Timeline of counselling, research and debrief meetings with participants (2008 – 2009)



Key	
D & L = Dave & Lolita	C = Counselling meeting
H & W = Hinemoa & Wiremu	R = Research meeting
M & T = Miranda & Tony	D = Debrief meeting