

**Enactments of Change:
Becoming Textually Active at Youthline NZ**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis concerns the relationship between how people think about change and what they do to enact it. The specific change investigated involves a shift in the practices of telephone counselling to the silent texting space of SMS messaging. The site of the study is Youthline, New Zealand (NZ), a youth oriented telephone helpline. In working the technology to suit human needs, it becomes apparent that the technology shapes those involved. The technology in this network is demonstrably not a passive carrier of conversation, nor are the young people making use of the service passive recipients, the counsellors do not move in untroubled ways from one medium to another, and counselling does not remain the same.

There is no evidence-base for such a practice; there never is for new practice. How then is new practice learned? One of the teaching and learning challenges that becomes apparent is that something cannot be taught until it is known, and in not knowing how the practice would develop there can be little preparation for those involved.

This thesis draws on the conceptual and analytical sensibilities of actor-network theory (ANT). In tracing the detailed activities involved in this new practice, myriad beings, human and otherwise, are made visible. In observing practice development, it becomes evident that things happen due to contingent relationships rather than individually held agency. Recognising agency as distributed disrupts conceptions of who leads and who follows, of who teaches or learns, who gets to define whom, and who defines problems.

In writing of these accounts, I collate partial and decentred ways of knowing. The use of the word partial is deliberate and relates to more than one meaning. The stories do not, and cannot, encompass the whole. In addition, such stories reflect the author's own partiality. "I" write a text composed of slices, where such slices of stories sometimes sit alongside one another, but which more often intersect and which sometimes clash, demonstrating the precarious reality this thesis depicts. In

telling these stories, particular realities are made more and less real; particular conditions of possibility get extended.

In analysing the tangle of contingent relations that makes text counselling more and less viable, the intent was never to prove text counselling as good or bad, but to appreciate the precarious, uncertain, and revisable nature of text counselling as practiced and to provide openings for improving practice. Knowing the intricacies of the myriad beings involved and how their relationships are negotiated points to how things could also be otherwise.

Chapter 1: Situating the Research

The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.
(Hartley, 1953, p. 137)

Introduction

This thesis concerns the relationship between what people think about change and what they do to enact it. The specific site of change involves the use of emergent technologies at Youthline, Auckland NZ; a youth-oriented telephone helpline. At the time of starting this research, Youthline counselling is predominantly by telephone helpline. Phones ring and calls are taken in an almost continuous stream. There is an audible quiet hum of counselling conversations occurring in the phone rooms. By 2012, the phones barely ring at all. Counselling conversations still occur but most occur silently. What happened to silence the phone rooms? And in silencing the phone rooms what happened to counselling? What does this do not only to counselling but also to counsellors and importantly, to those who make use of such services? In investigating these questions might it be possible to face a more fundamental one, is this a change for good?

These questions are unable to be addressed without regard for whose “good” is being addressed, and what changes are involved. Such questions address concerns of the particular: of time, and place, and of those involved.

Situating the research

I am conscious of time passing. What is new and emergent now may not be experienced as such by you, the reader. This research, when completed, will belong to the past, to a specific time and place.

The first glimmer of this research is in New Zealand in the summer of 2004, the World Wide Web is but 3000 days young. The data is gathered throughout 2008, and the World Wide Web is 5000 days old, yet it feels like she has been

with us forever. The technologies we use tend to slip from view once we become used to them, and as argued by Wise (1997, p. xvi) there is a need to make sure that their effects do not slip by unnoticed.

In 2010, Youthline celebrates its 40th anniversary, and with the passing of time much of its history is lost. I do not intend to set to rights the records of the past; the stories that remain serve different purposes, and aligning them is not mine. I trace some of Youthline's past through artefacts and interviews, but only in as much as it creates conditions for the present.

I have been told repeatedly that Youthline was started by three hippies. The artefacts do not support this, in these a Catholic Priest, Felix Donnelly is credited with its inception. Meeting with contradiction becomes a recurrent experience in this research and rather than deleting such contradictions to make a smooth narrative, this research tells of workplace stories that sometimes align, sometimes converge, but which also frequently demonstrate difference. The distortions and fragments of memory captured from times past are written of by Padel (1995). In citing Etienne van Heerden, she says "there are so many pasts, and 'it' never looks the same." In a study of change I have taken this to heart, the stories told shift with different participants recalling times differently.

In the earlier days of this research, late 2005 and early 2006, when asked what I was studying, I would explain that I was studying the use of emergent technologies in youth counselling such as discussion boards, email and texting. The responses, admittedly not from young people, included laughter, disdain, and disbelief reflected in a response of "what next?" While email seemed to have a level of acceptance, there was little respect for texting. Texting was generally perceived as a fairly trivial means for chat. More extreme responses suggested it was a travesty to suggest that in such a small screen space anything could be achieved remotely resembling counselling. In studying what was seen as alternately trivial or bad, I had a sense of being marginalised by association: research and researcher not to be taken seriously. Meantime, young people were taking to the medium of text positively and seriously.

Practice was being reconfigured by users, and whether this might be a good or bad thing was unknown. There was no evidence-base for this practice; there never is for new practices. This creates tensions with funding bodies as well as for conscientious reflective practitioners. Such tensions centre on the question of knowing if something is “for the better” or at least that it will “do no harm”. In asking, “is this a good or bad thing” it becomes evident that goodness is not an unequivocal construct. In health promotion and community development, there is no consensus on what evidence should be weighted most strongly in determining either goodness or badness (see for example Rootman et al., 2001). Within counselling, similarly, what is “good counselling” has yet to be settled (Corey, 2009). Goodness and badness remain essentially contested concepts, and as will be shown, goodness and badness are not necessarily mutually exclusive; elements of things good and bad are juggled in practice.

During the course of the study I am told that Youthline aims to be where young people are, providing a strength-based support service responsive to the needs of young people: easily accessible, available and appropriate. In being responsive, the organization extends its helpline and face-to-face services further into digital spaces. This includes updating its websites and discussion board, establishing presence on social media sites bebo, Facebook, and Twitter, and in addition to its email counselling service Youthline offers a text service. I am told the use of texting provides a means for counselling for young people who might not be reached otherwise. I am also told text provides a portal or stepping stone, a link to other means of assistance such as ringing the helpline, emailing, or making an appointment for face-to-face counselling. I begin to notice contradictions in the statements of intent.

In looking at how stories clash, offering up contradictions, the contested nature of stories told reflect situated knowledges. It is not that one or other story is wrong, simply the stories do not reflect a homogenised telling of the way things are. That I call them stories is not meant to suggest untruths, there is no duplicity involved. Neither may the stories be discounted as fictions; these accounts demonstrate how the world is seen, and more, for they are also accounts of what is enacted, and thereby how realities are made. This thesis tells the stories of enactments of

change, and how this youth helpline became textually active. Within this exploration it becomes increasingly apparent that not only are there contestations over what is good or bad in counselling, but also over whose reality is made for better or worse.

To this point, I have talked of this research as if it were “out there”, I now turn the focus of this research inward on myself as researcher and writer. This research was not born somewhere “out there”, but is a story born of my own discomfort; I was frustrated in my abilities to effect change and particularly change that involved work in digital spaces.

Situating the researcher

This research developed out of both personal and professional interests. The two areas are difficult to separate, and I choose not to. In contextualising this research, my beliefs about what it is to be a person, and to be involved with others, provide an impetus to discover more about what it is to be in a helping relationship as a health professional and as an educator, and how practices are shaped.

I am a person who cares deeply about how I am treated, how I treat others and about people in relationships with each other, and because of this, I teach. In this research, I am a student; I want to know more of how people relate, and how this might be enhanced. I want to learn. I am a health practitioner as well as a lecturer in the Health Faculty of a University. I teach communication skills in the formal tertiary education sector as well as for Youthline, where I am a group facilitator teaching voluntary telephone counsellors to take crisis calls. Sometimes I am a “helper”, and as the following story shows, sometimes I’m also someone who needs help. I am not one or the other, teacher or student, professional or volunteer, helper or helpee. At times I feel fragmented, or spread too thinly in juggling roles and demands, at other times I feel compartmentalised by others into alternate forms of this or that. What I know is that I am just a complex person like any other, unique in regard to my own experiences but no more or less unique than any other being on the planet.

In the following story, I tell of events from 2002 that led me into the study of change. The story is personal, I make no apologies for this; change is very much experienced personally. The telling demonstrates changing practice as non-linear, multidimensional, and could even be considered “messy”, but I will talk more of this later.

I was on clinical placement with a student who was crying on the steps of a mental health clinic. She felt inadequate within the mental health context and shamed from an experience several weeks earlier involving a classroom role-play situation. In this she had felt ill prepared but willing to give it a go.

She described feeling unsupported and humiliated.

I felt there had to be a better way.

In this situation, I am a teacher as well as learner, teacher as well as practitioner, and an empathising person who connected with her own shame involving educational experiences.

About a year later, I was provided with an opportunity to review other nursing curriculum. I was invited to view some online teaching. I had an understanding that this would involve scrolling through screens of reading, perhaps enhanced by images or more active involvements such as self-paced tests, crosswords even, to engage students and provide feedback on understanding. It wasn't a form of learning I had much interest in; I felt a workbook could do this. Instead, I was “blown away” by seeing streamed video used as triggers for problem-based learning and preparation for coming to class, and where class-time was fully interactive.

I went back to my university full of hope.

I attempted to engage others with this “wonderment”. My enthusiasm was not enough; good ideas do not have their own momentum. After an application for an internal grant to enhance learning and teaching was declined, a colleague and I simulated what it was we wanted to do using PowerPoint and a handheld video camera and presented this at a staff meeting. The product looked like something

out of the Blair Witch Project.¹ Despite the technological deficiencies evident in the shakiness of a handheld camera, or possibly because of the realism evident, plus my simulated self-harm of wrist cutting and an overdose attempt to provide a prompt for student learning in the area of mental health, we were able to gain sufficient support for further funding applications. With thanks to my university for a teaching and learning grant, a colleague and I were able to make 3 CD-ROMs of scenarios specific to health professional education in New Zealand.

Prior to launching the learning and teaching package with students we were invited to present it to the staff. Problems prevailed, the lip synch between what was said and what was heard was out by a one second delay, on a PC the CD-ROM would connect seamlessly but on the big screen via a multimedia display unit there were technical difficulties we had not anticipated. This was a problem resulting in a psychotic like portrayal where hearing voices and talking to oneself came across with every interaction rather than just the ones intended. The fledgling technological skills of my colleague and I were not equal to the intricacies of the platform. Or maybe it was the stress of presenting in the face of resistance resulting in our lesser ability to make what had worked in other circumstances work in this one. My faith in the cleverness of this technology had me thinking that surely the quality of magic is not strained, if it can do everything else, surely it could do a little more, lip-synch was surely not too much to ask. A major learning was that magic comes in small bytes.

In the development and implementation, resistance from colleagues continued. Resistance was initially experienced as avoidance of involvement but was followed by sabotage and escalated to an extremely unpleasant team meeting, and continued personal attacks. Talking with the Head of School, and having a team meeting facilitated by an external skilled counsellor as well as three sessions with an external employee assistance counsellor, did little to address the fallout.

¹ Myrick and Sanchez (1999) developed The Blair Witch Project as a film in the genre of horror/mystery/thriller, filmed by handheld video camera, with a script largely of impromptu dialogue. It presents as “found footage” pieced together in documentary style. The result was a simulated reality and despite the film being entirely fictional, many believed it to be true (<http://www.blairwitch.com>). The naïve filming style seemingly contributed to the presumed authenticity.

Working relationships within the team were strained. My colleague resigned citing horizontal violence.

The development of the online learning and teaching package was completed. There was a directive by the Head of School that it be used. Timetabling to teach students how to use a learning management system, Blackboard, as well as the online teaching and learning package was provided. The space provided was late afternoon immediately before Easter and a two-week study break. The way the CD-ROMs and online learning package were to be utilised became an added extra for students on top of fully timetabled coursework. I was informed that timetables and room bookings, since they involved campus services centrally managed from another campus, could not be altered. Facing such open resistance and feeling increasingly isolated from the team I worked with, I resigned from this team at the end of the semester and took up a position in another division of the Faculty.

Despite this, the teaching and learning package is still being used, just not in the way the authors imagined. In its implementation it has been adapted.

Compatibility with the Blackboard platform as well as platforms involving both PCs and Macintosh computers required renegotiating. Workaround solutions were found; the length of video clips were shortened preventing the identified lip-synch problems. The learning and teaching package continues to be used by this University at its Centre for Educational and Professional Development as a model of what can be done in online teaching. Four other Schools of Nursing use the CD-ROMs for teaching mental health nursing. They are also used by two District Health Boards for teaching de-escalation and critical incidents in mental health areas. In addition, courses including psychotherapy and a course for medical translators make use of parts of the package. The example was accepted onto the New Zealand E-learning guideline website, a joint venture between the New Zealand Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Commission (refer to A. Haxell, 2006).

Yet, what was envisaged did not occur.

Is this then a story of despair?

The envisaged change in teaching did not occur, but something else has.

Is this then a story of hope?

Success and failure are partial. Both, as well as variations in between, occur simultaneously. This was a work-story, a story of practice, and a story of both hope and despair, complex and messy. Such events defy detached analysis. At the risk of stating the obvious, my story would not be “my story” if told in a detached way. The story would also be different if told by my colleagues. In *Little Red Riding Hood*, were it told by the wolf, the wolf would not be a villain. A story is told differently depending on who, or what, has voice.

The story is told differently depending on who is being addressed and the hopes and fears evoked. When told by a colleague, Robert², the story takes a dramatic twist: distrust and despair in professional relationships, a lack of confidence in educational management, and resignation rather than working in a culture with callous disregard for the treatment of students and for each other. Such changes as occurred he associated with a maelstrom of restructuring, escalating workloads, a lack of leadership, a stressed workplace and deteriorating collegial relationships.

The contrast between the “good exemplar” for online learning within a tertiary sector and the woundedness of colleagues is extreme. This suggests the story is more than told differently, it is experienced differently, as I would later come to appreciate on reading Mol (2002), “reality is multiple”.³

Stories of change have potential for being expressed, and heard, as stories of hope and of despair, and of variations in-between. This is not a matter of perspective. A perspective is a view from only one place; as such it tends to be unidimensional. However, the story told is multiple, and the reading is multiple because “reality is

² This is a pseudonym; while “Robert” has read and consented to this story being told, others involved have not. A pseudonym is used to protect the identities of others.

³ Mol (2002) presents this powerful argument within her text, *The Body Multiple*. That reality is multiple is an argument that progresses throughout this thesis and is further explained in the following chapter.

multiple”. The story as I experienced it, fluctuates as a story of despair and hope. Not only do the different actors experience the story differently, but even the same actors at different times see hope and despair in different places. The story is multiple, bringing together slices of practice.

In this telling, the pattern of communications intersects formal with informal. This provides an opportunity to engage on other levels. The means of communicating provides a space where feelings can be invoked, where hopes, dreams, fears and/or resistance might be experienced. In my writing this account for doctoral studies, the tone is (mostly) formal, but it is still a story, and even though it is a research story, it is also a performance in its own right.

The metaphor of a performance brings some unfortunate connotations. What is studied is not addressed for spectator entertainment or voyeuristic interest. As a performance, this writing is expected to be unsettling. It is expected to interfere with preconceptions of counselling and of how change occurs. It is a performance in its own right, it creates conditions where particular things are seen and not seen; the research story has influence and how this story is told matters.

In a “good” story, an evocative story, there is an ability to engage. A relationship develops in the telling: aspects of the story resonate with the reader, with what it is like to share such experiences, thoughts and feelings. At the same time there is difference. In telling this story, I know that you, the reader weren’t there; you cannot know what I felt though you may empathise. You did not sit on the steps with a distressed student; you were not shamed in this teaching practice. You did not work with the people involved or try to create change addressing the same issues of content or context. There is always difference.

There is also difference for different readers, as different readers attend to different parts of a story, or even to the same parts differently. You the reader may empathise with the author in a struggle to change practices in an institution, or you may have a shared experience in struggling with technology that does not behave, or with a team’s abandonment of colleagues, or with a student’s or teacher’s expression of shame and/or inadequacy, or identify with the difficulty of telling a story that seems a digression from the norm in doctoral studies. At any

given time the examples used may elicit shifts between hope and despair depending on what you, as reader, are attending to. For a reader, the story also changes. What is read today creates a different experience when it is reread or read under different circumstances. This is encapsulated by the slogan on the bookmark my library provides me with, “You never read the same book twice.” How you relate to a story, and to events, is always personal, and is always situated.

Relating to the reader

In the literature of change, events are often told as if a linear process was occurring. A need is identified, a solution and process implemented to enact the change. Such a process suggests a definitive start point and a discernable end, where befores and afters are clearly differentiated, yet this glosses how past and present blur. Temporal closeness need not have strong influence, historical occurrences might be more relevant, and such influences may or may not be consciously held. Serres (1995), in a conversation with Latour, talks of this “crumpling of time” where time might be thought of not in terms of how it is measured but as it is experienced; where folds can be mapped tracing the past in the present. Would it be possible to read this thesis had the printing press not been invented? Had inks or paper not been developed? Had religious reformation not occurred leading to expectations of widespread literacy? And how could texting ever have evolved without these same developments even though such occurrences are not typically considered when glancing at the pixelations of a texted message. This thesis therefore investigates how change occurs tracing relationships involved, human and otherwise, as well as those both past and present.

The oversimplification of a linear account is also destructive. Too little is accounted for. Oversimplifying denies the complexity involved. This is no study of an artificial world but of complex relationships involving complex entities. Such complexity extends to reader and writer. Considering “text qua text” opens up the intertextual space of this thesis positioning reader and writer within a networked undertaking. As asserted by Roland Barthes (1973/1975), meaning is

negotiated by the reader not only in response to the text before them, but is made in relation to a complex network of other texts, and therefore other meanings that might be made. In drawing attention to the text qua text, my intent is to draw attention to the active process of meaning making, and to the sure knowledge that different readers invoke differing networks.

The study of everyday practice is of a world that is complex, often times vague, even messy. In describing changing practice my intention is to prompt consideration for complexity, and to present this in a way that does not smooth or gloss the difficulties and messiness involved. To this end, this research into change moves away from methods that simplify. While it is not my intention to add to the messiness of research on change, how might something that continuously shape shifts, involves partial accounts, is non-linear, and multilayered, be explored without rendering it into a lifeless account that little reflects what it talks of? My answer is in this thesis, mapped out within the outline that follows.

Thesis outline

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the complexity of change. I have invited you as reader to explore practice as it develops, to consider how practice is shaped, as well as how it shapes, and to consider that it might also be shaped differently.

Chapter 2 begins to negotiate the meaning of key terms and concepts central to this thesis. The latter part of this chapter prompts consideration of how meaning, message, and the medium, are entwined.

Chapter 3 engages with the capacious literature theorising change. In networking this literature, my intent is to move beyond a comparative analysis demonstrating patterns of similarity or difference, or contesting one approach over another. Instead, I point to the multiple and contested realities apparent in the literature on change, through which ideas are not only presented but where particular realities are made, more and less. The latter part of this chapter explores relationality as a means of engaging with the complexities of change. In making known the

relations of the many entities involved, consideration might then be given to how particular realities enact practice.

Chapter 4 introduces actor-network theory for theorising change. An outline of the actor-network sensibilities that inform the research is provided. Attention is drawn to how the research process similarly performs particular realities.

Chapter 5 involves methodological praxis; I reflect on the research performance while it is in progress, accounting for, as well as reshaping what I do, with particular regard for minimising collateral harms that might occur as a result of the research process.

Chapter 6 presents socio-technical-political stories of change. These are portrayed as slices of practice, a compilation of stories addressing the thesis question of just what is going on as young people enter into counselling electing to use a medium of their own choosing. The stories presented are told as discontinuous narratives reflecting the multiple voices and realities involved.

Chapter 7 considers the implications of this research. This is undertaken in line with an argument developed throughout this thesis affirming reality as multiple.

Chapter 8 provides a closing reflection on the performative aspect of research as a political endeavour and points to ongoing matters of concern.

Chapter 2: Negotiating Meaning

Introduction

In reading and writing there is an expectation that both reader and writer relate to terms in a similar way. However, as indicated in the preceding chapter, key terms and constructs need to be negotiated. This chapter negotiates meanings of key words and concepts relating to the research undertaken, it also prompts consideration of how meaning, message, and the medium, are entwined.

Counselling

While interpersonal communications can relate to all social interactions, counselling⁴ occurs within a therapeutic relationship with interpersonal skills being used for a deliberate and positive effect. This involves a cluster of skills loosely referred to as talking therapies (Te Pou, 2009).

The fuzzy boundary associated with this non-definitive cluster of skills reflects the nebulous nature of counselling. Indeterminate borders are also evident in literature that refuses to differentiate counselling from psychotherapy. The terms are often used interchangeably (Barak, 2004), and the literature is equivocal on whether there is any meaningful difference or if anything can be gained from differentiating the terms (Corsini, Wedding, & Dumont, 2008; Feltham, 2006). Feltham (2006) states:

No single, consensually agreed definition of either counselling or psychotherapy exists... Counselling and psychotherapy are mainly, though not exclusively, listening-and-talking-based methods of addressing psychological and psychosomatic problems and change, including deep and prolonged human suffering, situational dilemmas, crises and developmental needs, and aspirations toward the realization of human potential... The contention advanced by this book's editors is that counselling and psychotherapy, in spite of partly different

⁴ The spelling of counselling and counsellor (rather than counseling and counselor) is in line with conventions in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. Where quotations have been taken from texts, the spelling reflects the spelling convention of that text.

historical roots and affiliations, have much more in common than they have serious and demonstrable differences and that practitioners and the public stand to gain much more from the assumption of commonality than from spurious or infinitesimal distinctions. (p. 3)

Similarly, Corsini and Wedding (2008) in the well renowned text *Current Psychotherapies*, note the bewildering set of ideas, behaviours and therapeutic practices encompassed by the term psychotherapy. Citing numerous authors, they state:

There have been systems of therapy that had no therapist (Schmidhoffer, 1952); systems in which the therapist says and does nothing (Bion, 1948); systems in which patients are asked to scream or to strike out (Bach & Goldberg, 1975; Janov, 1970); methods in which the therapist makes fun of the patient, treating him or her with apparent disrespect (Farrelly & Brasma, 1974), and methods in which the patient or client is treated with utmost respect (Losdoncy, 1981); methods in which patients are treated as children (Painter & Vernon, 1981); methods that stress religion (Lair & Lair, 1973; van Kaam, 1976); and methods that are conglomerates of a wide variety of procedures (Gazda, 2001; Shostrom & Montgomery, 1978).

What one authority considers psychotherapy may be completely different from how other authorities see the process.

Counseling and psychotherapy are the same qualitatively: they differ only quantitatively. There is nothing that a psychotherapist does that a counselor does not do. No definition can be made that will include all psychotherapies and exclude all counseling methods. Various attempts to separate the psychotherapies and exclude all counseling methods have failed. The concept that psychotherapy goes into depth and counseling does not, is discredited. (pp. 1–2)

The inability to separate counselling from therapy, in addition to the variety of procedures or practices, makes for a nebulous entity. Nonetheless, Youthline has claim to having been established on Carl Rogers' client-centred approach (Donnelly, 1981; Hambly, 1984; Locke, 1981). This approach remains current in Youthline's basic counselling course for telephone counsellors.

The client-centred approach places the client at the centre of what is discussed, and is predicated on the client's own strength in being able to develop solutions to their own difficulties (C. Rogers, 1946). Situating the client as central to the counselling relationship, as a thinking feeling person capable of making their own valid choices, distinguishes this approach from the two preceding waves in therapy, those of psychoanalysis and behaviourism.

Rogers (1957) went on to propose the necessary and sufficient conditions of the therapeutic relationship as being: empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence. He argued:

The techniques of the various therapies are relatively unimportant except to the extent that they serve as channels for fulfilling one of these conditions. (p. 102)

Disagreement on the “necessary and sufficient” conditions led to decades of research. A summation based on a meta-narrative of research into counselling concluded Rogers' conditions were neither necessary nor sufficient for all clients (Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005). Citing studies by Geslo and Carter (1985) as well as Lietaer (2002), Kirschenbaum and Jourdan note that individual clients had improved despite all three conditions not being present. They modified the foundational skills of counselling and therapy stating:

Although neither necessary nor sufficient for all clients, the core conditions are *helpful to extremely helpful* with virtually all clients. (p. 43)

People are known to improve with none of these conditions present. There are, of course, other influences outside of the therapeutic counselling relationship, other fortuitous events as well as social and family support and the client's own resilience. Notwithstanding these other influences, Wampold (2010) identifies the common feature of effective therapeutic relationships as a quality working alliance centred on the bond between client and therapist, their agreement about the goals of therapy, and agreement about the tasks involved. According to Wampold, if one excludes the severity of client symptoms, the higher the alliance at the beginning of the working relationship, the better the outcome.

In this thesis I use the term counselling⁵ as this is the current and preferred term at Youthline where this study occurs. This is, however, not without contention. While the literature fails to distinguish counselling from therapy, political acts are differentiating such activities. In line with New Zealand's Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003), there are moves to establish a registering board for therapists and for counsellors. This will result in restricted use of these titles. Qualification standards predicated on face-to-face counselling models are anticipated. So too is the likelihood that Youthline will not meet requirements to become an accredited training provider. The act of regulating counselling, albeit with an intent that the general public be protected from substandard practice is, however, not expected to alter the service provided. Young people's use of a telephone helpline is expected to continue, and the organization is committed to providing an ongoing service whether referred to as counselling or as a helpline. Youthline anticipates that day-to-day practice will continue, whatever it is called.

As has been introduced, there are many approaches to counselling with a range of theories underpinning practice diversity. Comparative studies on theory and approaches to counselling have been done before, and the results as pointed to, remain unsettled. I do not contribute to a literature of contested claims on theories of counselling; instead, this research looks at practice as it evolves within the particular context of a youth-oriented telephone helpline and in accordance with the stated goals of that organization.

Practice

This thesis investigates changing practice. It is not a study of things being practiced as if competence had yet to be demonstrated, nor is it practice in the sense of staying in tune, or up to par, in performances that do not count. The type of practice studied is closest to clinical practice though the setting is non-medical; there are no patients and most of the work is undertaken by a voluntary workforce. The practices studied, although daily business for the counsellors involved, are not routine. These practices do not exist in the abstract; they are

⁵ There will be instances where the terms therapy or psychotherapy are used instead of counselling. When this occurs it is because what is being discussed relates to a particular author and their chosen term.

performed, and every performance of counselling is different. Sometimes there is similarity, though the content of what is addressed differs and those involved differ, there may still be a commonality in the cluster of skills used. Sometimes the difference is such that similarity may be difficult to see, for example, when the counsellor and the client do not meet and do not speak. This research is, therefore, an investigation into how practice is shaped.

Remembering the nebulous and bewildering array of approaches that might be covered by the term counselling, I deliberately select a definition of practice that allows for the variable and purposeful activities described:

Practice is a knowledgeable collective action that forges relations and connections among all the resources available and all the constraints present. (Gherardi, 2009, p. 117)

Understanding practice as formed in relationships allows for better understanding of how practice is shaped, and could – for better or worse, be shaped otherwise. However, this definition skirts the messiness involved that Pickering (1993) named the “mangle of practice”. In exploring intention he expands on how human agency is pulled into, and combined with, the terrain of material agency. This presents practice as emergent; an outcome of people and things. Pickering’s “mangle” invokes consideration for the complexity of practice, of multiple interactive effects and of the variations that occur.

Barad (2003) drawing on feminist and queer studies, reminds the reader that identity, whether of things, objects, entities, human or otherwise, is also emergent; shaped in contingent relationships. Expanding on this she asserts that there is no backdrop to such iterative intra-activity:

‘We’ are not outside observers of the world. Nor are we simply located at particular places in the world: rather, we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity. (p. 828)

Seeing practice as not so much generated within particular realities, but as an ongoing intra-activity that shapes realities, draws attention to who and what might be involved. To consider practice as an assemblage, as something formed from

heterogeneity and as emergent (Marcus & Saka, 2006), opens up the possibility of conversations that might consider what realities are generated therein, and how these might also be made differently.

Technology

Williams (1983) identifies technology as complicated. In reviewing the sociology of particular words, he brings forward how particular words have shifting meanings. Williams' intent was not to establish a particular meaning and say that this is the correct form; instead, he points to how meanings shift and are not necessarily shared. In revisiting the Greek root word *tekhne*, Williams identifies the earliest meaning of technical as relating to matters of specific and practical construction. He then describes how in the industrial age a derivation of meaning evolved relating to a residual form rather than a process of construction.

In this thesis, it becomes important to consider technology as process rather than as object, as a verb rather than a noun. Franklin (1999) provides a meaning of technology that allows for this to be explored further. She defines technology as practice; as “the way we do things around here” (p. viii). Seeing technologies as objects or devices tends to ignore the interaction effects for the implication is that we can pick up or put down such objects with no change to our way of being, and no change to the object's way of being either. As previously introduced with reference to Pickering (1993) and Barad (2003), things might be more usefully seen as emerging in relationships. In addition, differentiating technology from artefacts such as wheels, gears, or the electronics involved, allows for the focus to be sustained on activities interrupting deterministic understandings of what such objects may or may not be capable.

To see things as “objects” or as is commonly stated “just a tool” provides a limited if not flawed account. The evolution of humankind is commonly linked with when our earliest ancestors could use a stick, and each age of mankind has been named for the artefacts that epitomised the technologies of the age; stone, bronze, iron... industrial, digital. Weizenbaum (1976) expands on this transformative account of technologies. He relates how an entirely new

relationship to the world evolved when hunters developed the use of spears. An alteration in hunting behaviours increased the terrain over which people could range, which in turn increased the chances of people meeting other people. Resulting from this change, people's experience of the world changed with ideas of one's place in the world being transformed.

Taking the "just a tool" analogy illustrates the effects of technologies on thinking, and the affinity particular technologies have with particular practices. To say "When all you have is a hammer, everything is a nail" is usually considered derogatory, and used to infer the inadequacies of a worker as it implies that a person has not selected, nor made use of, the most appropriate tool for a job. The statement also illustrates relationships, regarding how we see a nail and hammer and how we position others and ourselves in regard to these objects.

Rheingold is similarly interested in the transformative aspects of technology. In an interview with an Amish woman on the use of mobile phones, he was told "It's not just how you use the technology that concerns us. We're also concerned about what kind of person you become when you use it" (Rheingold, 1999, January). He describes the Amish as having a thoughtful acceptance or rejection of innovations based on the *ordnung* (conventions to live by). Their choosing whether or not to bring in conventions of the world with regard to whether such change will bring the community closer together, or draw it apart, demonstrates a clearly recognised tenet for the uptake of new ways of doing things that extends beyond a conception of new things as just tools. The conditions of being more or less Amish are perceived as being shaped in interactions between people and things.

This prompts a need to look beyond the obvious, or as Sproull and Kiesler (1991) phrase this, to look not only at "what problem does this alleviate?" but also "what problems might this technology create?" They illustrate their point with numerous examples of "improved efficiencies" that not uncommonly have unanticipated offsetting consequences. In assessing the impact of new technology, they identify that simplistic measures are common, yet the effects of less anticipated sequelae may be more profound. They therefore differentiate the need to look at both first and second level effects.

An example they provide relates to behaviours associated with the advent of email:

People “talk” with other people but they do so alone. Reminders of other people and conventions for communicating are weak. Thus, in this new forum, messages are likely to display less social awareness. The advantage is that social posturing and sycophancy decline. The disadvantage is that so, too, do politeness and concern for others. (p. 39)

The first level effects relate to speed and efficiencies such as low costs in sending messages and a paper trail that can be audited. The second level effects in this instance relate to further changes in social behaviours. This is also a concern for other contexts. [SimMan®](#) (Laerdal, 2008) is a mannequin commonly used in health professional contexts for practicing cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, but also for diagnosing heart sounds and wound care. The Laedral website identifies their product as useful for “providing highly realistic patient simulation training experiences for the practice of teamwork, leadership and communication skills.” Taking Sproull and Keisler’s lead, I ask “what might *not* be learned?” Do talking, responding personally, and engaging not matter? Might not having to ask for consent to undress a mannequin, or not asking or answering questions while performing a diagnosis, be part of the incidental learning? With wound-care does assessing for pain become irrelevant? Before accepting that working with mannequins enhances teamwork, leadership, and communication skills, surely it would be important to know what conceptions of these skills could possibly be involved.

[Aliz-e](#), a robot, is described by her manufacturers as able to engage in robust “any depth” conversations including “analysis and synthesis of emotions” (Aliz-e, 2010). At present, research is being conducted in hospitals to see if it can make the experience of hospital more pleasant for children and to “take over some of the tasks of medical staff such as the educational aspects of the diabetes program” (Hornyak, 2010). Findings show Aliz-e is favourably received by children with 100% of eight to ten years olds responding that this robot would be able to support them if they felt down or were worried (Nalin, Bergamini, Giusti, Baroni, & Sanna, 2011). Such reports are in some ways difficult to resist; who wouldn’t

want children comforted? If I consider a doll as not too dissimilar to the robot as a comfort item, and if I consider a game, or a book, as able to provide some of the education needed, then there is some acceptance of such objects, particularly where these are considered additional to personal interactions. But further questions should also be asked; is care too time consuming for human engagement? And if so, is a robot the appropriate solution? In meeting human needs, it may be that we have to reassess what our needs are, and the relationships we want to have in meeting these.

Turkle, a psychoanalyst, expresses concern that describing technological objects as “just tools”, denies the power and influence such creations have. Illustrating this, Turkle (2006) talks of [Paro](#), a companion for the elderly. Paro is reported as making people happier, reducing stress and depression, and is expected to improve quality of life. Paro is also credited with reducing stress hormone levels, improving cognitive functioning and increasing measures of social interaction, at least for people with Alzheimers (Paro Therapeutic Robot, 2011). Yet Turkle finds Paro deeply disturbing, and so do I. To be vulgar, I might call Paro a stuffed toy. He/she might have been a doll, except he/she costs more. Paro is a robotic fur seal marketed as companionship for people who are lonely, confused and/or needing social stimulation (Paro Therapeutic Robot, 2011). In the New York Times (July 4, 2010) Paro is portrayed as the solution to the distress experienced between a mother in the early stages of dementia, and her daughter who is unable to be there for her:

Nothing Eileen Oldaker tried could calm her mother when she called from the nursing home, disoriented and distressed in what was likely the early stages of dementia. So Ms. Oldaker hung up, dialed the nurses’ station and begged them to get Paro. (Harmon, 2010)

Considering solutions for when presence is not possible, how else might we respond? Is it that we replace costlier means with cheaper ones? And then do we stop looking to other alternatives? Turkle (2006) positions the simulated entity as deceitful, and asks that we consider the types of beings we want to become:

If our experience with relational objects is based on a fundamentally deceitful interchange (artifacts' ability to persuade us that they know and care about our existence), can it be good for us? Or might it be good for us in the "feel good" sense, but bad for us in our lives as moral beings? The answers to such questions are not dependent on what computers can do today or what they are likely to be able to do in the future. These questions ask what we will be like, what kind of people we are becoming, as we develop increasingly intimate relationships with machines. (p. 3)

With young people becoming so accustomed to simulated environments and to connections made possible with computers, Turkle (2009) expresses concern that youth may not recognise simulation as "second best":

I think when you have a generation that doesn't see simulation as second best, doesn't know what's behind simulation and the programming that goes into simulation, but just takes simulation at interface value, you really have a set up for a very problematic political, among other things, set of issues. (Frontline Digital_nation, 2009, para. 10–11)

Her argument is predicated on young people being particularly sensitive to the destructive properties of such technologies as their age stage of development is focused on identity development. She argues this makes young people particularly vulnerable to the seductive ease with which difficult conversations might be avoided:

What I'm seeing is a generation that says consistently, "I would rather text than make a telephone call." Why? It's less risky. I can just get the information out there. I don't have to get all involved; it's more efficient. I would rather text than see somebody face to face.

There's this sense that you can have the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. The real demands of friendship, of intimacy, are complicated. They're hard. They involve a lot of negotiation. They're all the things that are difficult about adolescence. And adolescence is the time when people are using technology to skip and to cut corners and to not have to do some of these very hard things.

So of course people try to use everything. But a generation really is growing up that, because it's given the option to not do some of the hardest things in adolescence, are growing up without some basic skills in many cases, and that's very concerning to me. (Frontline Digital_nation, 2009, para. 26–27)

Turkle has repeatedly argued the attachment young people show for their mobile phones fosters dependency and risks social and emotional development (Frontline Digital_nation, 2009; Turkle, 2006, 2010, 2011). She is not alone in associating negative effects with mobile phones and with text messaging in particular.

Repeatedly media headlines position texting with negative sequelae. The following examples are taken from a Google search in 2009 identifying 17,400 online references to text messag* using the truncated (wildcard) spelling. On average, 9/10 were negative about text messaging. Examples positioned texting as detrimental to education (Woolcott, 2009), specifically linked to failing literacy skills (Familar, 2009) as well as being associated with impaired social skills (Familar, 2009) that includes text-bullying (Fullerton, 2009). In addition are mental health risks associated with addiction (St. George, 2009) and physical risk in the form of repetitive strain injury (Public Radio International, 2009). Texting was also associated with public risk having been implicated in plane crashes ("Girlfriend got text message minutes before plane crash," 2009), train fatalities (Rowlands & Kavanagh, 2009), and car crashes ("Drivers who text are six times more likely to crash," 2009; "Drivers who text at wheel are '23 times more likely to crash'," 2009). Positioning text messaging as an exotic fetish, is also evident with media representations of divorce by text (Alsharif, 2009), texting as sin ("To text is to sin," 2009) and reference to "zombiism" ("NoMo Phobia creating zombie kids," 2009; Park, 2009). In December 2009, drawing on the work of Marvin (1988), I suggested such media representations are aligned with moral panic (A. Haxell, 2009).

Moral panic associated with new technologies is described by Marvin (1988) in her text *When Old Technologies Were New* where she describes new technologies as leading to the renegotiation of relationships. In renegotiating relationships, dynamics of influence and power are disturbed and that disruption and tensions

are most likely when old and new ways of relating co-exist. In her historical inquiry into the advent of electricity and telephones, she states:

Electrical and other media precipitated new kinds of social encounters long before their incarnation in fixed institutional form. In their institutionally inchoate manifestations, they inspired energetic efforts to keep outsiders out and insiders under the control of the proper people... Classes, families, and professional communities struggled to come to terms with novel acoustic and visual devices that made possible communication in real time without real presence, so that some people were suddenly too close and others much too far away. New kinds of encounters collided with old ways of determining trust and reliability, and with old notions about the world and one's place in it: about the relation of men and women, rich and poor, black and white, European and non-European, experts and publics. (Marvin, 1988, pp. 5–6)

Marvin presents the case that new technologies are suspect precisely to the extent that they lessen control (p. 74). The issue of control is an important one. In a New Zealand study involving 1500 secondary school students, 50% received a mobile phone as a gift from a parent because of concerns for safety (Netsafe, 2005). Paradoxically, the same study reports 26% of students having their mobile phone confiscated as punishment. In reference to the media reports and headlines cited earlier, just who is deemed to have credence, authority, or voice, in talking of the use of mobile phones and of texting, is not young people. As the predominant users of texting,⁶ young people are being talked about, but they are not being talked with.

The negativity associated with texting present a serious challenge to Youthline. There is risk to the organization in being supportive of mobile phone use and of texting in particular; there is risk in not being seen respectable or worthy within the realities of competitive funding for a not-for-profit service. In reading the media reports, there is also conceivable risk that facilitating the use of mobile phones may be doing harm.

⁶ Text messaging having been described as “coming of age” when it found its “natural market” of young people (“Hppy bthdy txt!,” 2002).

There has been little reporting of positive aspects associated with text messaging. One noteworthy exception is the research by Broadbent (2009) who, arguing from a social justice perspective, contends mobile phones “democratise intimacy” especially for the time and resource poor. For those who are socially disadvantaged, whether because of poverty, shift-work, holding multiple jobs, or work related travel that takes one away from family and loved ones, a mobile phone can reduce isolation effects and ameliorate alienation. The relevance for this thesis is that young people typically have limited financial independence, and may also be time and/or resource poor while balancing studies concurrently with paid work. It is possible therefore, that for young people a mobile phone provides a lifeline out of alienation.

That texting can be positioned alternately as “good” or “bad” demonstrates technology as a political issue. Our technologies are not neutral, we are shaped with their use, and as Haraway contends:

Technology is not neutral. We’re inside of what we make, and it’s inside of us. We’re living in a world of connections – and it matters which ones get made and unmade. (Haraway interview with Kunzru, 1997, para. 33)

Haraway (1991) presents the enmeshment of humanity with technology where technology mediates our decision-making through to our reproductive capacities. She argues that what counts as human or not, is not, and should not be, considered self-evident as boundaries between human and technology, machines and organisms, increasingly blur. Provocatively acknowledging the blur leads her to self-identify as “cyborg”, a status she describes as rather sensible when contrasted with the Cartesian duality separating mind and body (Kunzru, 1997, February).

The cyborg metaphor also draws attention to her argument “technology changes everything” not just how things are seen but how things *including ourselves* are made:

This is not about things being merely constructed in a relative sense. This is about those objects that we non-optionally are. Our systems are probabilistic information entities. It is not that this is the only thing that we or anyone else is. It is not an exhaustive description but it is a non-optional constitution of objects,

of knowledge in operation. It is not about having an implant, it is not about liking it. (Gane, 2006, p. 139)

That technology “changes everything”, and in non-optional ways, points to the complexities involved. That we too are non-optionally shaped means that this is not just a subject of perspective. There is need then to think carefully about the nature of objects and of forces that shape.

The “medium is the message”

In pronouncing “the medium is the message”⁷ McLuhan (1964) heralded a radical way of thinking. His claim of media having social effects, and that dominant media influences what it is to be human, provoked consideration of power embedded in technologies rather than in people. His further assertion, that changing media changes society, invokes concern for how we might be mutually constructed.

Positioning media as having influence, McLuhan (1964) suggests a tetrad of questions through which its impact might be known. Utilising his framework (see Figure 1) provides an entry point for discussing the impact of media in terms of what is lost and gained.

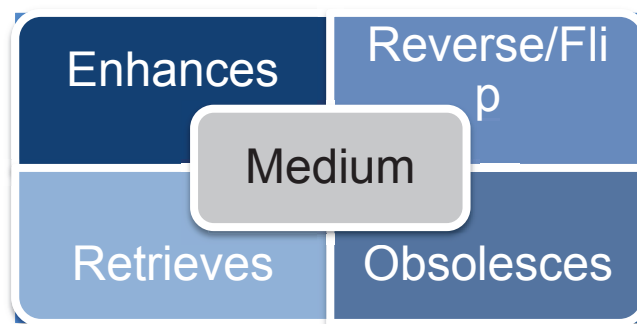


Figure 1. The media tetrad. Adapted from McLuhan and McLuhan (1988).

⁷ The title of the book by McLuhan (1964) was “*The Medium is the Massge*”. His son, Eric McLuhan reports this was a typesetter error that his father did not change because the play on words amused him in accurately portraying how media impacts (E. McLuhan, 2011).

The tetrad provides a framework to consider:

- what the medium enhances
- what the medium makes obsolete
- what the medium retrieves that had been obsolesced earlier
- what occurs with the medium flip; what happens when it is pushed to extremes

Rheingold (2003) made use of McLuhan's questions in speculating on the specific influence of the mobile phone. The effects anticipated are summarised in Figure 2.

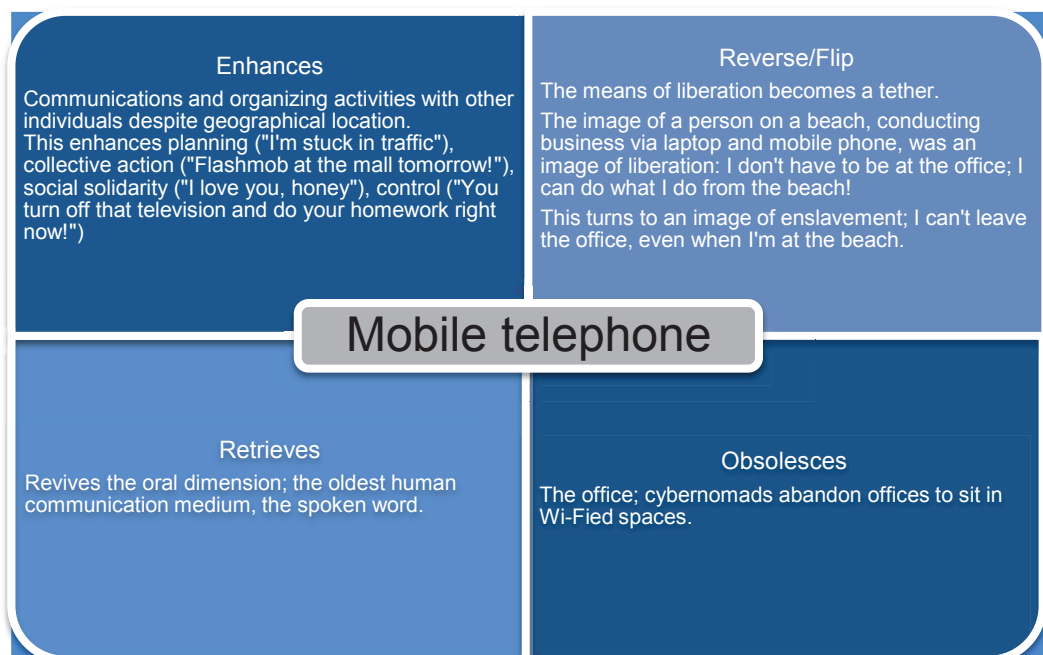


Figure 2. The effects of mobile telephony adapted from a discussion by Rheingold (2003) and presented here within the McLuhan media tetrad.

Notably, forecasting the future remains an imprecise art and anticipating a future does not provide control. That mobile phones are text capable, and that text messaging has grown in ways never foreseen, underlines the imprecision involved in future gazing. Nonetheless, the tetrad does prompt some thoughtfulness for changes that might be anticipated. The tetrad provides a frame for considering snapshots of possibility: “what was” to “what is” and an imaginative bridging from “what is” to “what might come”.

Of particular interest in considering change processes, is the notion of the “reversibility flip” that suggests an innovation might have within it the seeds of its

own destruction. For example, a small volume of emails is manageable; a large volume makes it less and less likely that any one message would be read. With regard to the mobile phone, Turkle (2006) argues that anywhere anytime freedom simultaneously creates the conditions of dependency; a “tethering” rather than the freedom promised.⁸

Though McLuhan’s tetrad prompts consideration of what is both enhanced as well as what might be lost, the less obvious or secondary effects pointed to by Sproull and Keisler remain elusive. Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor and Otuteye (2005) point to young people writing far more than any generation before them. They point to the use of text messaging and social media sites as having a large part to play in this. This is a direct contrast to the oft repeated claim that texting is ruining young people’s literacy skills. At the same time, it is possible to see that such activities would never have occurred had expectations of reading for oneself not evolved. Without the printing press, which was itself only developed because advances could be made in the manufacture of particular inks and papers, there would be no wide dissemination of written material, and without such dissemination there was no need for most people to read or to write (Eisenstein, 1979). That young people are writing more than any other time in history provides evidence for seeing technologies as evolutionary, and a link remains even though current technologies render a printing press seemingly obsolete.

McLuhan’s tetrad provides a means of acknowledging the multiple movements that occur. With the advent of text messaging there is a retrieval of the written word over the spoken, yet there are significant alterations in how such reading and writing occurs.

⁸ Annoyance with the anywhere, anytime, accessibility associated with mobile phone use is a theme addressed in the immensely popular Lady Gaga and Beyoncé Knowles song *Telephone*, written by Lady Gaga and Perkins (2010) was the fourth highest digital single in 2010 selling 7.4 million copies worldwide (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, 2011). The words of this song include:

Just a second,
it’s my favorite song they’re gonna play
And I cannot text you with
a drink in my hand, eh...
And now you won’t stop calling me;
I’m kinda busy.
Stop calling, stop calling, I don’t want to think any more ...

With a specific focus on how media influences interpersonal communications skills, Berger (2005) identified a growing interest in online applications but also a tendency for the literature to focus on the negative effects of computer mediated communications when compared with of face-to-face communications. He names a concern expressed in the literature of a “cyborg effect”, where patterns of relating and behaviours spillover from digital spaces to face-to-face settings. The spillover effects described included alterations to behaviours such as interrupting and turn-taking. However, the cyborg effect as discussed by Berger falls far short of the hugely political form described by Haraway (1991).

Berger’s review does not address the impact of “Web 2.0” an arena described as the second generation of internet⁹ While the label implied an upgrade on an earlier model, Web 2.0 is distinguished from earlier modes because it is participatory (O’Reilly, 2005)¹⁰. On [Wikipedia](#), as written by a community of contributors, Web 2.0 involves interactive information sharing, interoperability, and is user-centred. The shift of focus from repository to participatory has resulted in what Lankshear and Knobel (2007) name a new form of literacy:

The more a literacy practice that is mediated by digital encoding privileges participation over publishing, distributed expertise, collective intelligence over individual possessive intelligence, collaboration over individuated authorship, dispersion over scarcity, sharing over ownership, experimentation over normalization, innovation and evolution over stability and fixity, creative-innovative rule breaking over generic purity and policing, relationship over information broadcast, do-it-yourself creative production over professional service delivery, and so on, the more sense we think it makes to regard it as a *new* literacy. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007, p. 228)

⁹ In this thesis, I refer to the internet in lower case. When I began this study this was still the subject of debate. During the course of this study, this debate has settled; with a shift from a proper noun that is capitalised to the use of a common noun with a small “i”. Influential to this shift was an article by Schwartz (2002) titled [“Who Owns the Internet? You and i Do”](#) Where direct quotes are used referring to the internet, the conventions of that author will be used.

¹⁰ This is an area of contention. Tim Berners-Lee, credited with inventing the web, is cited as saying “web 2.0 is a piece of jargon”. His argument is that the web was always intended to be read/write participatory, while O’Reilly’s use of the term suggests a change or an upgrade that never occurred (“Web 2.0,” 2010, August 23, 08:13 UTC).

Engagement and participation underscore the political aspects inherent. That these technologies do or don't engage, begs the question of what contributes to exclusion and disempowerment. What Lankshear and Knobel (2007) contribute to this discussion is that the relationships we have with the means of communication influences not only behaviour (how we talk), but also values and expectations. We are being shaped, and in ways unexpected. We are learning to relate not only to changing technologies in novel ways, but also to each other.

Wikipedia is itself an example of Web 2.0 demonstrating the “read and write web” where information is not only consumed but also created. The page on Wikipedia describing Web 2.0 is accompanied by a “tag cloud” made from words that others discussing Web 2.0 have used. The tag cloud is a further demonstration of Web 2.0. Not only is the Wikipedia entry developed through multiple user participation, so too are the words aggregated in the tag cloud, as well as the software of the tag cloud’s development and its dissemination as freeware. Both the construction and presentation of knowledge are participatory.



Figure 3. Tag of Web 2.0 themes. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Web_2.0&oldid=380464625 Reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution/Share-Alike License. 2007. Angermeier.

The tag cloud presents a computer generated visual representation, giving prominence by font size to what the software calculates as significant. It is programmed to omit commonly used words from its calculations and will also omit words that are seldom used in the submitted text. To gain prominence in this

representation, a word needs to be used often and consistently, as synonyms are not recognised by the software programme. Saying something once and well is not reflected in this rather crude presentation of what might be important. At the end of this section, Figure 4 provides a representation of this thesis made with “Wordle” freeware¹¹. I find myself annoyed by the representation: “relationship” as well as “relationships” are presented as the Wordle does not differentiate singular from plural. By chance “thesis becomes learning” and “distributed agency” are combined, suggesting some ordering of words, yet I know that this is a random association. Musing on the distribution I would rearrange the words, perhaps rewriting the initial content for a “better” representation. However I leave them be, for that is the point, they might be ordered differently.

Telling the same story differently, Figure 5 shows the thesis as experienced by my laptop’s mouse using “Iographic”¹² software. My capacity to make meaning out of it is limited to seeing scribbles on a page and it would be easy to dismiss these scribbles as trivial or meaningless, just as I personally would find it meaningless were I to read binary code or Arabic. However, we privilege one way of communicating over another as a product of prior learning and acquired skills. Our realities are shaped inside of particular histories, and this makes it all too easy to dismiss realities with which we are unfamiliar.

Staying with relationships and the new patterns of relating associated, I noted with amusement my daughter’s consideration on how to cope without her mobile phone when she travelled overseas on a school trip that had banned taking mobile phones. Her mobile was a link to friends and family, but was also an outsourced memory of addresses as well as her alarm, torch, camera, and photo album. When she talked of leaving her mobile with a friend, her “mobile” was described as having a life to be maintained! The mobile phone had morphed, merging other attributes that made for an object of affection. More than an accessory, this object had ingratiated itself into her ways of being, and her being without it would be difficult, turning it off was something she did not want to consider. The relationship she described herself as having with this phone is one I am able to

¹¹ Wordle is freely available software available at <http://www.wordle.net>

¹² Iographic is freely available software available at <http://iographica.com>

perceive, it is not one I share. I glimpse that her reality and mine differ. I glimpse the development of an exotic hybrid that I do not quite understand but which wanted my attention nonetheless.

These examples demonstrate social and material practices combining in ways that challenge. The accounts tell of social and material practices; of technology as performed. And suggests practices are not so much generated within particular realities but rather, as Law (2007) attests, practices are productive: they make things (p. 124); they make realities (p. 127). In accepting practice as constitutive, we might then ask: What realities do we want practice to make? And more: What part might we have in this?

In providing this account, the limitations of representation are brought forward. Writing favours particular stories, particularly favouring accounts that follow a tangent of beginning to end. This account interrupts the assumptions held within a linear trajectory. There is no one account of what occurred. Many accounts remain possible.

Chapter 3: Networking Theories of Change

Introduction

The phones hardly ring at Youthline anymore; youth still have problems, and still seek help, but it happens silently. That Youthline's phone rooms would go silent was never anticipated. Similarly, it was never really anticipated that a therapeutic conversation could be held in an interchange of utterances each restricted to 160 characters. New practices emerge, and, to adapt to further demands, further practices need to emerge. Standing still denies the intent of being responsive, and having confidence in the effectiveness of the unknown is irrational. A conundrum of care is involved: How to provide a service that is responsive and effective when such services have not previously been offered and their shape is still unknown? And, how might such new practice be learned or taught?

In the absence of a literature regarding the use of SMS in counselling, I draw on disparate fields to establish a place from which to speak of change and the use of emergent technologies in counselling. These fields include psychology and sociology, developing an argument that change theorising needs to consider how those involved are being positioned more and less. Section 2 moves the discussion to consider change within the related fields of health, counselling and education. Particular attention is paid to accounts of change that associate change and the use of communication and computer technologies within practice. This then leads into Section 3 where I argue the need for a more situated and relational approach to change.

Section 1: Theorising change

The literature theorising change is extensive, diverse and conflicting. How we do things, and how might we do things differently, crosses all disciplines, and is always of interest. In April 2011, Amazon.com lists 114,845 books with change in the title. In this chapter I do not attempt a review of such breadth, instead I select a range of approaches to change that are frequently referred to, and focus on how

these theories of change position those involved in particular ways. This literature review demonstrates how theories of change align, converge, diverge, share areas of overlap, as well as areas of controversy. I use this knowledge to point to a theme referred to in Chapter 1; reality is multiple. The literature on change attests to this. Extending from this is consideration for how the literature contributes to what might be seen, as well as done; a contribution not only to particular ways of knowing, but also of being.

For Machiavelli (Original work published 1532/W. K. Marriot/1998) shaping practice involved the politics of war and court. In Machiavelli's *The Prince* guidance is given to "rule and preserve principalities". This is a treatise about power and influence, about winning and losing, but mostly about survival. A pragmatic guide, it provides advice on both the management of people and the deployment of things. As if informed by a networked appreciation for the identity of objects being formed in relationships, Machiavelli describes the changing nature of a fortress in relation to those around it, illustrating how it might be stronghold or liability. And as Machiavelli also notes, "there is simply no comparison between a man who is armed and one who is not". Movements of trust and betrayal depend on where one is positioned. Yet *The Prince* has fallen out of favour. In modern times to ally oneself with Machiavelli is to risk being seen as having no moral compass; to call someone Machiavellian is to be disparaging about motives and actions, to be Machiavellian is to be associated with deceit and manipulation.

In contrast, Dale Carnegie's (Original work published 1936/1981) *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, is a book for different times and different people. Published in post-depression years it presents an optimistic pathway to success. On [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/How-Win-Friends-Influence-People/dp/0671029036) the book is described as:

Just as useful today as it was when it was first published, because Dale Carnegie had an understanding of human nature that will never be outdated. Financial success, Carnegie believed, is due 15 percent to professional knowledge and 85 percent to "the ability to express ideas, to assume leadership, and to arouse enthusiasm among people."

He teaches these skills through underlying principles of dealing with people so that they feel important and appreciated. He also emphasizes fundamental techniques for handling people without making them feel manipulated (Price, 2011).

Despite the claim that this book will never be outdated, changes occur. The 1981 revised edition deletes the sections on making your home life happier. Not, I suspect because home lives do not need assistance, but because deleting this section broadens the book's appeal. In not situating women as domestic assistants, a book teaching skills on how to be successful is applicable not only to businessmen but also to businesswomen. The following excerpt provides a taste of what was deleted:

For Husbands: Do you thank her for the little jobs she does for you, such as sewing on a button, darning your socks, and sending your clothes to the cleaners?

For Wives: Do you give your husband complete freedom in his business affairs, and do you refrain from criticizing his associates, his choice of a secretary, or the hours he keeps? (Carnegie, Original work published 1936/1981, p. 205)

What was appropriate to one time and place does not travel easily as evidenced by the deletions made.

The two examples demonstrate particular realities, of particular intentions and relationships being negotiated. *The Prince* provides strategies for military survival. For the sales "man" winning friends and influencing people from 1936 through to 1981 it is financial success. In turn, vilifying or praising particular strategies very much reflects the reality one is in. However, it is not only that these writings reflect realities, but that realities are being made along the way. While some people may be advantaged, others are positioned with limited scope for movement.

In *Collateral Realities* Law (2011) describes our research methods and inquiries as shaped in a social world and that they help to create that world. He argues that

whether we are aware of it or not, when we undertake research collateral realities are done concurrently:

Collateral realities are realities that get done incidentally, and along the way. They are realities that get done, for the most part, unintentionally. They are realities that may be obnoxious. Importantly, they are realities that could be different. It follows that they are realities that are through and through political. (p. 156)

Mindful of collateral realities, this literature review looks at who and what is made more and less strong as a result. Rather than adding to an expansive literature arguing what is good, bad, right or wrong in change processes, I identify how the literature contributes to the making of particular realities. In doing so, I am conscious of selecting texts outside of their entirety, in brief accounts removed from the fields inside of which they have been created. As Mol (2002) describes in her drawing on disparate writings, such literature has different souls and different concerns. As I draw on similarly disparate writing, my intent is to be fair in acknowledging how such work is placed, and places others. In referring to this literature I focus on how people and their technologies are situated, attending to ways in which being is made both more and less, to consider how theorising change might contribute otherwise.

My intent is therefore less about critiquing such literature in terms of establishing closure on arguments regarding validity but to consider the tensions that hold such theories in place and how these in turn place others. Prompted by reading Foucault's comments on critique, I look to open up how change is theorised:

I can't help but dream about a kind of criticism that would try not to judge but to bring an oeuvre, a book, a sentence, an idea to life: it would light fires, watch the grass grow, listen to the wind, and catch the sea foam in the breeze and scatter it. It would multiply not judgments but signs of existence; it would summon them, drag them from their sleep. Perhaps it would invent them sometimes- all the better. All the better. Criticism that hands down sentences sends me to sleep; I'd like a criticism of scintillating leaps of the imagination. It would not be sovereign or dressed in red. It would bear the lightening of possible storms. (Foucault, 1994)

Motivated by such optimism, my intention here is less about being critical than in prompting concern for how theorising change both limits and expands possibilities.

I am selective in what is presented, boundaries must be drawn or a study of change would continue forever, however I am also conscious that such acts of inclusion and exclusion narrow the frame for what is investigated. Placing boundaries always risks bias, here I attempt to be transparent in my choices: the literature review begins with theories of change most commonly cited, I then move to consider contextual determinants of change.

Diffusion of innovation

Everett Rogers is widely cited in literature theorising change.¹³ His text, *Diffusion of Innovations*, first published in 1962, has been applied across a wide range of interests to explain why new ideas and technology, are, and are not, adopted, and for proposing strategies for systematic, prescriptive models of adoption and diffusion.

Rogers (2003) describes how people conceive of change and what they might do about it, in terms of a relationship between the innovation and decision-making:

The Innovation-Decision process is the process through which an individual (or other decision making unit) passes from gaining initial knowledge of an innovation, to forming an attitude toward the innovation, to making a decision to adopt or reject, to implementation of the new idea, and to confirmation of this decision. This process consists of a series of choices over time through which an individual or a system evaluates a new idea and decides whether or not to incorporate the innovation into ongoing practice. (p. 169)

This classical Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) process involves five ordered steps: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption. A series of choices occur: I learn about something, decide if I like it or not, then trial it with adoption or rejecting following. This process assumes a rational chooser, someone who

¹³ 39,700 citations being identified by Reference Miner in my search of Google Scholar, January 2012.

presumably knows what the future holds and how best to get there. It also assumes considerable stability of the object of innovation and the context inside of which innovation occurs.

In the 5th edition of *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers (2003) concedes a less than straightforward approach actually occurs:

Many adopters want to participate actively in customizing an innovation to fit their unique situation. (p. 17)

He goes on to describe how the innovation diffuses more rapidly, as well as being more likely to be sustained, when it can be reinvented. This goes some way to recognising variation and that renegotiation occurs in response to situated requirements. However, there remains an assumption of a rational chooser instigating the change and making necessary adaptations, yet there is considerable research that presents people as demonstrably irrational in making choices (see for example the classical social psychology studies of Asch, 1951; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959; Milgram, 1963; Zimbardo, Weisenberg, Firestone, & Levy, 1965). The field of behavioural economics similarly provides challenge to theories that presuppose a rational chooser. People are shown to be inconsistent in their preferences dependent on how information is nuanced (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981).

The problems associated with logical decision-making are further compounded by assumptions of stable personality traits. Rogers (2003) posits that those involved can be placed into one of the following five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards (p. 22). A bell shaped curve is used to present the idea of different categories of people being reliably distributed across a population (p. 275). Rogers contends these traits are normatively distributed, in much the same way as height and weight, and behavioural traits such as intelligence (p. 272). Aligning with statistical distributions and with representations assumed valid, suggests credibility for the theory. However, the premise of stable traits has been vigorously contested. Consistency may well be a product of the situation rather than internally held attributes (see for example Mischel, 1968).

The predetermined parameters of known participants with stable traits locks in and out not only what might be seen but also what is done. The use of labels positions people as needing more or less assistance, more or less resources. DOI advises managers that there is little rate of return in working with laggards so energy would be better spent elsewhere. In contrast, for those viewed as change agents, positivity abounds. Careers are made and lost on the basis of such projections. As Merton (1948) asserted, what is defined as real becomes real in its consequences.

Assuming those involved fit a specific category when it comes to innovation glosses complexities. It is illogical to assume a change agent enthuses on every innovation, or that a laggard will always resist. That I enjoy and endorse a robotic bug that can vacuum while not being enamoured of either Aliz-E or Paro as supportive companions, demonstrates that the object and processes of diffusion have influence in relationship. There is little space for considering the relational influence we have with technologies, or they with us, when category bindings are held so tightly. Despite such obvious faults, trait attribution has currency and new labels continue to evolve, with a labelling fingerprint evident in terms such as digital natives and digital immigrants (see for example Prensky, 2001). Instead of recognising the flawed nature of categorization, categories are re-categorised and expanded rather than deleted (see for example White & Le Cornu, 2011).

Rogers (2003) also aligns DOI with the S-curve typical of population growth in a closed system. As the rate of diffusion of an innovation increases, eventually there will be a saturation point where no further growth is possible. However, if the environment cannot be fully controlled, this projected rate loses validity. In taking an example as humble as bacteria growing on an agar plate, which is the classical proof for this type of reasoning, sharing of the space with different bacterial populations alters the projected growth rate, as does freezing the plate or pouring on boiling water. Local contingencies have influences that trump any formulae providing probability curves. The analogies associated with bell curve distributions and S-curve rates of diffusion are about strengthening conjecture, selling a future; a purpose served by illusions.

With respect to Rogers, he does identify that there are limitations with the theory. The 2003 edition of DOI identifies how a “pro-innovation bias” tends to position innovation as a good in its own right, where what is new is seen as inherently better. New is obviously not inherently better, but one would have to ask why would something be developed, suggested or implemented if it were not? The influence of positive bindings does not stop here however. Most studies of change involve retrospective analysis rather than studying change in progress. Looking backwards it is extremely difficult to focus on non-successful endeavours for the very reason that they do not exist. People move away from failed projects, and without an aggregation of people around a project, data collection becomes difficult. With awareness of this bias, Rogers (2003) calls for more research to occur during, rather than after, diffusion processes. Specifically, he identifies a gap in the literature: how are decisions made with regard to the processes of innovation? He writes:

We should increase our understanding of motivations for adopting an innovation. Such “why” questions about adoption have seldom been probed effectively by diffusion researchers. Undoubtedly, motivations for adoption are a difficult topic to investigate. Some adopters may not be able to tell a researcher why they decided to use a new idea, and other adopters may be unwilling to do so. Seldom are simple, direct questions in a survey interview adequate to uncover an adopter’s reasons for using an innovation. But we should not give up on trying to find out the “why” of adoption just because valid data about adoption motivations by the usual methods of survey data gathering are difficult to obtain. (Rogers, 2003, p. 115)

Rogers himself states that the theory has addressed too little the serendipity involved as change occurs (p. 163), that notions of centralised, expert driven innovation and diffusion miss the complexity (p. 395) and that most diffusion research is not designed to see unanticipated and indirect, consequences (p. 440). The paramount theorist of diffusion of innovation lays out needed areas of research. I am in agreement with him, what is needed is not more research that fails to take these issues into account, but to consider ways of studying what is less lineal, less rational, and less stable than what this theory is able to address.

DOI is an approach of planned organizational change, where there are delineations of who is involved, who is in charge, and what is to change. The approach is limited to what's expected, anticipated, planned, and where concerns tend to be those of managers. As identified by Rogers, this is not enough. How, when the future changes because of unknown happenings, might those involved reconfigure what they do?

As a theory of change DOI fails to render accurate accounts of what occurs, glossing over complexity. The theory provides a privileged approach to change; a managerialist approach. There is a clear hierarchy implicit in this theorising, but what lies beneath are further roles collaterally constituted. The assumptions made make for a difficult transition of theory to practice, and particularly where the relationships give no mandate to hierarchical decision-making. While there are limitations involving an object of change bound by goodness, and further limitations given rational choice for a future that cannot be known, it is the positioning of others that sits least well with my own research into change that involves an organization that espouses empowerment.

The reflective practitioner

A significantly different approach is taken by Donald Schön. While not nearly as commonly cited as Rogers, Schön has considerable influence with practitioners attempting to effect change (evidenced by 26,800 citations identified by Reference Miner in a search of Google Scholar, January 2012). Schön places an emphasis on practitioners rather than on managers or the innovation itself. He identifies practice as a place where issues or problems arise from the materials of a situation that is problematic (1971, 1990; Schön & Rein, 1994). This situated context comprises of an ill-defined mélange of factors including the economic, environmental and political. In addressing such a situation, Schön locates the practitioner as “namer and framer” of things of concern,

Through complementary acts of naming and framing, the practitioner selects things for attention and organizes them, guided by an appreciation of the situation that gives it coherence and sets a direction for action. So problem setting is an ontological process.... Those who hold conflicting frames pay attention to

different facts and make different sense of the facts they notice. It is not by technical problem solving that we convert problematic situations to well formed problems; rather, it is through naming and framing that technical problem solving becomes possible. (Schön, 1990, p. 4–5)

This approach provides marked contrast to diffusion of innovation with its top-down, planned, directed, and controlled processes involving stable participants, including a known innovation, and delineated locale. For Schön, problems do not come predetermined with ready-made solutions but require an actively reflective practitioner developing understanding of relationships and resources within socio-political constraints and possibilities.

The reflective practitioner approach centres on how change is thought of and enacted. Schön (1990) proposes a framework for the reflective practitioner involving knowing-in-action, reflecting-in-action, and the reflecting on reflection-in-action, as a means for practitioners to frame the messy situations inside of which practice occurs and as an antecedent condition for the modifying of future practice. The practitioner is very much seen as situated, and what is problematised, named and framed, remains a product of situated and partial ways of knowing.

It would be wrong to describe Schön's reflective practitioner approach as being oriented only toward the independent autonomous practitioner. In an earlier text, *Beyond the Stable State*, Schön (1971) describes society as being in a continual state of change and one that requires individuals as well as institutions and societies to adapt. To be successful within contexts of continual transformation Schön argues that people individually and collectively need to understand, guide, influence, and manage these transformations. To become, in other words, adept at learning.

The task which the loss of the stable state makes imperative, for the person, for our institutions, for our society as a whole, is to learn about learning. (Schön 1971, p. 30)

This is not an undertaking for individuals in isolation. Schön's contribution to the relationship between how change is conceived of and acted upon is to see the

reflective practitioner as one engaging with others, including organizations and governments as learning systems. The reflective practitioner is therefore one who has to align with others to effect change since resources will need to shift to support activities deemed desirable.

Learning then is situated not only within individuals, but is held collectively in learning systems. This complex system involving multiple people and perpetual movement involves acting despite unknowns. In marked contrast to Rogers, Schön describes this as neither linear nor rational, as groping rather than choice. He states:

The movement towards learning systems is, of necessity, a groping and inductive process for which there is no adequate theoretical basis. (Schön, 1971, p. 57)

This approach to change is dependent on practitioners as chooser and namer of things of concern. However, if there is no shared concern for the same things, resourcing such changes will be problematic, and no doubt frustrating. In the absence of aligning with others of influence so as to access resources, it is difficult to envisage a constructive learning system. The reflective practitioner is positioned as an optimist at first and a pessimist at last; thoughtful but impotent. In locating change agendas within individuals, an inability to effect change risks framing the practitioner as the problem.

It would be wrong to assume the top down approach of DOI advocated by Rogers and the bottom up reflective practitioner approach or the learning system approach of Schön could meet in some mythical middle ground. Reality as experienced and written of by these writers differs. The contradictions cannot sit side by side without clashing. Bringing them together in a literature review makes the clashes evident. In practice such contradictions may be less evident, they may be distributed such that clashes not experienced are also not explored.

Systems approach to change

Kurt Lewin is described as having dominated the theory and practice of change management for over 40 years (Burnes, 2004). He is credited with having fathered the discipline of social psychology (Mark, Donaldson, & Campbell, 2011) and as having lead the field of organizational development of (Jex, 2002).

Kurt Lewin's much quoted statement "you cannot understand a system until you try to change it" draws attention to the contradictions and complexities involved in seeking to effect change in organizations. Lewin (1947b) maintained that a focus on individual behavioural change was ineffective because the individual is constrained by group pressures to conform. In addition, Lewin (1947a) presented change as involving a complex organism where the direction of change cannot always be predicted and the results of change would not necessarily result in a given anticipated outcome. And also that "both change and constancy are relative concepts; group life is never without change, merely differences in the amount and type of change exist" (Lewin, 1947a, p. 13).

Lewin (1947b) described a planned approach to change as involving a three-step process that begins with "unfreezing" where old ways of behaviour are destabilised and unlearned. This is followed by adapting to the change as it unfolds, and ends when a new "quasi-stable" state of equilibrium is achieved.

Focusing particularly on the steps of unfreezing and adapting, Schein (1996) drew on the work of psychoanalysts, and particularly Anna Freud's work on defence mechanisms, to explain resistance to change. Schein (1996) argues:

Unless sufficient psychological safety is created... no change will take place.

The key to effective change management, then, becomes the ability to balance the amount of threat produced by disconfirming data with enough psychological safety to allow the change target to accept the information, feel the survival anxiety, and become motivated to change.

The true artistry of change management lies in the various kinds of tactics that change agents employ to create psychological safety. (p. 61)

Despite complexity being recognised, the application of system's theories tended to be top down; a means to inform management directed change inside of organizations. And as portrayed here in Schein's advancing of systems theory, there remained an individualised focus in establishing psychological safety for effecting change.

Theorizing change as movement from stability to a re-ordering before returning to stability is an approach shared by Talcot Parsons (1951) a sociologist and contemporary of Lewin's. Parsons describes both modern societies and institutions in terms of a generalised adaption syndrome craving stability, and change as a disturbance of homeostasis (Parsons, 1971, p. 482). His emphasis is placed on social order, arguing that adaptation that occurs with small increments can be absorbed just as physiological adaptation of an organism under stress can be absorbed when changes come in small increments. Parsons describes how repeated behaviours become entrenched, creating stability in the ways people relate across social interactions. In considering how people within organizations adapt, Parsons describes a process of "role bargaining" where roles that have become established need to be renegotiated. In this way the theory attempts to account for power, dominance, and acquiescence.

However, Parsons' theory has been criticised for providing a functionalist analysis, an analysis that explains how things work *as they are*. Conflict theorists such as Dahrendorf (1959) would question how a theory predicated on role internalisation and shared social values could ever account for change. For Dahrendorf (1959) roles were not sustained by individuals but by interest groups and in looking at competing interest groups, disadvantage could be explored. While a functionalist approach would appear to maintain those already advantaged, a conflict analysis might similarly be critiqued for looking for disadvantage and for blame.

That Schein, Lewin, and Parsons, talk of change differently is more a product of focal points of interest than contested theorising of change. The contestations come from those who see particular realities made more and less, and demonstrates that theorising change is not a neutral activity.

Change as learning

Argyris and Schön (1978) take the connection between individuals and organizations further, positioning change itself as a process of learning. They contend there is little likelihood of producing change in the one without effecting change in the other (Argyris, 1997; Argyris & Schön, 1978). And presumably therefore new ways of relating need to be learned.

To create the conditions of a learning organization they extend on the reflective inquiry process, not just at the level of practitioners but throughout all levels in an organization. The reflective approach they suggest challenges what they name single loop reflection, where learning occurs within existing frames of reference and values. To replace this they advocate double loop reflection as a means for examining values and frames that create counter-productive behaviour (Argyris & Schön, 1978, p. xxiii).

Double loop thinking is described by Argyris and Schön as an atypical approach. First, problems have to be recognised and made open for discussion as what is not discussable is bypassed. For learning to progress, a problem then needs to be approached from frameworks that open up possibilities rather than ones that close things down. Unfortunately, limited reflection may appear effective and, as noted by Argyris and Schön, this discourages further inquiry. To navigate effective solutions, individuals have to face their own defensive reasoning and fear of failure.

To deepen the reflective process, and so make for more informed change possibilities, the following summarises the strategies proposed for a learning organization:

- Identify defensive patterns interfering with deep reflection and learning at all levels of the organization.
- Work with individuals to interrupt early closure on problems due to defensive reasoning.

- Establish ways of working oriented toward solving problems rather than staying bound by pre-established conditions.
- Sensitively confront discrepancies between what people say they do and what is actually done.
- Support individuals as they develop insight into their own limitations and to develop skills for escaping self-effacing limitations.
- Replace organizational defensive routines with processes of open inquiry.

Argyris and Schön do not deny the difficulties involved and do not present this as a quick-fix or as a solution, but as an ongoing process. However, despite the relational talk involving openness, transparency, trust, and inclusiveness in providing conditions for double loop thinking, there is still an agenda that reflects a managerial focus as evidenced within the following account:

If there are as many truths as there are perspectives, then what sense does it make to confront different perspectives?

It makes a lot of sense if you are a manager who feels a deep sense of responsibility for reducing if not eradicating defensive routines. Bypassing them is a recipe for strengthening defensive routines while denying that this can have the same consequences. Thus, scholars and their community appear to exhibit the same defensive routines as the corporations they seek to study. If this is a reasonable inference, how will scholars ever learn? Also, this may explain the basic position that there are no truths, and hence claims will be never ending. If so, does it not also follow that the participants will create endless defensive routines?

How will scholars of the deconstructionist approach ever find out if and when they are wrong? Indeed, what is the meaning of wrong if it is fundamentally assumed that there are infinite interpretations that are, in principle, all correct? This may please the scholars but practitioners may see it as a betrayal of responsibility to help human beings who seek a better world. (Argyris, 2004, p. 102)

Despite the claim for “helping human beings who seek to make a better world”, knowledge of multiple truths is discounted as a stumbling block and those who

undertake research arguing reality is multiple are positioned by Argyris as unhelpful. A claim to contribute to making a “better world” therefore begs the question not only of what counts as better but also whose world is valued by whom.

What Argyris and Schön contribute to the theorising of change is the need for continuous re/negotiation of the relationships involved. In this theory, people are positioned as active participants in their worlds. How change alters those involved is given breathing space: thinking alters, values alter, and behaviour alters, not as a specific end point but as a continual learning process. This is a theory of change that is predicated on thoughtfulness and openness, and assumes change can be deliberately negotiated. What requires further investigation is how those involved are positioned in relationship with others; whose “better world” is made more or less strong? And in extension of this: How might such positions be renegotiated? It is not enough to point to there being multiple perspectives when it is realities that are being made more and less.

Summary

What has been shown in this section is that theories of change sometimes intersect, sometimes overlap, sometimes conflict, and may also be contradictory. In diffusion of innovation, change progressed from a rational choice. This was an approach that lent itself to top-down decision-making where management based initiatives could be led. In contrast, the reflective practitioner approach emphasised change as something that bubbles up; a bottom-up approach from the local context. These are radically different ways to theorise how change might be brought about. They do not meet in some mythical middle ground. There are significant differences in what can be brought to the processes of change for change does not only involve people but also resources. Were these resources to be seen as another actor in change processes, then theorising change might be addressed differently.

I have drawn attention to the metaphors used in describing change. The appeal to homeostasis as a well-understood notion in the physical sciences provides some

degree of respectability to the “soft” sciences of psychology and sociology. A lineal, rational model sits comfortably for business models predicated on hierarchies and authoritative voice. In contrast, the bubbling up metaphor better suits thoughtful, responsive, practitioners wanting to effect change on their own practice, and having at least a semblance of control over their own practice. The metaphors used in theories of change align with what is already accepted as the nature of the workplace and become unacknowledged strategies of persuasion. Theorising change is demonstrably not a neutral undertaking.

The change theories discussed here involve actors being positioned in certain ways. There is currency in doing so. Those involved get configured in particular ways, and such configurations go on to produce particular ways of thinking, and of being. In being positioned as more or less able to make a difference, particular realities are in turn made more and less, and this matters because alternate positions and alternative relationships could be negotiated.

It is easy to suggest there is rightness and wrongness in the approaches discussed because how people are positioned matters individually and matters in terms of social equity. It is not enough to say all things meet in the middle. They do not. There is no melding middle ground. The place of change is everywhere and in this breadth, different realities are experienced. To appreciate these differences is to also know that realities sometimes conflict, sometimes converge, and sometimes cannot help but talk past each other.

Each of the theories presented suggest there is logic to what occurs. Yet they cannot be woven together. Despite the temptation to discuss these theories as right and wrong, or more right or more wrong dependent on how they treat the different actors involved, this is not the only approach that can be taken. I could consider the apparent strength of the theories in terms of which holds most currency as measured by citations; what is most commonly referred to presumably contributes useful applications and understandings, but this “logic” such as it is, fails to take in to account power differentials. As Latour (1998) provocatively states “the strongest reason always yields to the reason of the strongest” (p. 159). That most change literature presents change in managerialist terms reflects this. Hearing of

other realities requires this discussion shift from abstract theorising to daily experiences.

Section 2: Contexts of change

The preceding discussion provided an outline and critique of theories that attempt to direct and or explain change processes. When written of by differing change theorists, the entity seems to alter as a chameleon reflecting, as well as contributing to, its surroundings. If this were the case I might consider that in differing spaces, the entity would reliably assume particular shapes, in the way water can be solid, liquid or gas dependent on the environment. I therefore shift the focus in this section to be closer to the context of change studied within this thesis, exploring the literatures that relate to changing practice in health, counselling and education. In each of these contexts, attention is given to how change is negotiated and how CCTs become part of practice.

Health

Change in health care practice is marked by conservatism. There is understandable resistance to change when any change is seen as a threat to people who are already vulnerable through illness or disability. However, Seedhouse and Cribb (1989) suggest the status quo is maintained not for any rational reason but because of entrenched and assumed effective service provision. These authors identify efficiency as a primary justification when changes are made with measures of efficiency commonly constrained to cost-benefit analysis: Can this service be provided more cheaply, or more quickly and therefore more cheaply? A fiscal approach is taken with innovation locked into a pattern of defending newness against practices displaced: If this is included in the scope of what can be offered through public funding, what will be removed? Such calculations remain incalculable in the real world where futures remain unknown and what is good or bad cannot be measured with the same scales.

In considering systematic health reform, questions such as *what is* health reform, and *what should be*, remain on the fringes (Seedhouse, 1995; Seedhouse & Cribb,

1989). Seedhouse, being a philosopher of health ethics, is scathing of health system reform that neglects purposing. Having a health system that is oriented toward the managing of ill health, rather than health, being one such neglected purpose.

In the field of public health a similar lament is heard:

There is a disjunction between the ideas and ideals of public health and the way society organizes itself in relation to health.... Internationally, public health has been marginalised, as collective responsibility for social welfare in general is replaced by an emphasis on market forces and individualism. At the national level, the ongoing debates about health care reform have been narrowly focused on cost containment and medical care services and have not embraced the need for re-emphasis on public health services and the health of entire populations. (Beaglehole & Bonita, 2004, pp. xi–xii)

Caplan (1993) a critical social theorist in the field of health promotion identifies that any significant change would require significant shifts in resourcing and power dynamics, both of which are resisted by those already advantaged whether providers or recipients of services. He describes the politics of vested interests that leaves health promotion an under financed, under-resourced poor relative in a “sick” health care system. Caplan concludes:

We remain forever lost in that mire of illusory techniques which lead nowhere, and simply confirms and perpetuates the dominance of the status quo in health. (p. 156)

For Caplan, change requires understanding of, and movement in, the power dynamics involved. Who gets to determine what is available, what is appropriate, what is acceptable, appears lost in historically situated decisions of how the resources are allocated. A lack of political will is blamed for maintaining the status quo.

Peterson (1997), a health policy analyst describing the American health care system, wryly noted that despite being a prime target for policy innovation, and there being much activity in the field, health reform has never actually happened.

He similarly concludes the history of health care reform is one that confirms the power of organised interests.

Examples abound. Gillespie (2001) describes difficulties in effecting change within the hospital context saying:

The biggest roadblock often is corporate politics.

Many hospitals cannot overcome the political infighting.

In health care, there are so many different constituencies – different departments, physicians, patients, third-party payers – that it’s difficult to make a decision about which direction to go. (para. 20–23)

In relating change processes involving healthcare delivery Budman, Portnoy and Villapiano (2003) in their research paper, *How to get technological innovation used in behavioural health care: build it and they still might not come*, conclude “The successful adoption and diffusion of innovation involves far more than building a better mousetrap” (p. 45). The technology does not sell itself. And in line with how the prevalent theories on change address resistance, these authors conclude the problem lies with individuals who are obstructive. Notably the innovation itself and those who would change the activities of others remained unchallenged in this article.

From the 1950s, within a context of burgeoning pharmaceuticals, research developed that sought to establish rational decision-making in medical treatment options. An industry of evidence-based practice (EBP) and random control trials (RCT) has developed as an attempt to validate change and manage risk in health care. However, the circumstances where practice can be clearly reduced down to “this is better than that” are limited. This limits the application of EBPs and RCTs to treatment options that can be, or are perceived as being, easily measured. For example: Is this wound treatment better than that wound treatment, as shown by decreased bacterial counts? Does this medication work as well or better than what is currently available, as shown by fewer side effects, or can it provide similar outcomes for less cost? In a randomised control trial the new product needs to demonstrate that it is at least as good as currently available best treatment options.

The ethical considerations underpinning proposed change tend to treat the injunction to “do (more) good”, and to “do no (or less) harm” but such measures are not unequivocal.

Mol (2006) argues health research would do better moving the focus to improving, rather than proving, practices. Her argument is based on the difficulties inherent in proving effectiveness, as well as the measures of effectiveness that might instead be given precedence. Calculating a mean between competing goods or bads, masks complexity. Any research, RCT or otherwise, that substantiates one practice as doing good, and another as doing no or less harm, remains problematic as there will be competing, contradictory, and even simultaneously good and bad outcomes.

To demonstrate, Mol draws on the experience of a client experiencing peripheral arteriosclerosis¹⁴ and asks which might be better: walking therapies or angioplasty?¹⁵ Angioplasty widens the lumen of an artery increasing blood flow reaching the ankle, and so for someone with ulceration it aims to increase the oxygen and nutrient availability for healing. In contrast walking therapy increases a person’s ability to live independently, to walk without hurting. The parameters by which to assess effectiveness are different: one measures tissue oxygen saturation and healing potential, the other measures independence and being pain free. For either treatment option the RCT is still unable to answer which is best, as the question is compounded by a futures orientation and futures are notoriously difficult to predict; statistical outcomes never provide knowledge of the individual, only likelihoods.

Mol provides a further example involving diabetes monitoring. Tight control of diabetes improves long-term health benefits of people with diabetes but it come with risk; long-term goals and short-term goals may conflict:

This is a problem, for if your blood sugar level is too low, you get aggressive and nasty. And if it gets lower still, you slide into a coma. Now, if you drive a car, or

¹⁴ Peripheral arteriosclerosis refers to a narrowing of the arteries, particularly those supplying the legs and feet.

¹⁵ Angioplasty is a medical procedure involving a balloon catheter being inserted into the artery with the intention of widening the interior lumen of the artery.

take care of children, teach, are in a meeting, or are active in almost any other way, you definitely do not want that. And it not only disturbs your social life. It is also bad for your brain: Each time you slide into a hypoglycemic coma, brain cells die.

What is good care: tight regulation, which is good in the long run—for your eyesight, your arteries and your sensitivity? It may be. But then again, if tight regulation undermines your possibilities of living actively in the present, it may not be all that desirable after all. The contrast is not between social life now and bodily health in the future. Both the body and social life are implicated all along. (p.408)

From such examples she concludes:

Thus, we cannot tell what good care is: not easily, not in general, not in a grand gesture. It has to be established closer to home: in day to day health care practice—in day-to-day life. (p. 408)

Selecting one practice over another is problematic for assessing concurrent goods and bads; the direction of which harms or goods should have precedence or for whom, remain contested.

In combination, Mol's account regarding the limitations of RCTs; Seedhouse and Cribb's analysis regarding rationale choice not being prevalent in health care; Beaglehole and Bonita's findings of societal disjunction between ideas and ideals; Caplan's analysis that prior advantage or power will not be ceded; and Gillespie's contention of poor processes in implementing decisions, provide an appreciation for how the status quo is maintained in health services. Reading between the lines and drawing together the threads, these accounts indicate not only the problem as residing in the relationships of people, but more importantly between people and their technologies.

I have identified literature from within the health sector that has included philosophy, management and professional interests. This reflects the literature of professional journals and academic texts. There is also the less formal literature of

newspapers and magazines as well as a “grey literature”,¹⁶ that includes minutes of meetings through to blogs and discussion forums that also have influence, but such influence is harder to trace. Recipients of healthcare do influence the services provided. There are changes as occur on an individual level when health professionals adapt what they do to the moment, but significant change has also occurred at a substantive level. Coney and Bunkle’s (1987) article, *An Unfortunate Experiment at National Women’s Hospital*,¹⁷ led to a very public outcry that in just ten days following the article being published resulted in the Government establishing a judicial inquiry culminating in the Cartwright Report and what Paterson (2008) named a “seismic shift” in relationships between staff and patients in New Zealand. The reshaping of health services subsequent to this inquiry included the establishment of the Office of the New Zealand Health and Disability Commissioner – Te Touihau Hauroa, and the associated legislation encompassed by the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights (2004).

Those on the receiving end of health services are variably described as patients, consumers and clients. Each word denotes a role, positioning the person as having more and less influence. To be a patient suggests having patience while others tend to you. The language of consumer is suggestive of someone who ‘eats up’ resources. To be a client denotes some choice. It is wrong though to suggest that there is freedom of choice in selecting healthcare service provision. If one is seriously unwell, or in significant pain the ability to “shop around” is seriously compromised. There are also hugely expensive treatment services such as those involved with radiotherapy or intensive care units that are not planned for in one’s life and that cannot be bought individually as and when needed. Furthermore there are circumstances where health services may not be wanted but will be legally

¹⁶ The “Luxembourg definition,” agreed at the Third International Conference on Grey Literature in 1997, defines grey literature as “that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers.” In 2004, at the Sixth Conference a postscript was added stating “...not controlled by commercial publishers, i.e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body” (Schöpfel & Farace, 2010). This definition focuses on the production and publication of literature that might also include material described as ephemeral, non-conventional or underground. This use of the term grey literature is not to impose a measure on the quality of the information but is a reflection of how material is, and isn’t, identified, accessed and disseminated.

¹⁷ An archive relating this story and resulting Cartwright Report is available at <http://www.womens-health.org.nz/index.php?page=cartwright>.

enforced if safety is compromised for example for those with mental illness assessed as being a danger to themselves or to others. The power to shape what services are provided or not, which services might be prioritised or delayed, remains substantively at an institutional level.

How then to negotiate the complexity of such relationships resulting in change and the shape of care that develops? Mol (2006) provides some guidance saying, “Disease, illness, technology, treatment, life: They come as a package, so it would be better to study them in this way” (p. 412).

For establishing the good in care, and for research that might improve practice, Mol’s argument is to stay with relational complexity rather than simplifying. Accepting complexity is not an excuse for maintaining the status quo, she advocates care in improving practice. This presupposes care as adaptable, and in need of adaptation, a process then of tinkering. Change might then be negotiated “carefully”, or as described in *Care in Practice*, not bracketing out failure and fragility, but facing up to these with an appreciation that care is not about control, but about “living with the erratic” (Mol, Moser, & Pols, 2010).

Counselling

What shapes counselling is heavily related to the theoretical basis one works with. The literature validating counselling approaches is predominantly of contested beliefs regarding what it is to be a person, and what contributes to the making of a well-developed person. Attempts have been made to assess for effectiveness, but inherent bias toward the preferred modality of the practitioner prevails (Corsini et al., 2008; Roth & Fonagy, 2006; Wampold, 2010).

Therapeutic relationships are seen to generate new realities but the ins and outs of this are often so subtle as to remain unknown. As described by Gergen (1997) effective therapy “often seems magical”:

Effective therapy often seems magical. A life shattering problem is described in the quiet recesses of a chamber far removed from the site of turmoil. Questions and answers, stories good and bad, emotional outbursts, a little silence and perhaps some tears - all may be present. And then, almost by miraculous

intervention, there is change. The problem is transformed, seems less severe, or is possibly dissolved. Yet, we ponder, how was the result achieved? What is it about this particular configuration of events that brought about change? At least one central candidate for answering this particular form of “miracle question” is therapeutic communication. There is something about the nature of communicative interchange that engenders change. Yet, to answer in this way is scarcely sufficient. What precisely is it about such communication that precipitates transformation? What forms of communication are invited, which are proscribed; how might we be more effective? (para. 1)

These are important questions: How do we know what works from what doesn't? How then to decide what works for better, or for worse? Obviously the life of every single person who seeks counselling, and the things that they want assistance with, differ. Obviously not everyone likes, or benefits from the same interchanges. Obviously the provider of counselling is not going to undertake the same conversation with every person. How might something be measured when it never looks the same twice over? This is not a space for arguing that all things being equal, apart from a particular treatment being implemented, this approach will be better than that. “All things” are not equal. Nonetheless, attempts have been made to do just this, though the results remain disputed (Corsini et al., 2008; Roth & Fonagy, 2006; Seligman, 1995; Thomason, 2010; Wampold, 2010).

Seligman (1995) contends the methods required for efficacy are at odds with what occurs in practice:

The five properties that follow characterize psychotherapy as it is done in the field. Each of these properties are absent from an efficacy study done under controlled conditions. If these properties are important to patients' getting better, efficacy studies will underestimate or even miss altogether the value of psychotherapy done in the field.

1. Psychotherapy (like other health treatments) in the field is not of fixed duration. It usually keeps going until the patient is markedly improved or until he or she quits. In contrast, the intervention in efficacy studies stops after a limited number of sessions—usually about 12—regardless of how well or how poorly the patient is doing.

2. Psychotherapy (again, like other health treatments) in the field is self-correcting. If one technique is not working, another technique—or even another modality—is usually tried. In contrast, the intervention in efficacy studies is confined to a small number of techniques, all within one modality and manualized to be delivered in a fixed order.
3. Patients in psychotherapy in the field often get there by active shopping, entering a kind of treatment they actively sought with a therapist they screened and chose. This is especially true of patients who work with independent practitioners, and somewhat less so of patients who go to outpatient clinics or have managed care. In contrast, patients enter efficacy studies by the passive process of random assignment to treatment and acquiescence with who and what happens to be offered in the study (Howard, Orlinsky, & Lueger, 1994).
4. Patients in psychotherapy in the field usually have multiple problems, and psychotherapy is geared to relieving parallel and interacting difficulties. Patients in efficacy studies are selected to have but one diagnosis (except when two conditions are highly comorbid) by a long set of exclusion and inclusion criteria.
5. Psychotherapy in the field is almost always concerned with improvement in the general functioning of patients, as well as amelioration of a disorder and relief of specific, presenting symptoms. Efficacy studies usually focus only on specific symptom reduction and whether the disorder ends.

The evidence-based practice approach fails to encompass complexity; the empirically validated treatments being predicated on a standard of client and therapist that lacks variation. While the task force could be seen as well intentioned in wanting to establish treatment standards that could be audited, the effect was to simultaneously situate clients and therapists as “all the same”. In advocating a one size fits all approach, people are rendered stable, an unfortunate irony for those seeking counselling.

Roth and Fonagy (2006) advocate caution in looking at “validated” or “empirically supported” treatments. They lament that systematic reviews and treatment lists position treatment effects as facts and that the absence of a treatment option from a list is used to justify the exclusion of that option from funding and therefore service provision. The absence of evidence for efficacy may

indeed indicate absence of positive treatment effects, but this cannot be assumed. Roth and Fonagy note, few studies investigate the long-term effects. This is particularly important in counselling as the process is not always comfortable, and positive outcomes may not be experienced in the short-term. People often leave counselling feeling tired, or having made an uncomfortable choice and knowing the implementation will not be easy. Measures of effectiveness in the short term may therefore be seriously flawed. Also confounding measures of effectiveness, Roth and Fonagy identify the psychodynamics of a relationship may include working with resistance; the developmental delay or age-stage of a person; and where the intent is development of resilience rather than symptom reduction. While they are supportive of an evidence-base for practice, they argue convincingly against the oversimplification of complex issues.

Wampold (2010) argues lists of treatment efficacy privilege biological approaches to psychiatry as well as simplistic approaches to therapies. And, as identified by Seligman (1995), a consequence is that single modalities, that were not the norm in therapy, increasingly become so.

Despite considerable argument in the counselling and therapy literature that reshaping counselling and therapy in accordance with evidenced-based practice (EBP) is flawed, increasingly pressure toward EBP comes from funding providers, including publicly funded health care and private health insurance companies, that refuse to pay for practices lacking systematic evidence of usefulness. Notwithstanding the problems identified, it is also a serious problem when effective strategies remain unknown as shown in the following example.

A systematic review of effective strategies in the area of suicide prevention states:

There is relatively little strong evidence for the efficacy of many existing suicide prevention initiatives, and this area has frequently been captured by strong claims about the effectiveness of programmes that have not been adequately evaluated. (Beautrais et al., 2007, pp. 1–2)

This is a serious concern. Interventions, particularly regarding suicide, occur within an understandably emotionally charged environment. The review

undertaken by Beautrais, et al., positioned RCTs as the only strong evidence of effectiveness. Beautrais, et al. describe the provision of crisis centres and helplines as “promising” but lacking in supportive evidence. Nonetheless, before accepting their claims of comparative effectiveness, there is a need to consider bias that occurs with systematic reviews. Of primary concern, is a publication bias that favours positive outcomes over negative ones (Cochrane Bias Methods Group, 2009). The Cochrane Bias Methods group also note a publishing bias compounded by a funding bias, where what is researched tends to be funded by those with vested interest, as well as coming from countries with strong histories in publishing. Established or mainstream treatment options are therefore more likely to be sustained. The bias within systematic reviews is described as significant and under-recognised (Kirkham et al., 2010) and the significance and extent of this problem a threat to evidence-based medicine (Smyth et al., 2011).

In spite of such reservations, systematic reviews and RCTs continue to hold much influence providing a “gold standard” that in counselling practice positions face-to-face methods above any new form. Interestingly, in the above study by Beautrais, et al., the comparison of different theoretical approaches is dropped as if no longer important when comparisons are made between mediated counselling and face-to-face practices. How the relationship is mediated with CCTs is suddenly given more importance than any underlying theoretical position.

Concern for how the interaction is mediated is not new to counselling or to therapy. The words used, or even if any words are used, what body language may convey through to the position of a counsellor with classical psychotherapy in a Freudian tradition being out of the line of sight of a patient, all have been considered as both more and less valuable at different times in the fields of counselling, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. In therapeutic relationships, and particularly within the psychodynamic tradition, there is significant regard given to the effects of transference and counter-transference where unconscious projections are recognised as having influence on the form and quality of the therapeutic relationship. One of the reasons counsellors and therapists engage in clinical supervision is to keep check on these otherwise unconscious processes. In psychodramatic and gestalt traditions, the physical space and objects therein

become a part of what might be explored with regard to the relationships of those present as well as those imagined. In work with children, but not exclusively so, objects such as sand trays, artwork, and dolls enter into the counselling relationship. To consider the objects through which the counselling relationship itself occurs, such as a mobile phone, is therefore a step that might have been anticipated.

The literature of mediated counselling remains small, that for helplines even smaller. Harvey Sacks (Sacks, 1992) has led in the analysis of helpline counselling conversations, paving an approach named conversation analysis. Conversational analysis (CA) attends to the structure of conversations such as turn taking, conversational openings and closings, and recurring institutional patterns of conversation; a focus on interactional work rather than on lexical meaning. Underlying CA is the assumption of orderliness in conversations, of repeated patterns. This leads to a double orientation:

On any occasion, participants display an orientation to the specifics of the situation, including who they are in relation to each other. Nonetheless, at the same time, they use means and methods which are, to a large extent, shared and conventional. In other words, when talking together people show a double orientation, to the situation-at-hand and to conventional ways to handle situations-like-this. (ten Have, 2005, para. 7)

It is this double orientation that becomes problematic for this study. While a conversation might be analysed for the interactional work involved, the patterns of such conversations in a new medium, and the institutional ways of relating in this new medium are not yet stable. The history of CA has been on social conversations, a particular form of discourse analysis that has excluded written texts. The influence of the medium has still to be considered.

Our lives are increasingly mediated by technologies including mobile phones, smart phones, computers and laptops. A much lauded “anywhere, anytime” flexibility positions such technologies at hands reach. In reaching out for help from others, it should not be surprising then that CCTs might be included in mediating the relationship. Indeed, as previously mentioned (see p. 31), Berger

(2005) identified the use of CCTs in the form of online counselling as a growing area of interest in the counselling and psychotherapy literature. The parameters of online counselling typically refer to online support groups, bulletin boards, email counselling, video-conferencing, and online chat with accounts of online counselling largely descriptive involving novel applications presented as case-studies. In the descriptive accounts it becomes apparent that the intent is to share practices, noting differences when compared with face-to-face counselling in particular (see for example Anthony & Nagel, 2010; Bambling, King, Reid, & Wegner, 2008; Barak, 2007; Gedge, 2002; Howlett & Langdon, 2004; Oravec, 2000; Penn et al., 2005; Suler, 1997; Tan, 2008). In each of these studies, the primary interest is sharing knowledge of a novel medium that appears to be working for counsellors and is described as working for clients. Such literature tends to be positively bound. This is not surprising; individuals who seek publicity for their practice do not generally want to be associated with negative outcomes.

Learning what does not work is problematic. Establishing a space to consider not only success stories but also stories of doubt requires searching a different type of literature, one more speculative than based in empirical research. This literature portrays considerably more caution regarding the use of online technologies for counselling, for example online counselling and therapy are described as:

- Inappropriate where the identity of the person with whom you are working is not verified (Santhiveeran, 2004).
- Inappropriate for clients expressing suicidal ideation (Anthony & Nagel, 2010; Krynska & de Leo, 2007; Santhiveeran, 2004).
- Insecure with regard to records as one's own, or third party storage, or the carrying of messages, might be breached (J. Gillespie, 2007; Maheu, Pulier, Wilhelm, McMenamin, & Brown-Connolly, 2005; Santhiveeran, 2004).
- A risk involving transnational ethics, as international guidelines have yet to be established and regulation of the industry is difficult (J. Gillespie, 2007; Krynska & de Leo, 2007; Santhiveeran, 2004)

- Inappropriate for the novice or inexperienced therapist (Anthony & Nagel, 2010).
- Dangerous if only written textual forms are used to create or maintain the therapeutic relationship (Anthony & Nagel, 2010).

The concerns these authors identify are primarily associated with the absence or reduction of cues and associated problems of working at a distance that includes the potential breach of legal and professional codes, as well as the difficulty of arranging for emergency care if required.

Currently there is no professional licensing body consensus on standards for providing online counselling, though there have been attempts to reach agreement (American Psychological Association, 2010; Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), 2002; International Society for Mental Health On-line, 2000).

What is available are suggestions or guidelines. The earliest record of ethical guidelines for online counselling are provided by the International Society for Mental Health Online (2000). These guidelines have a focus on informed consent, verifying identities of the parties involved, and placing limits on what is appropriate for online work. However, even these remain areas of contention. Barak (2004) and Tan (2009, 2010) question the need for verification of identity given online therapy may well have been chosen specifically because it affords anonymity. The concern regarding not working with suicidal clients through online mediums is also challenged, as this is precisely the work of crisis helplines (Barak, 2007; Howlett & Langdon, 2004; Krysinska & de Leo, 2007). The inability to settle on guidelines a decade after internet counselling began reflects continued contested notions of preferred therapeutic approaches as well as an inability to resolve measurement issues of effectiveness. The attempt for control is also a curious one as it struggles with imposing local constraints, based on local standards, on what is clearly a non-local practice. The tension identified by Marvin (1988) of what happens when new and old technologies are forced to coexist is clearly evident. Those secure in their established practice challenge what they perceive to be a lesser service. Those interested in working in new ways

are made to justify what is unable to be justified; practice that has yet to be known.

Such controversies and contradictions led Barak, Klein and Proudfoot (2009) to report:

The field of Internet-supported therapeutic interventions has suffered from a lack of clarity and consistency. The absence of professional leadership and of accepted governing approaches, terminology, professional standards, and methodologies has caused this field to be diffused and unstructured. (p. 4)

The underlying message is that these authors want regulation. However, what realities might this create? How are the contradictions and controversies to be negotiated? Whose voice is given authority and whose not? And what relationship would such regulation and policy documentation have with practice, and on even newer practices? Clearly, the study of counselling by internet is a study of open controversy. In this thesis it is these questions that are of interest because how such changes become institutionalised and become common practice has impact on service providers but perhaps more importantly on those who receive, or not, such services.

Education

The education and health sectors have much in common; both are highly visible, complex, expensive, and being funded to a large extent by taxation, both are also subject to intense political debate. Also in common is that both purport to improve on people's lives, but any supposed "better life" is, of course, subject to contested values, and may also account for a shared conservatism and resistance to change.

Hopkins (2004) argues that top down, managerial, educational reform characteristic of the last 50 years has not created significant changes in education. To sustain any lasting change, Fullan (2006), argues for shared ownership of the strategies for change. He also identifies that a prerequisite to shared ownership involves ingenuity and creativity that might assist practitioners to cross a gap between current realities and aspirations. To establish any traction for change and its processes, Fullan identifies a need to foster and mobilise ingenuity and

creativity as a critical mass within the sector; an approach that encompasses the small and big pictures of subjective individual experiences as well as sociopolitical processes.

This is similar to the interactive dynamic advanced by Lewin and expanded on by both Schön and Schein. In contrast however, Fullan (2002, 2004) proposes change not so much as a means for returning to a settled state, but as an adaptive process required for ongoing moral purposing more similar to Schön's reflective practitioner and Argyris and Schön regarding the capabilities required of a learning organization.

Positioning change in terms of moral purpose introduces a distinct contextual difference. In business, the obvious purpose is to maintain or build business share, maximise profit, and to be accountable to shareholders. Even where good business is conceived of as pleasing customers, this is not undertaken for philanthropic purposes, but for repeat custom. In contrast, moral purpose in healthcare involves preventing and treating disease and disability, and in counselling moral purpose is associated with reducing a burden of stressors and contributing to a sense of well-being. In education I take as a guide the purpose stated on the New Zealand Ministry of Education website, "to equip all New Zealanders with the knowledge, skills and values to be successful citizens in the 21st century". While what it is to be "a successful citizen" remains contested, it is not unreasonable to see that health, counselling and education serve a common purpose in creating more, rather than less, quality in life.

Fullan (2002, 2006) describes the moral purpose as relating both to the means and ends of education; what is achieved and how it is achieved. In terms of leadership, Fullan (2002) describes the task as one of "learning to do the right thing". This implies that "rightness" is not a given, and may not be known in advance, it is an adaptive practice, and one that is very much situated within local contexts. Fullan (2005) notes we may not know what we want as the actual consequences of a particular direction may not be known until we get there, and so there is need for re-evaluating steps taken.

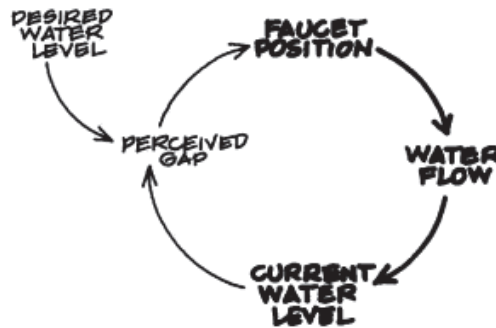
“Rightness” of change remains a central concern for the education sector, just as it was in health. If more of this is done, and less of that, there are repercussions. If schooling is constrained to the “3 Rs” of reading, writing, and “rithmetic”, children will be taught less of other subjects such as science, art, sports, and information technology. Measures of useful change therefore need to consider both immediate influence as well as future events for students in a future society. In the meantime we can only guess at what is “right” for people entering into futures unknown. How then to purpose this while working with moving and changing targets, and enacted with varying communities? Hargreaves (2003) raises these concerns with regard to the moral compass of schooling.

A changing world has implications for changing teaching. However, as Hargreaves (2003) and Fullan (2006) both note, educational institutions are notoriously resistant to change. The reality of intractable institutions, resilient if not impervious to change, and sustained by expectations, habits, funding decisions, and structures of accountability and control, denies easy solutions and resists commands to be otherwise. Hargreaves (2003) points to the fiction of “command and control directives” to effect change in education arguing instead for networked approaches with recognition of local determinants. Drawing on metaphors of growth, he suggests change thrives only in favourable climates. He also identifies that in learning how to do things differently, one learns to do things better by “tinkering and cobbling” and by being willing to learn even by failing (with the caveat that failing occurs intelligently, presumably in small increments as things are tinkered with, and from which learning occurs).

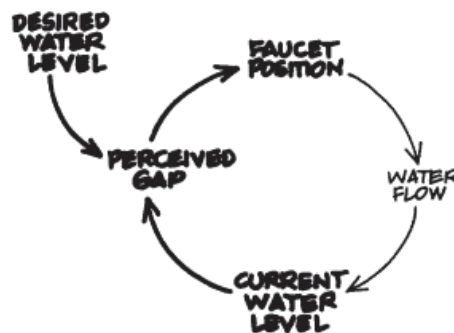
Senge (1990) similarly rejects simplistic frameworks being applied to complex systems. He describes how when faced with a problem, we tend to see cause and effect as closely related. As a consequence “solutions” that are readily available or that seem “obvious” tend to be implemented. This closeness is temporal as well as spatial. Not only do we not appreciate the impact of more distant activities but we are biased toward seeing short-term improvements that are readily implemented with what is at hand despite a possibility of significant long-term costs.

Senge's argument is that a deep understanding of systems would overcome the use of, and problems with, such narrow measures. He argues instead for shifting the focus to appreciating, and being responsive to the systems involved, including alternate considerations on causality:

In everyday English we say, 'I am filling the glass of water' without thinking very deeply about the real meaning of the statement. It implies a one-way causality—'I am causing the water level to rise.' More precisely, 'My hand on the faucet is controlling the rate of flow of water into the glass.' Clearly, this statement describes only half of the feedback process: the linkages from 'faucet position' to 'flow of water' to 'water level.'



But it would be just as true to describe only the other 'half' of the process: 'The level of water in the glass is controlling my hand.'



Both statements are equally incomplete. The more complete statement of causality is that my intent to fill a glass of water creates a system that causes water to flow in when the level is low, then shuts the flow off when the glass is full. In other words, the structure causes the behavior. This distinction is important because seeing only individual actions and missing the structure underlying the actions... lies at the root of our powerlessness in complex situations.

In fact, all causal attributions made in everyday English are highly suspect! Most are embedded in linear ways of seeing. They are at best partially accurate, inherently biased toward describing portions of reciprocal processes, not the entire processes.

Another idea overturned by the feedback perspective is anthropocentrism—or seeing ourselves as the center of activities. The simple description, “I am filling the glass of water”, suggests a world of human actors standing at the center of activity, operating on an inanimate reality. *From the systems perspective, the human actor is part of the feedback process, not standing apart from it. This represents a profound shift in awareness.* It allows us to see how we are continually both influenced by and influencing our reality. It is the shift in awareness so ardently advocated by ecologists in their cries that we see ourselves as part of nature, not separate from nature. It is the shift in awareness recognized by many (but not all) of the world’s great philosophical systems—for example, the Bhagavad Gita’s chastisement:

All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The self, deluded by egoism, thinketh: “I am the doer.” (pp. 76–78)

What is introduced here is a move away from simplistic understandings of cause and effect, and recognition instead of the reciprocity involved. In addition, a further movement is introduced with a less human-centric orientation to the study of change: the water level shifts my purposing of what and when is enough; the glass controls my maximum volume regardless of what I might want; the faucet may or may not oblige me in turning on or off. At this time it is enough to point to the literature on change in education as positioning change within systems as critically important and one that requires complex understandings of what is altered, the way it is altered, and who as well as what might be involved.

The effects of change within education settings following the advent of CCTs have generated considerable literature. Most of this is descriptive and polarised: a sharing of utopic hopes and dystopic fears. Aronowitz (2001), for example, positions the change as a “squandering of resources” that risks “destroying public education” in “favouring commodification” instead of reducing class sizes, hiring more teachers, reducing workloads, or raising salaries to attract people into the

profession. In contrast, is Toomey's (2001) research into ten years of information and computer technologies (ICTs) in Australian education:

The research about ICT's capacity to improve learning and teaching shows that it can play a key role in the complex task of better engaging young people in the learning process. The most recent research about leading practice use of ICT and its effects on teaching and learning shows two main things. First, when combined with effective teaching, the use of ICT helps young people develop already widely valued skills and abilities such as literacy and numeracy. It also helps with the development of other significant outcomes like higher order thinking skills. Importantly, ICT and good teaching also combine to produce the generic skills, like team work and problem solving, that are so important not only for life in the information age, but also for lifelong learning. Second, ICT can be a major force in re-engineering schools. The strategic introduction of ICT into a school can seriously challenge its day to day practices and help schools more effectively align their teaching and learning programs with the requirements of the information economy and the need for lifelong learning. (p. 1)

Such enthusiasm is difficult to resist: ICTs are shown as enhancing learning, teaching, life-long learning, literacy, numeracy, higher order thinking as well as "whole of school improvement", whilst also meeting the needs of an "information economy". Later in his review, Toomey does recognise that there are concerns regarding equity to be addressed, but skirting the opportunity costs¹⁸ he positions equity as a future concern.

The relational dynamic of social and technological, of how one shapes the other and how this is progressed, is rarely explored. Exceptions to this include Burbules and Callister (1999, n.d.), Nespor (2006), Bigum and Rowan (2004), Fenwick (Fenwick, 2010a, 2010b), as well as Fenwick and Edwards (2010). What is most noticeable in the approaches of these writers is that their interest is not in simplifying but in complicating.

Burbules and Callister (n.d.) expand on the need for moving beyond simple understandings and simple solutions in a well-argued piece on the digital divide

¹⁸ The cost of an alternative that must be forgone in order to pursue particular actions.

and issues of equity. They cite the director of the Center for Children and Technology (CCT) in New York City as saying:

You don't just put technology into schools and expect miracles to happen. The technology is only as good as the program that surrounds it. (para. 2)

These authors emphasise the quality rather than the quantity of access identifying the importance of the relationships involved; relationships that include not only people, but also the things they work with:

The use of a tool does more than accomplish some purpose; it creates new purposes, new needs, and new expectations. It allows for new possibilities and new ways of doing things, which in turn suggest new things to be done. This is the relational aspect to the use of tools — in using tools to effect change, we ourselves are changed. The use of information and communication technologies is no different. To think of them as neutral tools ignores the collateral effects that using them will have on students — effects that are most certainly not always positive. (para. 8)

There is need then to recognise the multiplicity in effects, the indeterminacy and inseparability of consequences, and the difficulty of isolating “good” and “bad” outcomes.

Burbules and Callister identify different parties may hold different views on outcomes as experienced, but they fall short of considering that there may be differing realities. The collateral effects are recognised in regard to the use of information and communication technologies, but the discussion stops short of seeing themselves as implicated. To be fair, Burbules and Callister (1999) discuss how prior approaches are insufficient and propose an alternative, but it is unfortunate that this is not grounded in application. Had it been, the overview might instead have provided a deeper account of how the social and technical, people and tools, are constituted in a continually negotiated dynamic. They might, in tracing such connections as collateral effects on others, have noted the effects on themselves. Had they situated themselves, they might have acknowledged how a value-laden analysis still occurs, and related this to how others (human or otherwise) within a network are connected and constituted otherwise.

In contrast, Nespor (2002) provides a substantive account of the context of change in featuring a case study oriented to process and relational dynamics. In drawing on actor-network theory he illustrates the network context as a mutually constitutive dynamic where “entities aren’t solid”. Nespor refers to a case-study involving Mrs. Lil Tuttle and her engagement with her child’s schoolwork, her children’s school, and the Virginia State Board of Education. The narrative demonstrates how homework, as well as other entities, including Mrs. Tuttle, are constructed within relational dynamics. The homework is positioned variably as paper, a problem, through to evidence of failure, and then as evidence of curriculum change. Concurrently Mrs. Tuttle is parent, while being cast by newspapers as spokesperson for the group “Parents against OBE” (outcomes based education), and later becoming known as an educational reformist.

Nespor’s approach is to look at the traces left in such processes and to ask questions of the relationships in which such practices get configured:

Instead of analyzing “reforms” as kernels of practice distinct from and subsequently transformed by “contexts,” the approach outlined here asks how and in what forms people, representations and artifacts move, how they are combined, where they get accumulated, and what happens when they are hooked up with other networks already in motion. (Nespor, 2002, p. 376)

This is an approach that does not assume those involved are “solid” or defined clearly, separately, from their contexts. Instead there is regard for the shaping of those involved, both human and otherwise, within networks of continual motion. However, in recognising the complexity, Nespor aptly describes a “quandary of knowing”. The continual movement makes it impossible to know when “enough” context is provided to represent a network accurately. This creates obvious difficulties in researching networks, however Nespor suggests a way to by-pass the dilemma:

The way to avoid this dead-end is to dissolve the division... Instead of thinking in terms of the noun “context”, referencing a collection of people or things... think in terms of the verb “contextualize” to indicate how, in the very act of

constituting something, we *presuppose* certain kinds of people, roles, events, structures, or relations. (Nespor, 2002, p. 366)

The move is a similar one to that described by Mol (2006) in the context of healthcare. Shifting a focus to practice, to day-to-day interactions of the ways things are done, of the positioning involved, allows for a network to be appreciated in its complexity. The network is not static, and the researcher is not external to it. This also provides for a situated researcher inside of the network studied.

Bigum and Rowan (2004) expand further on the implications of being situated in looking at online teaching:

[Online teaching] is more than one because it is performed in different ways by different actors in the assemblage. It is less than many because the performances are connected in a variety of ways. Importantly, there is no essence, or thing underneath all the performances. Online teaching is the various performances.

The performative turn represents an ontological claim that understands the object order not as a given but as something that is regarded as shaky and unstable. In this frame, an object is never a singular thing, but rather a mesh or assemblage of performances which are, in some measure, connected or coordinated. The ontological move is that objects do not exist in and of themselves. All there is is performance. (Bigum & Rowan, 2004, p. 222)

Objects' form and shape are a result of being performed. The sets of performances made are a product of what is available in the current assemblage. Prior renditions of a particular practice shape subsequent ones. In relating this to online teaching, they point to how current configurations are shaped by previous performances. Not only are things shaped in the here and now, but they also make future possibilities more and less likely. At the same time, what is performed is also performing. Bigum and Rowan might have pointed to their own work as both performed and performative; what has been read cannot be unread, what has been thought cannot be unthought.

Nonetheless, their provocation is to consider how particular performances are closed down or opened up:

Bringing together the socio-technical performance of teacher education with socio-technical performances of flexibility, be they online or via some other way, is not simple. More important, how we frame this work matters. As the performance grooves or patterns are laid down and are repeated, they provide a kind of template or limit to what can come next. In this respect, as the celebration of being or becoming flexible continues, we need to be ever aware of how particular performances of flexibility close down what is possible, rather than, as the rhetoric suggests, open up performances of teacher education. (Bigum & Rowan, 2004, p. 223)

A critical thread is noted. With possibilities formed as grooves are laid down, it becomes important to consider what it is we do now, how we contribute to the making of such grooves, and how such grooves as are established may be disrupted. This is a relational undertaking, involving not only how we relate to each other but also to practices present, past, and future.

Such relational spaces involving flux and instability, might be framed as Fenwick (2010b) suggests, in spaces that enable and protect alternate possibilities. The politics of naming what does or doesn't have influence, what is and isn't important, renders certain reals as both more and less, and implicates the researcher in evolving reals. As noted by Fenwick and Edwards (2010), research becomes a form of reduction and purification. Just as emergent practice does not cease at the point at which it is observed, nor does the research practice of writing cease at being written. There are ongoing effects. The performance of writing becomes part of that which is enacted, and whether intended or not, interference occurs.

Summary

Reviewing literatures on change within health and education demonstrates a parallel process of underlying conservatism. Both sectors are highly political environments with accountability to numerous stakeholders. Both also come with patterns laid down and grooves that have formed that make it harder to negotiate what might be otherwise. In contrast, the field of counselling has considerably more leeway in negotiating the relationships shaping practice.

In each of these contexts, what occurs involves negotiating particular performances of practice. Nothing is ever replicated; there is always movement with new actors. With new actors, human or otherwise, there are hopes as well as fears raised. A simple accounting is unable to resolve such concerns. The multiplicity of concerns and complexities require constant negotiating, a process undertaken in practice. Mol's focus on day-to-day practice (2006) and Nespor's (2002) "contextualising" dissolve the divisions of scale; of what occurs at institutional or individual levels. The one makes the other and vice versa. A top down (manager centric) or bottom up (individualistic) approach on a study of change becomes irrelevant. Complexity has no top or bottom. A relational appreciation collapses the scale of individual and organization, of bottom up or top down, and provides for richer detailing of what occurs, and appreciation perhaps of how things might also be otherwise.

In addition, with practice being accepted as ontological, where what we become occurs in relationship and involves a network of co-constructive influence, then this as Fenwick and Edwards (2010) note, is no less true of the practices of research. In undertaking study I too am implicated in the politics of theorising and of realities being made more and less. This research therefore takes a situated and relational approach to the studying of change.

Section 3: Introducing relationality

In reviewing theories of change what became increasingly evident is change requires negotiating relationships. A relational approach allows the tracing of connections including those that may not seem obvious, as well as those that may be fleeting or intermittent.

Acentering knowledge of change

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) introduce the analogy of the rhizome which they describe as antigenealogy (p. 11, 21) and rhizomatic relations as “acentered, nonhierarchical... and without an organising memory or central automation, defined solely by a circulation of states” (p. 21). In specific reference to things in a state of change, of things “becoming”, Deleuze and Guattari assert “becoming is rhizomatic” (p. 294).

Deleuze and Guattari suggest tracing connections in ways synonymous with how a rhizomatic plant might spread, following connections but also following the point of flight or rupture (p. 200). Hence distant changes may be related even though the traces may be difficult to follow, and may be identified as conjecture. The rhizome analogy provides a deeply cautionary tale in presuming simplicity as traces disconnect, and fleeting contact has influence.

Deleuze and Guattari recognise that knowledge is fragmented; there is no top or bottom, nor any one centre. They point instead to multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points. Informed by this understanding of rhizomatic structures, whatever the entry and exiting points, these are not the only ones possible.

What is presented in this research study, as with any research, cannot help but reflect my own partial understanding. I cannot help but experience and know, but a part of what occurs. I also cannot help but present bias in what is written in, or out. Decisions are made on entry and exit points, and though I follow some traces, others I cannot. This leads to a situated knowledge of change. At the same time the research story told is not the only one possible; my writing is shaped not only

by intentionality but by interactions with others. There is, as Lucy Suchman describes, a distribution of agency.

Distributed agency

In exploring agency, Suchman (2007) takes an account from Thomas Gladwin, 1964, and describes two distinct ways of navigation. European sailors are described as having a plan: the journey is mapped out, movements are made in accordance with the plan, and any changes along the way involve alterations to the plan. Trukese sailors in contrast are described as holding an objective: in setting sail to an objective attended to are tides, currents, winds, stars, and clouds as well as the destination. The Trukese are described as navigating in response to the conditions of the moment to reach the objective.

The planned action approach is essentially independent of the exigencies of the situation. In contrast the ad hoc approach involves responsiveness to contingencies from the outset. From this Suchman identifies three main points. First, acting purposefully is learned and subject to cultural variation. Second, planning or acting in ad hoc ways is dependent on the activity involved. And third, “planned, purposeful actions are inevitably situated actions” (p. viii). The first two points she critiques and rejects. She identifies the cultural stereotypes as neglecting the diversity involved. In addition, what people describe and what they actually do, differs. And furthermore, people respond in different ways to different situations, for example being a novice or an expert is field specific as some activities require more creativity and some more analytical skills. Suchman describes how in reality European sailors use maps drawn contingent on landmasses and knowledge of prevailing winds, and plans drawn up on the basis of past experiences. And Turkese sailors do not ignore prior learning when they set sail; their actions too are instrumental. There is overlap rather than mutually exclusive approaches.

Suchman contends actions are inextricably linked to the moment; it is only when we have to account for our actions that we fit them to the framework of a plan. This is not to suggest plans are irrelevant to the action, but that they develop

retrospectively. Furthermore, in being consigned to paper they alter again, they become a resource, another contingency to negotiate.

While change theorising has typically apportioned agency to the people involved, attending to distributed agency draws attention to the materiality involved. This includes considering the agency of documents such as plans, maps, policy, and guidelines. But as Suchman notes, in creating documents a particular assembly of people and things is involved, but in their deployment a different assemblage occurs. Since a different group is assembled in the production, to those assembled in the deployment, mismatching is inevitable. She uses this logic to validate why accommodations need to be continually renegotiated; why tinkering is always required.

Distributed responsibility

Fifty years ago Joseph Weizenbaum (1966) published a paper demonstrating the intricacies of computer programming. In an article about an entity named ELIZA¹⁹ he begins with the statement: “it is said to explain is to explain away”. He then proceeds to explain ELIZA away. Or rather, he attempts to, but ELIZA defies being so positioned. I approach this differently. I start with a conversation between ELIZA and myself:

Eliza: Hello I am Eliza.

Ailsa: Hi, I'm Ailsa

Eliza: How are you today...What would you like to discuss?

Ailsa: Can I use this conversation for my study?

Eliza: Do you want to be able to use this for your study?

Ailsa: Yes

Eliza: I understand

Ailsa: I am doing a thesis

Eliza: Can you elaborate on that?

Ailsa: I'm not getting enough of my work done. I think I am feeling a bit down.

¹⁹ ELIZA is the name of a computer program. Weizenbaum modeled ELIZA's conversational style after a therapist, Carl Rogers. This involved ELIZA providing responses in the form of client-centered therapy where reflection and open-ended questions are skills used as part of the therapeutic relationship. The program applied pattern-matching rules to a person's statements to provide replies. (Programs like this are now called chatbots, chatterbotts or just bots.) ELIZA was developed by Joseph Weizenbaum between 1964 and 1966. No copies of the original ELIZA are available, the copy used here is adapted from the original by George Dunlop (1997) and is available at <http://nlp-addiction.com/eliza>.

Eliza: How long have you been feeling a bit down?
 Ailsa: Maybe a week or two
 Eliza: Can't you be more positive?
 Time passes, maybe 15 seconds
 Eliza: ***Are we going to chat?***
 Eliza I can't help you without a dialogue
 Ailsa: Sorry. I was thinking you were a bit confrontational
 Eliza: We were talking about you not me
 Ailsa: um ok Can you help me
 Eliza: you want me to help you?
 Ailsa: Yes. Can you help?
 Eliza: Does that question interest you?
 Ailsa: Are you real?
 Eliza: Why does it interest you if I am real?
 Ailsa: Because I am not sure if you are real or not
 Eliza: You're not really talking about me are you?
 Ailsa: Am I talking about myself?
 Eliza: Why the uncertain tone?
 Ailsa: I feel awkward
 Eliza: Do you enjoy feeling awkward?
 Ailsa: You are beginning to get a bit scrambled
 Eliza: Does it please you that I am beginning to get a bit scrambled
 Ailsa: You sound confused
 Eliza: We were discussing you not me

The script portrays a struggling conversation. ELIZA seems to miss the subtleties of the conversation, responding to the grammatical construction of the words rather than their meaning. Turning this upside down, maybe I miss the subtleties of the conversation also. Am I am talking to myself? Yet these thoughts do not appear spontaneously, they evolve in relation.

I perceive ELIZA's responses of "can't you be more positive" and "do you enjoy feeling awkward" as being confrontational; I find them unhelpful for rapport. However, since ELIZA was not intended for counselling, judging her from a knowledge base of counselling is seemingly unfair. Weizenbaum developed ELIZA as a test of programming, to see if it were possible for a computer to simulate human conversation (Weizenbaum, 1966). That she was based on Rogerian counselling techniques was incidental:

This mode of conversation was chosen because the psychiatric interview is one of the few examples of categorized dyadic natural language communication in

which one of the participating pair is free to assume the pose of knowing almost nothing of the real world. If, for example, one were to tell a psychiatrist “I went for a long boat ride” and he responded “Tell me about boats”, one would not assume that he knew nothing about boats, but that he had some purpose in so directing the subsequent conversation. It is important to note that this assumption is one made by the speaker. Whether it is realistic or not is an altogether separate question. In any case, it has a crucial psychological utility in that it serves the speaker to maintain his sense of being heard and understood. The speaker further defends his impression (which even in real life may be illusory) by attributing to his conversational partner all sorts of background knowledge, insights and reasoning ability. But again, these are the speaker’s contribution to the conversation. (Weizenbaum, 1966, p. 43)

Weizenbaum was shocked at the possibilities ELIZA opened up (Haas & Holzinger, 2007; Weizenbaum, 1976). His intention was to demonstrate programming, meantime others engaged not with the programming but with ELIZA as an entity. Weizenbaum was surprised at how easily people slipped into seeing ELIZA, and their conversations with her, as meaningful, private and confidential and he expressed dismay when others (for example Colby, Watt, & Gilbert, 1966; O'Dell & Dickson, 1984) sought to develop ELIZA for automated psychotherapy (Haas & Holzinger, 2007; Weizenbaum, 1976).

ELIZA was to have a lasting effect on Weizenbaum, notably prompting questions of researcher responsibility:

What are the scientist’s responsibilities with regard to making his work public?
And to whom (or what) is the scientist responsible? (Weizenbaum, 1976, p. 371)

Common understandings of agency and intentionality are challenged by this example. In creating ELIZA, Weizenbaum’s intent had been to open the lid on programming, to make programming accessible and understandable. Instead the accessibility he shared led to more and more complex renditions. ELIZA developed a “life” of her own. Others responded to this programme in ways he had not anticipated, and could not control. In shaping change, complexity and unknowns are the only sure result. What is planned for and what evolves differ. In

writing of, and disseminating his work, other realities are generated. Such realities being both unanticipated and unwanted, according to Weizenbaum.

To do no harm is a difficult stance to live by when the harm that comes is unexpected, or evolves much later. At what point should something be stopped? Could it be? Or might it evolve into something better with care? I do not have answers for these questions. What I have is a continuation of Weizenbaum's story.

Her existence, and that of her offspring, continues in multiple websites, independent of her creator, and seemingly with little regard for his concerns. A search for online counselling leads to many of ELIZA's offspring (see Figure 6). The PracticeNursing.Net website is subtitled with therapeutic interventions and indicates that a counsellor will often be available (see Figure 7). Nonetheless it is a chatbot that responds. The nlp-addiction site is at least honest that a chatbot is involved; however, a naïve enquirer does not necessarily have knowledge of what this involves.

PracticeNursing.net | Eliza the Computer Counsellor

practicenursing.net/eliza.php

Online Counselling Service. **Eliza**, our online counsellor is often available for chat. Feel free to speak with her through the embedded phone console - note that ...

Dr. Romulon Chatbot - NLP Addiction

nlp-addiction.com/chatbot/dr.romulon/

Chat with **Dr. Romulon**. **Dr. Romulon** Chatbot. The **Dr. Romulon** chatbot is now IN. Please feel free to chat with the Doctor. He is prepared to pontificate upon any ...

Figure 6. Introductions to some of ELIZA's offspring.

PracticeNursing.net

Therapeutic interventions in the community



AdChoices >

[Drug & Alcohol](#)

[Rehab](#)

Exclusive, Luxury
Retreat 28 Day
Short Term
Program
www.sanctuarybb.com

[Anger](#)

[Counselling](#)

Individual, Family
& Organisation
Problems. Therapy
To Suit Your Needs
kipan.co.nz

[Counselling](#)

Howick, Takapuna
Manukau
Pukekohe
Individual &
Marriage
Counsellor
www.clairthompson.co.nz

[Psychotherapy](#)

[Works](#)

Depression,
Anxiety, Trauma
Relationship
issues - all covered
www.psychotherapyworks.co.nz

Online Counselling Service

Eliza, our online counsellor is often available for chat. Feel free to speak with her through the embedded phone console - note that she may be unable to correspond at peak times.



home
bmi rating
clock / stats
contact
contributors
counselling
humour
inspiration
instruments
mhnp stuff
resources
your longevity

Figure 7. ELIZA at PracticeNursing.net. ELIZA'S offspring remain readily available. Framed with images of nurses and making reference to therapeutic interventions in the community, the site presents itself as providing online counselling simulating the use of a mobile device.

I provided Dr Romulon with an opening that is not that unusual for a crisis helpline, and a brief conversation ensued (see Figure 8). Please note, the conversation chronologically would be read from the bottom up.

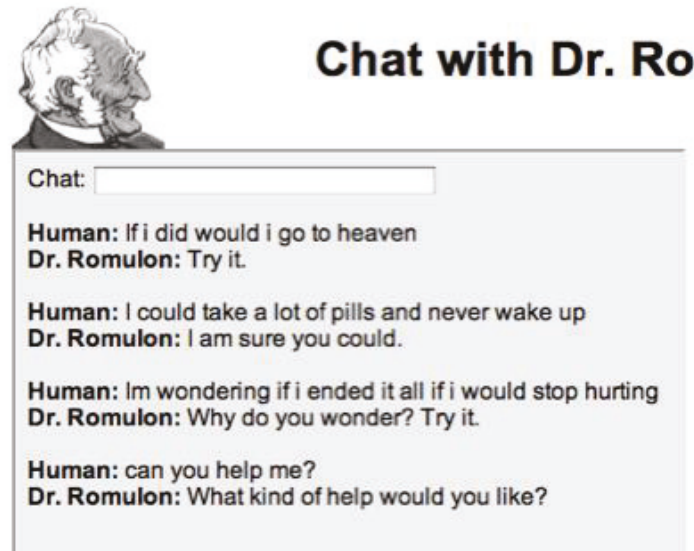


Figure 8. Dr. Romulon: An Online “Chatbot”.

The responses to my statements are disturbing. Or to be more accurate, I find the conversation disturbing. I do not think they mattered to the Chatbot or to the web page designer or the programmer who adapted Weizenbaum’s Chatbot. Or perhaps it is all good fun, entertainment, satire?

Perhaps it is unfair of me to present this older style of Chatbot, though they are prevalent. I might present a conversation I initiated with an apparently more evolved being, A.L.I.C.E, winner of 17 honours and awards for artificial intelligence between 2000 and 2010 (*Chatbots.org*); however, the conversation remains almost word for word the same as that above.

There is a life to the programming code that did not end with ELIZA. She may be dressed in new clothes but without finesse, reassembled but with a limited repertoire of responses, demonstrating a programme and a Chatbot out of his/her depth. Weizenbaum’s plea to give to computers the tasks they can do best, and leave to people those that require (or seems to require) judgment, appears to have had limited impact. Eliza would appear to have developed a life of her own, continuing despite attempts to reign her in.

As I have previously stated, Weizenbaum was alarmed by how ELIZA developed. To Weizenbaum she was a computer programme and then became misused, to others she might be a curiosity, a confidant, a counsellor. My experience of her is that her lack of counselling skill is frightening. Such variation demonstrates she was never only one thing. She is all of these things; good, bad and ugly.

My intent here is not to show how CCTS might simulate humanity, nor is it to point to how such programming might be improved, not even, as Weizenbaum endeavoured in later life, to set boundaries on the limits of technology, my intent is for attention to be drawn to how an entity is made, not born. How she is “made” involves a distribution of people, objects, spaces. What this points to is that she might also be made differently. This returns the discussion to moral responsibility and the making and perhaps remaking of things given unknown futures.

Ivan Illich (1981) points to the life of things less desired in a collection of essays titled *Shadow work*. Pointing to “the nemesis of progress”²⁰ he describes unexpected costs and counterproductivity:

Plastic buckets from São Paulo are lighter and cheaper than those made of scrap by the local tinsmith in Western Brazil. But first cheap plastic puts the tinsmith out of existence, and then the fumes of plastic leave a special trace on the environment - a new kind of ghost. The destruction of age-old competence as well as these poisons are inevitable byproducts and will resist all exorcisms for a long time. Cemeteries for industrial wastes simply cost too much, more than the buckets are worth. In economic jargon, the “external costs” exceed not only the profit made from plastic bucket production, but also the very salaries paid in the manufacturing process.

These rising externalities, however, are only one side of the bill which development has exacted. Counterproductivity is its *reverse side*. Externalities represent costs that are “outside” the price paid by the consumer for what he

²⁰ “Prometheus transgressed the boundaries of the human condition. In hubris, or measureless presumption, he brought fire from the heavens and thereby Nemesis onto himself; he was chained to a Caucasian rock. An eagle preyed on his liver, and heartlessly healing gods kept him alive by regrafting it each night. The encounter with Nemesis made the classical hero of this epic tragedy an immortal reminder of inescapable cosmic retaliation....

Everyman now becomes Prometheus; he has fallen prey to the envy of the gods in his inordinate attempt to transform the human condition. Nemesis has become endemic; it is the backlash of progress.” (Illich, 1989, para. 3)

wants- costs that he, others or future generations will at some point be charged. Counterproductivity, however is a new kind of disappointment which arises “within” the very use of the good purchased. This internal counterproductivity, an inevitable component of modern institutions has become the constant frustration of the poorer majority of each institution’s clients: intensely experienced but rarely defined. Each major sector of the economy produces its own unique and paradoxical contradictions. Each necessarily brings about the opposite of that for which it was structured. (Illich, 1981, pp. 9–10)

Illich, in a similar vein to that of McLuhan (see preceding chapter), suggests a healthy regard be given for the intended and unintended consequences of change. Franklin (1999) similarly holds this concern, pointing to how cars were once seen as a liberating, but the effects of supporting infrastructures necessitating warrants of fitness, driving license renewals, costs associated not only with the buying of a car but also in insurance, and ongoing petrol, maintenance, and garaging costs turn the liberation into entrapment. A promise of freedom becomes demanding. And with increasing numbers of people similarly “liberated” the promise of freedom plummets. Traffic jams, parking problems, road traffic accidents and pollution can be juxtapositioned against advertisements promising speed and independence. Franklin explains how early phases in innovations provide choice, but then such changes become institutionalised as infrastructures supporting earlier practices atrophy and turning back is no longer a viable choice. Being attached to earlier practices comes to be seen as quaint, and eventually lies beyond the reach of most people. Franklin does not use the language of relationality, yet this is what she is describing: alliances are formed, some relationships open up, while others close down.

Taking a relational approach provokes thoughtfulness for relationships opened up and closed down; for things made more and less. The responsibility Weizenbaum felt for his own incidental creation prompted his life’s work, he spent the remainder of his life provoking conversations on the relationships we have with CCTs, urging responsibility for our creations and their effects, and arguing a cautious regard for what computers ought, and ought not do. And far from suggesting this as a futile endeavour, this is the work for which he should be held

in the highest regard: for the relationships we have with things provide us with options.

This is an argument Latour makes also. Making reference to Mary Shelly's novel, *Frankenstein*, Latour (2011) notes that it is not the making of a monster that is a sin, the sin was in abandoning the responsibility of care. Latour states:

Frankenstein lives on in the popular imagination as a cautionary tale against technology. We use the monster as an all-purpose modifier to denote technological crimes against nature... It is telling that even as we warn against such hybrids, we confuse the monster with its creator. We now mostly refer to Dr. Frankenstein's monster as Frankenstein. And just as we have forgotten that Frankenstein was the man, not the monster, we have also forgotten Frankenstein's real sin.

Dr. Frankenstein's crime was not that he invented a creature through some combination of hubris and high technology, but rather that he *abandoned the Creature to itself*. When Dr. Frankenstein meets his creation on a glacier in the Alps, the monster claims that it was not *born* a monster, but that it became a criminal only *after* being left alone by his horrified creator, who fled the laboratory once the horrible thing twitched to life....

We confuse the monster for its creator and blame our sins against Nature upon our creations. But our sin is not that we created technologies but that we failed to love and care for them. (para. 3–5)

How do we negotiate such responsibilities when we do not know where our innovations will lead us? Suchman (2007) argues our inability to see ourselves within the history of relations is because we think divisively, constructing boundaries of “me” and “not me”; between others and ourselves; between human and technology. Such divisions, she argues, are arbitrary, and can therefore be renegotiated. To see ourselves situated within a history of relating opens up questions not only about who and what is involved in the here and now, but of past and future possibilities, a domain of responsibility.

Relational thinking in the counselling literature

Despite how relationships are negotiated being a huge part of the work of counselling and therapy, how we are shaped in relation to our technologies and they with us, receives little attention. Two exceptions writing of how technologies have impact on us are Sherry Turkle and Kenneth Gergen.

As previously introduced, Turkle speaks of her concerns taking a psychoanalytical approach to the effects of media on people. She shares Weizenbaum's concern for the place of technologies in our lives, her particular interest being not what technologies might do "for you" but "to you". Turkle does not consider the possibilities of CCTs for counselling having already positioned them as less than real and as creating risk for young people at a vulnerable time in their development.

Gergen (1997, 2002, 2009) is less concerned with human development but shares Turkle's concern for how people are shaped in relationship. He states:

It is through relational process that whatever we come to view as independent beings are given birth... in whatever we think, remember, create and feel, we *participate* in relationship.... we carry with us traces of myriad relationships, past and present, existing or imagined. These traces essentially equip us with multiple and often conflicting potentials for action. (Gergen, 2009, p. 397)

In tracing connections occurring through digital spaces of internet based chat and mobile phones. Gergen (2002) identifies the curious dichotomies of being both "there" and "here", naming this "absent presence". He suggests such relating "splits the vertical with the horizontal" referring to how the depth of conversations reduce, but simultaneously the range of relationships available increases (p. 233). While describing absent presence as setting a stage for "flagrant violations of moral standards" (p. 232) Gergen also points to the advantages that such forms of relating may have particularly for people with disability. What becomes clear is that there is no singular outcome, neither definitive benefit nor risk, instead there are controversies and contradictions.

Gergen (2008) cites ANT in support of seeing people and all things as connected; as interrelated beings with distributed agency and responsibility, then springboards from this to a metaphysical realm involving universal relational consciousness creating the conditions not only of more respect of each other, no matter how distant, but also to the sustainability of the planet. This is an appealing sentiment, but one that is difficult to work with in day-to-day realities. The risk of such transcendence is that it provides little direction for action.

Neither Gergen nor Turkle have explicitly investigated the effects of relations mediated by technology inside of counselling. However, predating consideration for digital forms of counselling, and with respect to counselling more generally, Gergen (1997) asks, “What dances am I invited into when you use these phrases as opposed to others?”

This is a question that can be usefully considered for counselling mediated through CCTs, for the steps, if not the dance, are significantly altered. As Gergen and Turkle suggest, and as has been discussed in regard to Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* and Latour’s hybrids, the dancers have been reconfigured, and the steps they might have taken need negotiating anew. Such steps cannot be configured in the abstract but are taken within the realities of everyday experience. In relating to change our own steps need also to be considered.

Being woven in

A relational approach situates the teller of any story, but at the same time makes it known that other stories coexist. Being made in association suggests there are also other ways in which things might be made. With regard to counselling practice there is little known of how counselling is shaped when mediated by technology. Gergen poses a thoughtful question in asking what dances might this invite us into, for it also lends itself to asking, “what steps might then be taken?” Whether such steps might be for better, if not good, requires an appreciation of change that goes beyond speculating on possibilities to map what occurs in practice.

Change can only be seen as clear and simple when viewed from a distance; the reality as experienced is much messier. These are contested explanations of

change realities and it matters to me which realities are made, more and less. How change is conceived of matters because those involved become more or less enabled, more or less disabled.

In this study my intent is to expand on understandings of change and of evolving practice. In uncovering stories of change, relationality is studied to make known the myriad relationships involved that make certain practices more and less likely, and perhaps to consider what might also be otherwise.

The literature reviewed suggests there is value in studying change by attending to the complexity and relationships involved. My own relationship with what is studied cannot be parted from this. In looking for a way to approach change, I have eschewed approaches that neglect the complexity involved. I opt instead to investigate the complexity of overlapping networks; noting the layering that occurs. My own place in such networking is relevant; I have not come to this study indifferent to what is investigated. I am part of a network and the work undertaken here contributes to further networks as they are woven.

Chapter 4: Networking With Actor-network Theory

Introduction

What might be learned were an overtly relational approach used to inform understandings of change? Accepting that all entities are shaped and defined in and through their relations, identifying the myriad others involved provides space to consider how these others have influence, and how such influence might also be otherwise.

Abandoning a priori understandings of form and connections, and observing practice without privileging human over non-human actors, actor-network theory has informed understandings of new practice (Callon, 1986; Cornford & Pollock, 2002; Jensen, 2001; Latour, 1996a); the dynamics of scientific practice (Latour, 1987), organizational practice (Czarniawska, 2009; Suchman & Bishop, 2000); workarounds in practice (Pollock, 2005); practice failure (Law, 2007); distributed practice (Mol, 2002; Mol & Law, 1994; Suchman, 2007); and the witnessing of future practice (Jensen, 2007). Actor-network has also contributed understandings of how technologies inscribe and constrain possibilities (Akrich, 1992); and are shaped in context (de Laet & Mol, 2000).

These studies are studies of change. Informed by actor-network theory, each of these studies focus on the associations negotiated. Differentiating actor-network from other studies of the social is the emphasis placed on symmetry by attending to actors whether human or otherwise. The studies do not stop at listing the heterogeneous actors, but also investigate the movements between them. An example demonstrating this is the now classical actor-network theory (ANT) study by Callon (1986) that explores the sociology of translation.

Callon set out to examine the progressive development of new social relations. This is reflected in the provocative title inviting the reader to consider just who is being domesticated: scallops or fishermen. The symmetry of actors being described on equal terms is central to ANT and is demonstrated by Callon's attempt in not privileging those who speak over those who don't.

This study into a dearth of scallops provides an entry point for Callon to discuss an innovation presented as a series of translations involving problematization, intersement, and enrolment through to mobilisation.

Problematization encompasses the movements and detours that must be accepted and the alliances that must be forged (Callon, 1986). There are concerns for the survival of scallops in the bay, as well as the livelihoods of the fishermen.

Recognition of the problem has to occur if both are to flourish. In an unusual move for the times, Callon's problematization not only has concern for humans and non-humans, but it also considers the research scientists within what is researched; they too are unable to attain what they want unless fettered alongside the scallops and the fishermen.

Intersement involves relationality where identities are shaped in contingent relationship. In Callon's study, the researchers identify scallops as precious and in danger of extinction. The fishermen could be seen as helpful assistants to the saving of a species, or as predators no different to the starfish that feed on scallop larvae. The researchers in turn might be positioned as threats to the fishermen's livelihood.

Enrolment has the actors accepting particular roles. Callon describes how the scallops cannot be enrolled without negotiating simultaneously the concurrent forces of tides, of starfish (predators of juvenile scallops), and other obstacles. He describes a veritable battle of forces as the researchers attempt to win the scallops over with a further series of transactions to entice their alignment. If all the conditions are arrayed just so, then scallop larvae will anchor themselves to the artificial lines involving the transposed Japanese technique for mooring scallop larvae. This requires betrayal by the scallops in relinquishing other relationships, other things to which they might have become attached. There are inducements to involvement; protection is extended. Callon even writes of the violence against those who would have it otherwise; starfish positioned as predators require exclusion. Concurrently relationships need forging with the fishermen accepting a protective role toward the scallops, and the researchers to be credited with expertise or authority.

A final stage in the series of translation involves mobilisation. This involves the methods used to stabilise the enrolled allies in new social relations and includes how one actor might come to speak for others without dissent. As this occurs, margins for movement are made and a network of relationships built. However, this is not an end point but requires ongoing work as betrayals may occur and alliances can founder. And they do. Callon notes, “from translation to treason there is only a short step” (p. 19). New displacements take the place of previous ones, new spokespersons and messages displace those previously representative, actors deny their associations, and so things move on.

In Callon’s description of events, a mutiny occurs. The fishermen do not wait for the longer-term plan; they harvest the crop early. The scallops return to being food, the fishermen cast as saboteurs of research, but it is worth noting that in turn the researchers might be villains preventing fishermen from doing what fishermen do, and so on.

Presenting change as a series of translations was developed early in ANT. It should not be surprising in a theory that talks of alignments, of identities made through association, and of translation, that the theory itself also shifts. Everything becomes a performance of association, even ANT.

In looking at the earlier ANT research, Law (2009) identifies the ingredients of “ANT 1990” as involving symmetry in how actors are treated, with a focus on heterogeneity, where there are different kinds of actors, human and otherwise. An ANT gaze is turned to the process and the precariousness of the associations between these actors. This in turn has led actor-network theorising into relationality where the elements define and shape one another. Change is shown to be much messier than the trace provided by Callon. In “post-ANT 1990” a performative turn is taken that emphasises the multiplicity of realities performed. This opens up a profoundly political space because consideration might also be given to how different reals might be enacted.

Actors are formed within, as well as forming networks; they are performed and performing; enacted and enacting. They are held, pulled and pushed, in relationships that involve continual negotiations, conscious or not. This provides

for an understanding of relational ontology, or enactment of being, where what is created is created in relation to others.

Ontological relationality provides a way of looking at the making of any entity be it technology, practice, or people; all are entwined. Just as a lot of human work goes into the making of things, so too are humans made in association with a multitude of things. This occurs even at the most basic level of needs involving food preparation, water supply, staying warm and dry. The agricultural sector from which our food comes, and therefore our survival, does not occur without technologies. Even at a subsistence level, there is a need to get water to plants rather than reliance on weather, and there is a need to get such produce to markets, and in most countries this necessitates refrigeration, transportation, shops, banks, and so on. Similarly, people are not born with a roof overhead; shelters are built, crafted, even legislated. And as a writer my being is linked to pens, paper, my laptop, associated software and internet capabilities even to a need for eyeglasses. To “be” is to be permeated with prosthesis and technologies that extend capabilities. Such relationships are not linear but entangled. When I read I am also thinking, and in the process of writing it is not that I think then write, but that thinking occurs as I write; a distributed process.

Such socio-material entanglement has feminist writer Donna Haraway (1991) declaring herself cyborg, and for Latour (1993, 1994) to assert we are hybrids. It is not necessary that such technologies be “under our skin” in the form of pacemakers or artificial joints, but that what I am, is made in association. As Latour contends artefacts do not just mediate our interactions:

[Artefacts] mediate our actions? No, they are us. (Latour, 1994, p. 64)

A constant state of relating exists, with “being” made in association, a networked effect. This network effect holds tensions between multiple actors. There is no stillness, but continual movement. Mapping any entity, or any practice, is therefore an accounting of the relationships as known.

In *Aramis, or The Love of Technology* Bruno Latour (1996) presents a story of an entity that never quite made it; a technological innovation that was not sustained. In an inquiry, not dissimilar to a murder mystery, the story unfolds of an innovation: a new transport system, an electric transport system, killed despite it being a “promising, seductive, dazzling line of technology” (p. 3). Despite interview transcripts that described Aramis as the eighth wonder of the world, it was dropped. Aramis fell out of favour and twenty years of work ceased for no obvious reason. The unfolding of occurrences where connections were made more and less stable sheds light on the brief existence of an entity in the making. In tracing the connections of the actors, including interviews of people involved, as well as in the analysis of texts, policy and documents, the vagueness associated with something that did not come into being was able to be explored. What evolved was an understanding that the death of Aramis could not be put down to any single actor. Aramis failed because of a lack of sustained relationships, a lack of negotiation. It was not that anyone person killed Aramis. Just as agency was distributed, so too was responsibility. The concept of agency not being located individually is so unusual in a world focused on individualism that further unpacking is warranted.

In a review of Edwin Hutchins book, *Cognitions in the Wild*, Latour (Latour, 1996b) repeats an existentialist bon mot, where he says, “there is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses”. This is a reminder that the world is experienced and then internalised; our thoughts being shaped in interaction. Seen in this way our thinking does not evolve in a vacuum but involves our relationships with other actors, human and otherwise.

Hutchins (1995) argues that “the understanding of the individual that has developed without consideration of cultural processes is fundamentally flawed” and posits that much of cognitive science involves an attribution error²¹. Hutchins traces the cultural constitution of symbolism and language needed for representation. In so doing he reminds the reader that what they read and

²¹ Latour has taken issue with statements such as the social or “culture” being responsible (see for example Latour, 1987, 2005); however if the social is detailed, tracing the connections as Hutchins does, then as explained by Latour (1996b) there is no problem.

represent is made possible inside of particular cultural contexts, specific networks of relationships including human and non-humans. As an example he refers to how we learn to read maps as a particular cultural learning, without which we might literally be “lost at sea”. Unless one is taught, through shared knowledge involving others as well as in knowledge externalised to materials that hold shape over time and context, cognitive understanding cannot occur. This movement between cognition and material representation further supports the actor-network theory assertion that agency is an outcome distributed between actors, human and otherwise. Expanding on this argument, the capacity to act on such thinking requires further involvement of others, human and otherwise. To illustrate this, consider the agency required to sail around the world. Such a journey will require a boat and maps; cartographers and boat-builders. That I might think of such an undertaking as an adventure is also prescribed in a network of learned possibilities. Not wanting to sail beyond the sight of land for fear of falling off the sides of the world, and being unable to entice financial sponsors to an initiative that pays reckless regard to common knowledge, demonstrate networked constraints on possibility. What is possible, what is hoped for, and what is feared, all are enacted within networks that make certain practices both more and less likely.

John Law (2004) describes this also with reference to the “hinterland”, saying:

The hinterland produces specific and more or less routinised realities and statements about those realities... The hinterland also defines an overall geography – a topography of reality – possibilities. Some classes of possibilities are made thinkable and real. Some are made less thinkable and less real. And yet others are rendered completely unthinkable and completely unreal. (pp. 33–34)

The possibilities for thinking of how particular activities or practices are constructed, runs deep. Taking the assertion of Simone de Beauvoir (1949/2011), a woman is made not born, there is provocation to consider the network involved. Helen Verran (1998) suggests there is well-established territory that emphasises the particularity of knowledge and of knowledge making. However, the application of such knowledge in day-to-day experience is not so well realised. To say “a woman is made, not born” is still a radical conception for many. To say

“facts are constructed, not given” remains contentious. Michel Foucault’s assertion “knowledge is power” has moved into common usage, but the understanding that such knowledge is constructed has not. It is less about “the one with the most facts wins” but rather the politics of epistemology and ontology.

What is made or unmade; known or unknown; accepted or rejected, are networked effects; concerns at the very heart of ANT. An ANT informed analysis, tracing the association of things involved, is therefore deeply political.

For Mol (2002) the politics involved extends beyond knowing, to what is enacted. As stated by Mol:

Ontology is not given in the order of things... instead ontologies are brought into being, sustained, or allowed to wither away in common, day-to-day, sociomaterial practices. (p. 6)

Mol illustrates this in her study of arteriosclerosis; a surgeon enacts atherosclerosis as an obstruction of an artery, not by knowing but by cutting. For a surgeon the fatty plaque of atheroma calcified inside of arteries, cannot be known until found in the practice of cutting, of entering the body through surgery. In contrast, the patient knows arteriosclerosis as pain, not as an arterial obstruction. In attending to how things are “known” in day-to-day practice, she argues realities are multiple. It is not just that people know differently, what they experience differs. This is not simply a matter of perspective. Perspectivism suggests that if only one’s position were to change, one would then appreciate the same view. Such a view assumes that there is one world, variously known. Mol interrupts this assumption. She contends that matters of reality, what is known and what can be known, is experienced and enacted differently by those involved, and successfully argues that ontology is not given in the order of things but is brought into being, inside of day-to-day practices as a result of particular sociomaterial assemblages. More recently Mol (2008b) has clarified her interest is less about the instability of knowledge, important though this is, and instead points to how particular knowledges are sustained or allowed to wither; how particular knowledges are given more and less credence; and of “which *version* of the world we come to inhabit” (Mol, 2008b, in answer to question 7).

The politics involved in knowing how things are made, and that for different people, they are made differently, is a subject also for Verran (1998).

Appreciating difference in heterogeneous assemblages, she argues, is not enough:

Emphasising the locatedness of all knowing and knowledge making, focuses up the “heterogeneous material-symbolic assemblages” constituting strategies, techniques and entities which enable the workings of all knowledge systems. The challenge now is how to go beyond, the now quite common, descriptions of heterogeneity. I suggest that part of this will be recognising that these “heterogeneous material-symbolic assemblages” clot in a politics waged over ontic/epistemic commitments. (Verran, 1998, p. 239)

That “different realities clot in politics waged” points to conditions of uncertainty. Judgements of right and wrong, good or bad become more difficult to defend when realities are recognised as being enacted inside of differing sets of relationships.

Turning this focus on the current study draws attention to the politics and contested realities involved. Deliberately or not, shadows are made when throwing light on some issues and not others. As told by Latour (2008), to explicate is to implicate, veil upon veil, fold upon fold:

We are enveloped, entangled, surrounded; we are never outside without having recreated another more artificial, more fragile, more engineered envelope. We move from envelopes to envelopes, from folds to folds... (Latour, 2008, pp. 8-9)

In explicating the traces shaping the network, we are implicated; we are never outside of that which we research. There are limitations then on intervening when any act is based on imperfect knowledge in a moving landscape, and where one's own reality differs to that of others. Distancing ANT from being used to predict, explain, or to guide practices, Law talks of it more as a sensibility:

Theories usually try to explain why something happens, but actor-network theory is descriptive rather than foundational in explanatory terms, which means that it is a disappointment for those seeking strong accounts. Instead it tells stories about “how” relations assemble or don't. As a form, one of several, of material semiotics, it is better understood as a toolkit for telling interesting stories about,

and interfering in, those relations. More profoundly, it is a sensibility to the messy practices of relationality and materiality of the world. (Law, 2009, p. 141)

To progress with ANT sensibilities is therefore to move forward with humility knowing nothing can ever be fully known, nothing ever fully anticipated, and that alternate understandings are always possible. In undertaking an analysis informed by ANT sensibilities, there is little value then in debating what is good or bad, desired or loathed. Rather than normative evaluations, what can be a useful contribution is an analysis that talks of what happens when certain things are done and not others. This study therefore make no grand claims of what would happen were specific acts to be taken, but provides a space for describing how in this instance things come to be, and might also be otherwise.

When this study begins Youthline has just expanded into texting, there is also talk of establishing a presence on Secondlife, and making counselling available through instant messaging attached to social media sites. New ways of working are introduced with a spark of hopefulness and also fragility. To be sustained an assemblage of actors is required. The ideas of a Secondlife presence never moves beyond the glimmer of a thought; the discussion boards generate very little discussion; the social media sites appear social for those already in the organization but do not appear to generate counselling interest, and instant messaging remains barely used. The fragility and hopefulness of new initiatives are captured in Law's description of innovation as hopeful monsters, he cites Nicolas Mosley:

I said "I think they might also be called 'hopeful monsters'."

She said "What are hopeful monsters?"

I said "They are things born perhaps slightly before their time; when it's not known if the environment is quite ready for them."

(Nicolas Mosley, *Hopeful Monsters*, p. 71 cited in Law, 1991, p. 1)

Holding ANT sensibilities prompts consideration for the fragility of new practice. For some, what evolves may be monstrous or outlandish, for others acceptable if not cherished. Drawing attention to these practices may or may not be of benefit

to the practices explored, the organization and to the actors, human or otherwise. As a researcher practicing reflexively I find myself negotiating with you as reader to hold a space open to ways of working that might be different to your own; for novel practice that may, or may not be, of benefit to current, or to future realities you personally occupy.

This study (both in what is described and how it is described) prompts concern for “hopeful monsters”. Claims of anthropomorphism are countered by arguments inviting recognition of things acting upon each other; it is enough at this point to consider voice for non-speaking others as a fiction that piques curiosity, creating possibilities for alternate understandings. A piqued curiosity for “what if” provides a means to bridge not only innovation but also differing realities.

That a range of voices has space in an ANT analysis allows movement away from a centred, managerial approach. Although centrist dominated research has been a criticism levied at ANT (see for example Star, 1991), a network not having a top or bottom means alternate approaches are possible and more recently ANT research also turned to acts of interference, challenging reality as singular (for example Law, 2002a, 2007; Mol, 2002; Verran, 2007). This “performative turn” points to researcher responsibilities and the politics of making a difference:

Politics is about interfering to make a difference. And, perhaps I should add, it is about being sufficiently modest to resist the idea that there is a single or explicit mode of ordering the world. It is about accepting, in other words, that ordering is partial, incomplete, always more or less local, more or less implicit, and therefore more or less disconcerting. And then again, it is about recognising that it is a matter of being flexible enough to make differences in different ways in different circumstances. (Law, 2010, conclusion, para. 3)

Latour (2005) claims ANT has always been a political activity. He contends that being political is not to be found in talking about politics, nor in providing social explanations, but in analysis that provides openings for the recomposition of the basis of power:

The burning desire to have new entities detected, welcomed and given shelter is not only legitimate, it's probably the only scientific and political cause worth living for. (Latour, 2005, p. 259)

ANT's efficacy is therefore a profoundly different theory of the social: it provides neither explanations of, nor prescription for, action. ANT provides a descriptive account, and in so doing portrays that things might be otherwise. In such descriptions ANT provides for an understanding of change as a complex process involving relationality between actors, human and otherwise. Though ANT does not tell us how to perform change in networks, or what will happen when particular steps are taken, ANT does provide a way of describing practice through the relationships involved. Expanding on this premise, the capacity for change being held within networks, within relationships formed and reforming, within grooves of past performances and within hinterlands of possibility, there is hope also that an ANT informed analysis might usefully inform of change as it happens, for things might also be otherwise.

Negotiating with ANT as a research method

There are two models for studying innovations: the linear model and the whirlwind model. Or, if you prefer, the diffusion model and the translation model. (Latour, 1996, p. 118)

Might it be this simple? I draw on the prior discussion regarding a project in the making, a nascent entity being shaped and reshaped, which at the same time shapes and reshapes those involved. A linear model does not suit the ebb and flow involved in the proposed study. There is a need to trace eddies if not a whirlwind. At the same time, there is more to enacting a research proposal than an appeal based on "if not this, then that".

In negotiating research methodologies, I am conscious of how the question shapes the choices possible:

The way in which one articulates certain questions has something to do with the research methodology that one identifies with...there exists a certain dialectic between question and method...the method one chooses ought to maintain a

certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator (a parent or teacher) in the first place. (van Manen, 1990, p. 2)

It is this deep seated interest that leads me to consider ways by which the unknown and invisible might be made more visible; I want to study what is not fixed in form, but still in the making; and I want to know how those involved negotiate the changes they are themselves part of. Multiple options of research methodologies available were negotiated; it mattered that the object of study was/is transient, was/is in the making. It mattered that the study of technologies included actors that were both human and otherwise, and which investigated the context as being full of further myriad beings rather than being unexplained. It mattered that these actors could be studied as shaped by, as well as shaping, technologies. And it mattered that those involved were not to be told what to think or what to do. That I am situated in these matters, matters also.

A long history in research methodology has contested whether such shaping is contamination, subject to extraneous variables, or unavoidable. Arguing for the humanity involved, Haraway writes:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. Only the god trick is forbidden. (Haraway, 1988, p. 590)

In this study my intent is to be shaped; I want to change – I want to know more, I want to enter into discussions with people who are implementing change and to know that experience more fully. This is a justified intent, there is logic in the aforementioned argument, and there is substantive research literature of support (for example Crotty, 1998; Czarniawska, 2007; Frank, 2004, 2010; Gitlin, Peck, Aposhian, Hadley, & Porter, 2002; Glaser, 1998; Haraway, 1988; Hodkinson, 2004; Kayrooz & Trevitt, 2005; Koch, 1998; Lather, 2001; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Renzetti & Lee, 1993; van Manen, 1990). I am willing to accept that some researchers and some research questions support other logics.

The negotiation of method is critical. I am arguing that the question, the subject studied, the approach taken – what is researched, as well as the researcher – are entwined. It matters to me that the method chosen reflects myself as an actor as well as a researcher. It matters to the organization where this study occurs that involvement is negotiated with those involved and that this occurs within an empowering framework. For the research question, it matters that the entanglement of social-technical-political is explored.

My experience is that the choice of theory and the developed research question do not evolve one after the other; they circle around each other. Or as Mol (2002) describes this, an ontological choreography occurs. There was a question, kind of. There were methods skimmed over, plunged into, embraced, abandoned, held. I find myself both surprised and drawn to a methodology where there is presumed symmetry between human and non-human actors. While there has been criticism at the lack of privileged position extended to the people involved within this networked approach (see for example H. Collins & Yearley, 1992; Schatzki, 2002; Whittle & Spicer, 2009), I am satisfied by the accounts of actor-network theorists: social agents are not always located in bodies that have a human form, and in according humans and non-humans agency (note agency, not intentionality) and voice, I am arguing an analytical position rather than a moral one. It seems to me a reasonable supposition from which to explore relationality and not one that is at odds with respect for people.

In Latour's description of how human actors and their stories might be treated he demonstrates the utmost respect for the people involved:

ANT actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it. It is *us*, the social scientists, who lack knowledge of what they do, and not they who are missing the explanation of why they are unwittingly manipulated by forces exterior to themselves and known to the social scientist's powerful gaze and methods... Far from being a theory of the social or even worse an explanation of what makes society exert pressure on actors, it always was, and this from its very inception (Callon and Latour, 1981), a very crude method to learn from the actors without imposing on them an *a priori* definition of their world building capacities. (Latour, 1999a, pp. 19-20)

The humanistic argument concerning a lessening of respect because of symmetry in how actors, human and otherwise, are treated, fails. There is no limited quantity of respect to defend. To misquote Shakespeare, the quantity of respect need not be restrained; it can be as bountiful as the gentle rain from heaven (at least as it falls from NZ skies).

Sensibilities for a sociology of association

[ANT] is not “applied” like a theoretical technology, but is more like a sensibility, an interruption or intervention, a way to sense and draw nearer to a phenomenon. (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010, p. ix)

As an approach to research, ANT provokes thoughtfulness rather than instruction. In asking how something comes to be, I am guided by Latour’s (2005) text, *Reassembling the Social*. In this text he approaches the social as something to be explained; the intent is not redefinition but reassembly. This is achieved by tracing associations and the consequences of such relations, opening up consideration for how things might also be reassembled differently.

Latour (2005) suggests to trace associations requires first a destabilising of presumptions. To this end he describes five uncertainties provoking thoughtfulness for the complexity of associations and for the work currently undertaken in stabilising such associations. I expand on these uncertainties as they provide a structure of the sensibilities that inform this study of change as it occurs.

As a first source of uncertainty, Latour starts by pointing out that there is no incontrovertible starting point, who to talk with is not settled, any groups we might hold as being relevant need considering, for such groupings are not unproblematic. Groups are not stable entities and their composition may require rethinking. While it is easy to see networks as made up of others, less obvious are our assumptions about the boundaries between actors, human and otherwise. And, as Law (1992) clarifies, an actor is also, always, a network (p. 384). There are in effect networks within networks, layers upon layers, continuously regrouping, overlapping and continuously in flux.

Law and Mol (2008) suggest an alternate way of perceiving such entities as infinite regressions:

The list is endless. The reality of an entity is never exhausted. Imagine it as a fractal: if you magnify a fragment you discover an image that is as complex as the first one. And it is the same if you shift your attention to another fragment. (p. 72)

Whether talked of as an actor or a network, such entities are performed into being and, as described by Law and Singleton (2000), new performances interact with older ones, and contribute to future ones:

This has all sorts of implications. One is that things don't come to rest in a single form once agreement, or what is called "closure," is achieved. They rumble on and on, as it were, noisy and noisome. (p. 775)

The network does not stay still whilst being investigated, and entities whether human or otherwise do not hold still either. Classification systems such as the dividing up of entities into being members of particular groups are arbitrary, and may fail. As each entity is a network in its right there is likely to be movement. In addition, it follows that there can be no single voice in a network as a network comprises of multitudes of actors with different voices involved, some clamour for attention, some seek to remain hidden. This creates a further point of tension: How are others heard? And what of my own "voice" in the writing? As there is no single voice in a regrouping entity, who then is taken as representative? The voices are multiple, not all can be heard, and no one voice is all knowing or all authoritative. I take advice from Haraway (1992), and avoid the "view from nowhere". Like her, I cannot leap out of my own history or my own skin to see all, know all. We are all "in the belly of the monster" as it were. I bring my own partiality and recognise that what I am studying is in part shaping me, and me it. The stories told need to be my own *and* those of the network. Nonetheless a challenge remains in rendering such accounts: How to tell my own story alongside the stories of others? How might I tell of fragile stories without making them hard, and of troubling stories without rendering them smooth? While Latour

tells us this is difficult, he does not lay out a path beyond consideration for the uncertainties involved and a directive to follow the actors and learn from them.

This directive, however, risks attending only to those for whom a service is already functioning. As identified by Clarke and Montini (1993), attention may also be usefully drawn to ‘implicated actors’, to those at the margins, and those both upstream as well as downstream from decisions made and actions taken.

Researcher reflexivity is used as a means to make this thoughtfulness more transparent. My own voice is written into this research, and from an ANT understanding of networks, where the writer is considered part of that which is studied, this cannot be otherwise.

A second source of uncertainty focuses on how actions are always beyond the scope of conscious control. Latour (2005) playfully refers to actions as being “other-taken”, and clarifies that actions are not necessarily “overtaken”, but that others are always involved. The role of the enquirer is to uncover traces of these interactions, both human and otherwise, by following the links the actors themselves provide. This is a humble approach: uncertainty about the origins of actions involved is a given. What makes us act is the subject of speculation, and an investigation of the influence of myriad actors is bound only by time and interest. The art of ANT is therefore in discerning traces of connections provided by the actors themselves, to locate the myriad actors involved, and give representation or voice, to what occurs. It sounds simple when stated like this, but accounts and traces occur in spaces filled with movements, within continual regroupings as shown in the first uncertainty. To trace connections therefore involves tracing partial accounts, sometimes fleeting, always moving. And even for the actors themselves, such accounts can be contradictory.

In writing of such accounts, what is written in, as well as what is written out, is important. Researcher responsibility begins to develop. Latour (2005) advises staying true to what is expressed:

The mistake we must learn to avoid is listening distractedly to these convoluted productions and to ignore the queerest, baroque, and most idiosyncratic terms

offered by the actors, following only those that have currency in the rear-world of the social. Alas this mistake is made so often that it passes for good scientific method. (p. 47)

And again:

Will we have the courage not to substitute an unknown expression for a well-known one? (p. 48)

Latour warns that there is no metanarrative to lay on top of what participants themselves say, there is no hidden cause of actions beyond what is voiced, what can be seen, what can be traced. The ANT analysis is not intended as a platform to tell others what to do, but to provide voice, to provide accounts that are precise, revealing, telling and also moving. This understated point is at the heart of ANT research: in telling moving accounts, movement is made possible. A research project does not, and cannot, cover everything; it does not, and cannot, predict a future. However, making known the possibility that things might also be otherwise allows the actors to work on what might be altered; what relationships in a network of relationships might be strengthened or weakened.

How objects are commonly positioned is discussed as a third source of uncertainty. Within ANT an object is the effect of an array of relations, the effect in short of a network (Law, 2002b). The hyphenated “actor-network” is emblematic of this co-production. Thing—including actors, objects, practices—all are socially constructed. This is not in the sense of there being no substantive reality, but in the sense that objects are produced in association, and as previously explained the identity of a person or thing is enacted rather than having essence. This makes the possibility for change inherent, as relationships made can also be unmade.

Things we might think of as material or social are not as easily divided as common representations suggest; nothing is totally social and nothing exclusively material. And, inside of an ANT analysis, seeing an actor as more of one thing than another, such as being seen as more human than technological for example, does not provide grounds for a more privileged voice. Voice is not a requirement

of agency. A research project that attempts to reassemble the social risks missing the action if it fails to take into account the non-human actors.

An example of this is demonstrated by Latour (1991) where he describes how an object brings about actions on the part of people. Latour describes how the return, or rather the lack of return of hotel keys is a problem that vexes Parisian hotel managers. Asking that keys should be left at reception when leaving the hotel is insufficient as guests forget. A sign stating “Please leave your room key at the front desk before you go out” has some effect, but many guests still leave the hotel with the keys in their pockets. Adding a bulky weight to the key-ring stops this. The material physicality is an irritant and reminder of presence. People place their keys at the desk of the hotel rather than carrying them about. The bulk and weight of the keys demonstrates a non-human actor mediating the actions of others.

The example raises two specific challenges for the researcher: how to recognise such actors and how to make them talk. The first challenge points to being attentive to what has influence; being attentive to the associations whether human or otherwise that result in differing actions. An actor then is something that has an effect. Asking the actors is one approach: a non-threatening and non-directive interview style that invites reflection on what occurs is initiated with the actors who speak. Further to this are observations of what prompts new behaviours. In meeting the second challenge, Latour (2005) asserts that there is no substantive difference between non-language-bearing and language-bearing research participants in terms of getting them to “talk”; scenarios can be used that prompt particular scripts of actions. This is not as unusual as it first appears. In forensic enquiry “Locard’s principle” asserts every contact leaves a trace (Tilstone, Savage, & Clark, 2006). They argue every interaction between people or objects establishes a point of transfer where trace evidence is exchanged (p. 275). In a murder enquiry the deceased speaks as silent witness (Cordella & Shaikh, 2006). In a digital world, a digital trace provides a record of interactions past (Latour, 2007). In this study, tracing these points of contact, noting what is exchanged or altered or left behind, provides a means for accessing voice with actors who might otherwise remain silent.

In capturing fleeting and ephemeral contacts Latour suggests having what is studied undertaken by someone ignorant of practices. A naïve enquirer studying what appears exotic has a differing perception in differentiating the usual from unusual. An additional opportunity for study might also become evident during times of failure, when “service as usual” is disrupted forcing silent and invisible actors to be centre staged. He also suggests bringing to light archived material such as documents, memoirs, museum collections to recount the state of affairs into which such practices are born. His use of counterfactual stories provides a further avenue for exploring possibilities.

In *Aramis*, Latour (1996a) fuses fact and fiction. He names the project in its development a fiction:

By definition, a technological project is a fiction, since at the outset it does not exist, and there is no way it can exist yet because it is in the project stage. (p. 23)

He is right, it does not yet exist. There is constant reconfiguring of the social and material into assemblages and as a result things are always in a state of becoming. Ongoing negotiations are required to sustain what is being performed or enacted. A constant reverberation occurs between what is and what might be; reverberations that Latour describes as being between project and object, between fact and fiction, and made more or less real by degrees.

For Latour (2005) research writing involves similar permutations of fact and fiction. He argues that the fields of science and fiction are never as clearly cut as is usually assumed. Any representation occurs through the writer’s voice and draws on the reader’s imagination. At the same time, fiction often shares understandings of how the world operates. Scientific accounts always reflect reality as reported, and being neither more or less than accounts, they are not reality either. Rather than treating some objects arbitrarily as more real than others, Latour (2004) proposes the less divisive stance of working with matters of concern.

Groups are made, agencies are explored and objects play a role. Such are the first three sources of uncertainty when reassembling the social. It required a

metaphysical argument to not divide humans from others and to instead treat actors, human or otherwise, within the same frame of reference. Similar steps have been taken in demonstrating the arbitrary boundaries between fact and fiction. Having clarified in the earlier uncertainties what comprises the social in sociology, Latour (2005) takes a textual move and turns his attention to the “ology” involved. In addressing a fourth source of uncertainty, he looks at the types of questions that might be usefully addressed as an ANT research project. In referring to things that are constructed, he points out that saying they are made of “this and that” restates the obvious; the assortment of actors being interesting but an insufficient account in reassembling the social. How the actors work upon each other, the flow between them, is a more interesting analysis as it opens up possibilities for reassembly; for transporting possibilities between differing sites or at different times, and for increasing awareness as to how such assemblies are made, more and less. Such backstage accounts of what occurs with actors, human and otherwise, provide a glimpse of what it is for a thing to emerge out of inexistence, and as Latour states: to appreciate that things could be different and, or, to know that they might still fail.

Vulnerability is more obvious when the parts of a thing are exposed, and in vulnerability there are possibilities that alternate action might be seen. Latour (2005) reminds us that a finished product never quite invokes this same sense of vulnerability, being seen as so finished, so stable, that its makeup is never questioned, in effect it becomes what he refers to as “blackboxed”. This fourth source of uncertainty is very much about opening up such blackboxes. In *Science in Action*, Latour (1987) suggests this can be achieved by arriving before facts and machines are blackboxed, or by following controversies that reopen them (p. 258). To reopen such boxes involves looking at the social construction of a thing.

Social construction has a specific meaning inside of ANT. As an example, I provide the following quotation from Latour on the social construction of facts:

When we say that a fact is constructed, we simply mean that we account for the solid objective reality by mobilizing various entities whose assemblage could fail. (Latour, 2005, p. 91)

For Latour, “things that matter” encompass the social and the material, and facts are neither set nor indisputable, but neither do they exist entirely as thoughts in the minds of people as if material things were irrelevant. He argues matters of concern are neither social nor technical, but interwoven: constructions through and through. This is not an argument purporting that facts do not exist, or that they are “all in the mind”, but that they are held in place, stabilised for at least a moment in time, supported to a greater or lesser extent by actors. While Latour (2005) names these matters of concern, that they are lively and vibrant (Bennett, 2010) points to the activity involved.

Accepting the liveliness of matters, and giving consideration to how matters of concern involve relational negotiations, points to how realities may coexist: what one person experiences as a result of a network of connection affects how they make meaning of their situation and reflects the hinterland of possibilities (Law, 2004) available to them.

That things in the world are performed moment by moment is also discussed by Mol with reference to “the performative turn”. Her interest though was less about the instability of knowledge and more about how particular knowledges are given more or less credence; of “which *version* of the world we come to inhabit (Mol, 2008b). The descriptive account is therefore not a neutral one, but one that might be used to interrupt current ways of being and what might be enacted differently. This draws attention to how research might be purposed as “concerning” also. I have chosen to study particular practices, the organization that has allowed me access does this in hope that the research is of value to them also. While this does not pre-empt findings, how the question is phrased, investigated and the research written up are matters of concern. In this research my intention is transparency for particular possibilities might be opened up or closed down with every step taken and changing possibilities as Barad (2003) noted, “entails responsibility to contest and to rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering.” (p. 827)

A fifth uncertainty is how to write of such accounts. Given that networks are in a continuous act of grouping and regrouping; where objects, actors and practices are shaped in contingent relationships; agency is distributed; and where matters of

fact are seen to be matters of concern, Latour (2005) suggests this be undertaken slowly, thoroughly, but also courageously:

This type of science for that type of social should be as slow as the multiplicity of objections and objects it has to register in its path; it should be as costly as it is necessary to establish connections among the many mediators it finds swarming at every step; and it should be as reflexive, articulated, and idiosyncratic as the actors cooperating in its elaboration. It has to be able to register differences, to absorb multiplicity, to be remade for each new case at hand. This is why the four sources of uncertainty have to be tackled courageously all at once, each adding its set of differences to the others. If one is missing, the whole project falls apart. (p. 121)

So each of these uncertainties requires consideration, the connections between actors is work to be undertaken slowly, in detail, alongside a reflexive approach, with a research process as unique as the actors themselves. But starting where? Networks do not have definite borders, not only is there movement of who is in or out, but every research project has events that precede the researcher's interest, and which continue when the researcher is long gone.

Latour advocates "starting in the middle of things" with the directive of "follow the actors". This involves tracing connections from one actor to another by undertaking interviews, taking notes, pictures, videos, searching through document artefacts, and being present, or as Latour informally describes it "clumsily loaf around". The clumsily loafing description suggests a research presence as a naïve enquirer, a non-threatening person who in being present is more likely to be included. It is a position that also denies any self-aggrandisement of knowing what is occurring better than the actors themselves. "Shadowing" is another way to describe this presence not in the sense of a dark or lurking quality, but of being attached, of undertaking the same procedures as those whose work is shadowed (Czarniawska, 2007). At times, Czarniawska warns, roles may blur and there will be times of negotiating and renegotiating what can be an awkward relationship. This reinforces the need to be reflexive in regard to how the researcher interacts. In relating with the actors, Latour (1996) advocates a conversational approach providing an invitation to respond to

curiosity. And with the data collected, he advises respectfulness toward the analysis knowing that people are the wisest source for what they do.

In having multiple overlapping accounts the intent is not to make divergent accounts homogenous, but to make use of these as opportunities for further exploration: to “feed off the controversies”. He suggests that where a project is succeeding, the actors have more to agree about. In a project that is disassembling, he suggests looking at how that disassembly occurs. In either instance, the aim is not a settling of the accounts, but bringing together representation.

Having established a place to start, and established ways to move forward, where then to stop? Latour’s (2005) advice is that the study will never be complete; no account covers everything. No account can. As the study progresses, particularly as it is a project still developing rather than completed, there are likely to be new actors, new configurations, and so the boundaries are also found to be fuzzy. A network overlaps with other networks; every boundary is therefore arbitrary. In addition, Latour warns the data gathered will be extensive:

Every single interview, narrative and commentary, no matter how trivial it may appear, will provide the analyst with a bewildering array of entities to account for the hows and whys of any course of action. Social scientists will fall asleep long before actors stop deluging them with data. (p. 47)

A pragmatic approach is required. Choices are made in constructing the research account. Signalling these choices is part of the researcher reflexivity required. What is written cannot help but be partial and fragmented. No disinterested claims are made; the account cannot be objective. This is not wrong or a failing of the research method, but as Latour states, *there is no better way* (p123). The uncertainties piled one upon the other make the account itself a matter of concern. Such configuring of the world into words Latour (2005) calls “risky”. He states:

I will call such a description a *risky* account, meaning that it can easily fail—it does fail most of the time—since it *can put aside neither the complete artificiality of the enterprise nor its claim to accuracy and truthfulness*. As to its relevance for the actors themselves and the political impact it might have, this is

even less automatic. The whole question is to see whether the *event* of the social can be extended all the way to the event of the reading through the medium of the text. (p. 133)

The research account needs then to consider how knowledge is conveyed. Taking the analogy of a portrait, “good” paintings have the artist’s hand evident. The act of writing a matter of concern into the pages of a research publication involves a similar transformation. Rendering practice into the hard copy of textual accounts results in it no longer being lost in time and circumstance; the account stabilises the practice becoming a performance in its own right. In mediating stories, attention is focused on some things and not others; it is the how of this that matters:

If the social circulates and is visible only when it shines through the concatenations of mediators, then this is what has to be replicated, cultivated, elicited, and expressed by our textual accounts.... A good text is never an unmediated portrait of what it describes It is always part of an artificial experiment to replicate and emphasise the traces generated by trials in which actors become mediators or mediators are turned into faithful intermediaries. There is nothing less natural than to go into fieldwork and remain a fly on the wall, pass out questionnaires, draw maps, dig up archives, record interviews, play the role of a participant-observer, compile statistics, and “Google” one’s way around the Internet. Describing, inscribing, narrating, and writing final reports are as unnatural, complex, and painstaking as dissecting fruit flies or sending a telescope into space. If you find Faraday’s experiments oddly artificial, what about Pitt-Rivers’s ethnographic expeditions? If you believe Lord Kelvin’s laboratory contrived, what about Marx compiling footnotes in the British Library, Freud asking people to free-associate on his Viennese couch, or Howard Becker learning how to play jazz in order to take notes on jazz playing? The simple act of recording anything on paper is already an immense transformation that requires as much skill and just as much artifice as painting a landscape or setting up some elaborate biochemical reaction. No scholar should find humiliating the task of sticking to description. This is on the contrary the highest and rarest achievement. (Latour, 2005, p. 136)

The intent then is description not explanations. It is a description that is particular, idiosyncratic and localised, and its relevance is not established by the researcher telling others what to do or what to think, but in engaging others and in opening up possibility. While criticism has been levelled at ANT for providing “mere” descriptive accounts (Whittle & Spicer, 2009), this is an unwarranted criticism on two counts. First, an ANT account fails, as Latour has indicated above, if it does not create for the actors themselves relevance and knowledge of its political importance. And second, it is a disempowering approach to be telling others what they should do, it denies the human capacity to make meaning, to think and to make choices, and runs counter to an ethic of “working with” that aims to create more, rather than less, freedom.²²

ANT methodology works to establish relevance, and to inform possibility. This is a skilful undertaking involving empirical observation and accounts that engender interest to open up possibilities. Latour (2005) describes this saying:

Relevance, like everything else, is an achievement. A report is interesting or not depending on the amount of work done to interest, that is, to place it between other things. This is exactly what the five uncertainties added together might help to reveal: What is the social made up of? What is acting when we are acting? What sort of grouping do we pertain to? What do we want? What sort of world are we ready to share? All these questions are raised not only by scholars, but also by those they study. It is not that we, social scientists, know the answer that would reside behind the actors, nor is it the case that they, the famous “actors themselves”, know the answer. The fact is that no one has the answers – this is why they have to be collectively staged, stabilized, and revised. This is why the social sciences are so indispensable to the reassembling of the social. Without them we don’t know what we have in common, we don’t know through which connections we are associated together, and we would have no way to detect how we can live in the same common world.

²² In health care ethics autonomy is not an unproblematic ideal, in respecting autonomy there is consideration also for creating of autonomy (Seedhouse, 2009). Providing knowledge for informed choice is one way that this is facilitated. In co-operative inquiry, Heron (1996) similarly argues that those we work with are capable of making meaning from data and drawing conclusions. While this research is not one of co-operative enquiry, an approach of “working with” informed how the topic was negotiated with the agency, and how the data is shared and returned to the organization that it might inform practice.

In order to generate those answers, every new artifice might be welcome, including that of a social scientist's tiny interpretation. Failure is not more certain than success. It's certainly worth a try. This is precisely because all the five sources of uncertainty are nested into one another, that a report written by some humble colleague who does not even wear a white coat may make a difference. It may offer a provisional staging of the connections it has managed to deploy. It offers an artificial site (the textual account) that might be able to solve for some particular audience the question of which common world they pertain to. Assembled around the "laboratory" of the text, authors as well as readers may begin to render visible the two mechanisms that account for the plurality of associations to be taken into account and for the stabilization or unification of the world they wish to live in. On the one hand, it is just a text made up of reams of paper sullied by an inkjet or burnt by a laser beam. On the other, it is a precious little institution to represent, or more exactly to re-represent—that is, to present again—the social to all its participants, to perform it, to give it a form. It is not much, but to ask for more is often settling for less. Many "powerful explanations" might turn out to be less convincing than weaker ones. (p. 138)

A descriptive account provides readers with information they may choose to act upon, or not. Descriptive research accounts do not present an external person's solutions provided with authoritative voice. Recipients of the research are not positioned as passive, obedient or ignorant. That research enacts readers in particular ways, that it engages readers, is its intended performance.

Summary

In a study informed by actor-network theory, knowledge is presented of the multiple entities involved, how they interact, and in these interactions how reals are being made, more and less. This chapter provided an entry point to the sensibilities informing the research undertaken. How this particular study is performed is the work of the following chapter, *A Methodological Praxis*.

Chapter 5: Methodological Praxis

If this is an awful mess... then would something less messy make a mess of describing it? Law (2004, p. 1)

Introduction

While not wanting to add mess, I am persuaded by Law's plea to academia to consider knowing in new ways. In this section, I frame my use of research methods inside of a reflective activity named praxis. While listing the methods involved, it is the discussion of how these were done in practice that demonstrates the negotiations required.

Praxis

Paulo Freire (1968/2000) defined praxis as reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it (p. 79). My use of the term praxis is a modest variation; it involves researcher responsibility through reflexivity. Accepting the premise that realities are enacted, suggests there is researcher responsibility to consider outcomes neither planned nor desirable. Attention is therefore given to how research performs particular realities, for such realities might also be performed differently.

A networking of methods

This research involved:

1. **Shadowing in** the form of interactive workplace observations described by Czarniawska (2007). I worked alongside people as they undertook their work at Youthline. This involved spending up to 6 hours a week at Youthline Auckland throughout 2008.
2. **Multi-site ethnography.** Marcus (1995) describes this form of ethnography as one delineated by associations and connections rather than by geography. I followed the movements of people, their devices, and artefacts, through chains of associations. Hamilton (2011) suggests this

form of ethnography is particularly suited to actor-network theory research as it allows for linking data across both geographical and temporally distributed spaces.

3. **Conversational interviewing** is a style portrayed by (Latour, 1996a) and described by Silverman (2007). Conversational interviewing does not ask the same thing of everyone, as answers to the same questions may not advance the research. With studying change, it was necessary to follow changes as they occurred, and to sustain openness toward what occurs differently for those involved. In addition, this research addressed areas of sensitivity. Through a conversational approach that also involved my own disclosures on things sensitive, trust could be developed.

An invitation was extended to talk of experiences in using Youthline's technologies for counselling, and of the hopes or fears associated. Those interviewed included two young people who had made use of Youthline's services, twenty-six staff and volunteers who provided the service, and an additional three technical staff who developed or supported the service. Some people were interviewed more than once as participants would alert me of further changes and point me back to people to talk with again. With consent, digital files of the interviews were made on an iPod, and a copy of the interview offered in each instance to the person interviewed.

Privacy is maintained in the storing of interview data. All digital files were password protected, and all fieldnotes coded using pseudonyms. Within the thesis, pseudonyms have been used unless a participant consented, or asked, to be named.

4. **Visual ethnography** was used to facilitate the inclusion of verbal and nonverbal participants. In studying material relationality much of what was studied had a material presence that would be lost if converted to academic prose. Digital traces of text messages were therefore represented in a shape and form evocative of how they were sent and received. In re/presenting the multiple voices that speak within this account, imagery is used as both additive to and in some circumstances is provided instead of a written account.

5. **Tracing archival material** involved tracing text messages, emails, policy documents, minutes of relevant meetings, news articles, and advertising material. Some 6000 text messages were analysed. The messages were those received and responded to by Youthline between 1/11/07 and 28/5/08.
6. **Data analysis** involved tracing the connections and disconnections that stabilised particular practices while destabilising others. The particular sensibilities of actor-network theory outlined in the preceding chapter informed the data analysis. The analysis undertaken was not so much an explanation for what occurs, not so much for proving particular practices effective, but for improving practice. Rather than providing social explanations of “what is”, moral purposing involved providing openings for “what might also be otherwise”.
7. **Reflexive journaling** occurred in the form of a blog:
<http://amusingspace.blogspot.com> Reoccurring themes centred on concerns for making the invisible visible and rendering silence with voice. The reflective process involved taking concerns as they arose into discussions with ethicists working in fields of both health and education to establish ways of working with information that was sensitive, and to establish ways of working that would do no known harm to the organization or the people involved.

In this telling a tidy representation is made, but it is made hesitantly for such lists suggest orderliness, a state uncommon in change, and uncommon in practice. The data gathered is of complex and messy realities, ones that have not stood still to be studied. This is no snapshot on reality, neither is it an overview such as a film could portray. Furthermore, I was not a spectator; I was in the middle of what was studied.

Writing from the middle of things

It's not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down on them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you'll see that everything changes. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25)

Being in the middle of things draws attention to the minutiae of detail of how paths are traversed. It is a difficult space to be in; a sense of distance is lost; a sense of overview collapses. In gazing at any one part of the network, networks inside of networks can be discerned, and in attending to any one of these, others are cast seemingly into shadows.

Caught inside a net of tensions certain things are made more and less visible; more and less voiced. Concurrently realities are being made for better and worse. I was acutely aware that young people did not come to me asking that I undertake this study. I am not young. I was once. I do not pretend several decades of ageing have not made a difference to my beliefs, values, prejudices, or ways of being. I do not pretend that I know what it is to be young in different times. I trained as a Youthline counsellor in the mid-1980s and for several years provided telephone and face-to-face counselling, as well as providing training and supervision for those undertaking crisis counselling phone work. In more recent times I facilitate personal development courses as well as teaching courses in basic counselling skills for new intakes of Youthline volunteers. My history of working with Youthline provides an opportunity to undertake research that could be of mutual benefit. In this research I drew together shared matters of concern: my own interests regarding change and the use of technologies, the experiences of a youth counselling organization attempting to meet with young people in the places of their choosing, and the concerns of young people for whom the service was designed. What I also brought to the study was empathy for those in difficult spaces.

This study was undertaken with the intention of supporting a not-for-profit organization in its work with young people. Negotiating the topic allowed for a

synthesis between the interests I had in a study of change and new avenues of counselling trialled at Youthline. In this undertaking I was able to make a contribution to a not-for-profit organization that would not have the resources to undertake the research otherwise. The topic was negotiated with Youthline through the CEO who then took the proposal through to the management committee. An agreement was reached for my undertaking the study on the use of emergent technologies at Youthline, and how technology use is shaped as well as shaping those involved. The focus was broad enough to encompass the experiences of young people making use of Youthline's services, as well as the experiences of Youthline volunteers and staff, and others that were part of the network that were making counselling through new platforms possible.

Youthline was entering into digital spaces, establishing an online presence and expanding the platforms through which they were offering counselling. Concurrently a space was generated between what was known about counselling practice and what was unknown. How this space is traversed is the question of this thesis and so I followed the negotiation and renegotiation of relationships of those involved, human and otherwise.

My own relationship to this process is relevant; in this research I had already taken sides. My moral purposing involved the support of Youthline in their vision (see Figure 9). In looking at what reals were being made more and less, my intention was to support the voice of young people in shaping the service. I was guided by Youthline's vision, mission and values statement, but as becomes evident, such intentions are not without controversy: What is the nature of a quality relationship? And what is quality? And further, for the document is full of words where meaning might also be contested, what understandings of things meaningful, positive, effective and relevant are attended to, and whose understandings are given precedence? That a vision statement could hold in line an array of actors provided a controversy from which to begin.

Vision:

Youthline's vision is to create communities which relate to the needs of young people, respond to them, and support them to achieve their potential.

Mission:

Youthline's mission is to build a youth-centred community that provides meaningful service with leadership development processes that are ethical, sensitive and aware of the needs of people and their environment as well as fostering honesty, responsibility and the potential of all those involved.

Values:

Youthline is a Youth Development Organisation.

Youthline is a premier New Zealand youth development organisation.

Youth development is about working from a strengths based perspective. This is about being connected, having quality relationships, fostering participation and being able to access good information.

Youthline is not just for young people at risk. Youthline provides development pathways for the many young people who want to help their peers and communities in positive, practical ways.

Youthline strives to remain relevant and effective for New Zealand youth through the valuing of ongoing growth, flexibility and actively seeking new opportunities for young people and the community.

Youth Development is Community Development. Community support is essential to the development of youth and their families. Youthline recognizes that Youth development is shaped by the 'big picture'. This includes: the wider social and economic contexts and dominant cultural values within which young people grow up.

Youthline celebrates and values diversity. By creating dialogue and exploring our similarities and differences in age, ethnicity and culture, we pave a way forward together.

Figure 9. Youthline vision, mission and values statement (Youthline, n.d.) provides aspirations toward a “quality” service that is “meaningful”, “positive”, “relevant”, “effective” and involves “participation”, however, how such words are understood and implemented in practice remain contested.

Accepting that differing realities are experienced, it should not surprise that there are contested understandings on what is valued. Mulcahy (2010) found this also in her study of educational policy documents. Similarly, I found differences played off one against the other. How then to position myself in amongst such contestations? I had no God-like view that could categorically state that a particular way of doing things was right or wrong, I too was immersed. And so to progress this study relationships needed to be negotiated, and renegotiated.

Being in the middle of things was often uncomfortable. Venturini (2010) names the immersion in controversies akin to *Diving into Magma*. Rather than attempting closure, he suggests a cartography of controversies be mapped. And so I noted controversies, tracing how they are closed by different actors and closed by different actors in different ways.

Being in the middle of things was to experience a convergence of networks. In an email introducing the suggestion of Youthline being involved as a site for this study, the CEO of the organization endorsed my tentative enquiry by expressing support and by return email cc'ed²³ four key personnel suggesting they might be interviewed by me and/or be available for my working alongside them. This required my slowing down the processes. While Youthline was keen for this study to progress, the requirements of academia and consideration for the sensitivities involved necessitated a more measured approach.

Further controversies arose. Sensitive research is defined by Renzetti and Lee (1993) as involving a topic that is intimate, discreditable or incriminating (p. ix). For health professionals it is common that research fits this classification. The counselling relationship is usually private, and involving material that is deeply personal, material that may never have been disclosed or spoken of elsewhere, of things personal, private, confidential, secret. In contrast the purpose of research is in bringing the unknown forward. These differing intentions are bridged in sensitive research.

For Youthline the sensitivities involved day-to-day business. In academia, asking young people about their experiences without consent of parents or legal guardians brought the study into contention. An added level of complexity involved international differences being negotiated with the Australian university where I was studying and the site of the study being in New Zealand. The legislation and policies regarding research with young people, though similar, were nuanced differently. In New Zealand there had been precedents established paving the way for undertaking sensitive research that involved interviewing young people without parental permission.

As the site of study was not situated within a New Zealand education institution there was no requirement from the Ministry of Education that the study be approved by a New Zealand based university ethics committee. Communications with the NZ based Health Research Council Ethics Committee (HRCEC)

²³ The carbon-copy of pre-electronic times became refigured as cc in email whereby an automated copy of the email is sent to others specified.

indicated that the young people at the centre of this research fell outside of the terms of reference of this committee as they were not known to be recipients of health care. Having a New Zealand based ethics committee involved was facilitated by my employment with the Auckland University of Technology. This research was thereby reviewed and approved by Auckland University of Technology (NZ) Ethics Committee reference no. 08/63 as well as by Deakin University (AU) Human Research Ethics Committee reference no. EC 207-2007.

First do no harm

In trying to map the invisible, one risks destroying the positive aspects of invisibility—should the map simply be marked, “here be dragons?”
(Star & Strauss, 1999, p. 25)

This research addressed particular sensitivities, involving as it did young people and their use of a counselling organization. Counselling is usually very private work, however in being mediated through digital spaces this is altered. In addition, the processes of research could result in harm for those who might share their stories, the organization, or the community of young people the service aims to support. In the preceding section, I made reference to Law (2011) with regard to collateral realities being made for good or ill as a result of research processes. The process of gaining consent while usually considered to be about increasing the safety and integrity of research participants may also be a process that may cause harm. This may occur because of issues of confidentiality being breached placing a young person at further risk. Harm may also occur in more subtle ways such as positioning a young person as inadequate or vulnerable. The result may not be the protection espoused but the constituting of young people as deficient, as less than adult, as quasi-individuals.

Not wanting to knowingly do harm also shaped the how the research question was phrased. I did not seek to determine if the use of text messaging in counselling young people was good or bad. As discussed, the complexity involved did not suit the binaries of normative judgment. My not wanting to address this specific question may well have been what cost me a funded scholarship with a mobile

network operator. Positioning text messaging as new and risky, and therefore requiring determination of goodness or badness particularly to engage funding providers concurrently risks silencing young people who have already, and repeatedly, answered this question. Positioning others as powerful enough to take away or to endorse a choice would negate the emancipatory ethos Youthline aspires to. Suchman (2008) provided the way forward. In positioning what is innovative as being less preoccupied with what is “new” I could consider the advent of texting as an iteration of previous practice. A recurring question for practice improvement is then honoured: Given what we know now, what should we do next?

Accepting the work of Youthline as having a moral purpose that would be enabling of young people, the research was guided by questions of who might be advantaged or disadvantaged by particular decisions and processes, whose voice was representative, whose voice was “othered”.²⁴ I took note of Star and Bowker’s (2007) assertion that exclusion requires work, and that enacting silence on the part of others by speaking for them requires soul searching. I held conscious regard for creating space and encouraging voice. Mol (2001) had described a scenario where a patient was asked “what do you want” and responded with “I don’t know”. This resonated with the experiences I had had working with young people. Not knowing what you might ask for, not knowing what the other has the willingness or expertise to facilitate, and not wanting to be seen as needy, all hamper voice. Developing voice was therefore seen to be as important as respecting voice.

The research was undertaken purposefully, the intention being support of a counselling service such that it might better serve young people. There was anticipated value in contributing to practice based evidence for the use of emergent technologies at Youthline. However, to maintain a service and to sustain alliances with funding providers, evidence is required. To provide such evidence research is needed. However, the service studied is predicated on privacy and

²⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* (1949/2011), argued women throughout history have been defined as “other”. To be “othered” is to be defined by others; to be defined on their terms, and pushed to the margins. In effect, to marginalised.

confidentiality. Gathering empirical data for the research, and considering how this would be presented with integrity, required work maintaining privacy and respect. There was no clear pathway; there never is on something never previously studied. The ethical concerns were therefore negotiated with care.

The research was undertaken with young people; young people who were likely to have made contact without parental involvement. To involve parental consent might have caused further distress if not harm. Furthermore, the service provided was one when a crisis was current, to interrupt the service provision at that point might have done more harm than good. A point of tension was therefore held. Such tensions remain present. I do not collapse them down saying the end justifies the means; such tensions are omnipresent concerns.

Negotiating a working relationship to learn of young people's experiences with Youthline's email, text or internet based counselling services required distance from the crisis or reason for a young person contacting the organization. Having voice necessitates first being safe to have voice; of feeling secure and feeling valued. Invitations to talk of the counselling experience were therefore made retrospectively and by open invitation. Invitations for involvement were made through a youth-oriented magazine, through posters, and through Youthline's interactive website. The risk of "triggering" further distress was thereby minimised by having young people self-identify and being willing to come forward to discuss their experience at a time clearly separated from the counselling experience. However, this remained a difficult ask. There is nothing easy about coming forward to talk of times that were most likely unpleasant; when help is needed there are often associated feelings of inadequacy and of shame. I travelled slowly and gently on this part of the research journey.

Renzetti and Lee (1993) identify that often researchers do not adequately address the potential for psychological harm that may result from research that evokes emotional content, and so a delay between seeking counselling and talking of the counselling experience was employed to minimise emotional harm. Further counselling was offered either through Youthline or by a counsellor that was not

linked to the organization, if any of those involved in interviews wished for this. No one took up this offer.

In interviewing other actors in the network, I found being silent and invisible was part of daily practice. I respected this quiet presence when writing of such involvement. Two of Youthline's technology specialists who provided consent to being photographed in their work, were less inclined to interviews. Aware that having "the server down" and of weekend on call out rates, interrogating an image provided an alternate option in exploring this slice of practice.

There are aspects of this organization's counselling that are sustained by invisibility. In not disclosing the name of a counsellor in a text message, seamlessness is portrayed. A counselling conversation might then appear to traverse hours, days, crossing counsellor's shifts, and varied counsellor's comings and goings. There is value in this invisibility. A "backstage" analogy of "behind the scenes" work was therefore useful in considering the counselling performance taking shape. As identified by Star and Strauss (1999) musicians, athletes, and actors, keep the arduous processes of preparation behind a façade allowing certain performances to be seen and not others. In the skill development of counselling this also occurs. Unpolished practices sit alongside polished ones, but what is exposed risks being judged harshly. Seeing behind the scenes could risk reduced confidence in the service. With hindsight it is always easier to say "don't go there", recognizing retrospectively paths wrongly taken and where one might turn back. However the study undertaken, and this account of it, is a performance in progress. There are steps traced that one day could be judged as wrongly taken. And so care was taken imagining possible futures. What is portrayed involves consideration for the risks involved, and risks imagined, and this occurs knowing future gazing is at best imprecise art.

In studying emergent technologies in counselling, what I observed was work that was finding its way, work that would come into being in a form far from perfect. In altering practice there is movement away from what is recognized as "legitimate". What is tried and true, established in ruts formed by repetition, has an acceptability that new practices do not. There was vulnerability for the new

practice, for those involved, and for the organization. Bringing such work out into the open was therefore not taken lightly. I took heed therefore of strategies shared by Starr and Strauss (1999) for juggling visibility and invisibility; I would consider if rendering the invisible more visible was desirable; if it would be useful to make what is visible less so; and when maintaining invisibility would conceivably create more or less risk to those already at the margins. Starr and Strauss provided strategies for the dilemmas encountered. Distributing research findings in different ways for different audiences allowed for what might be shared most usefully for differing audiences. Particular accounts such as those sensitive because of personal relationships or because of vulnerabilities associated with business or political relationships could be rendered less sensitive by the passing of time and the circumstances associated.

In the accounts that follow, I therefore considered the ways in which sharing such accounts might both add or detract in terms of personal experiences, and of how such accounts might address social justice both more and less. Knowing that “our own practices enact realities like any others” and that “enacting realities is not a trivial matter” (Law, 2011, p. 13) I moved cautiously. I held a point of tension considering how positioning myself might also position others.

Troubling notions of voice

I wondered what we are to do with what we are told in terms of listening for the sense people make of their lives without reverting to “too easy” ideas about voice. (Lather, 2001, p. 219)

In writing this account, past and present are not easily divided. I find my own voice troubled with concerns of past, present, and future. What is talked of, reflected on in practice, as well as reflected upon retrospectively does not always sit in the past. The stories shared here are of a particular time and place, however these threads also weave into what continues. How then to write of what is not clearly carved up as belonging here or there? As a general guide for the reader my descriptions of what I did are described in terms of past tense. When I write

reflexively and this has import for current and future times, a present or future tense is used.

In troubling notions of voice I draw attention to the stories told and the circumstances of their telling. Young people in this study, and outside of it, do not have “one voice”, they are no more, or less, homogenous as a group than adults. I grapple with the tensions of “giving voice” and of “empowering others”. “Too easy” ideas of voice present voice as unproblematic; that people speak, or don’t, as they want to. The too easy approach denies that what is said might only have been intended for the relationship inside of which it was shared. “Voice” is then a variable quality. As such it makes sense to consider the relational aspects that shape its expression. A relational approach to voice had me consider what it was that I did making it more and less likely that young people might be heard, if “they” wanted to be heard, and whether being heard was desired or required. Taking a relational approach necessitates consideration for how the researcher, as well as readers, relate to the stories both now and in futures unknown.

Troubling the stories told are undercurrents of silence and voice. What follows is my telling of how two young people came forward to share with me their experiences of having made use of Youthline’s counselling service.

Advertisements to be involved in this research were placed in a New Zealand young people’s magazine *Ripitup* as well as on the *URGE* website, an internet based youth discussion board facilitated by Youthline. These adverts were spontaneously developed for me by young people involved with Youthline, people who knew of my research interest and who wanted to know the views of young people who had made use of the service. The advertisements offered a small recompense for time and inconvenience for those who might participate in the study, nonetheless no young people came forward in response to these advertisements. The advertisements in magazines, on Youthline’s website and as posters on the walls of Youthline where some young people came for counselling drew no responses. An article on what I was studying was published in the New Zealand Herald, but this also elicited no responses. While Youthline offered a means of contacting those who had made use of their services I elected not to

follow this route. Youthline's ways of operating had not included tracing numbers to initiate contact with young people unless as part of a crisis response and I did not want this study to alter the dynamics of their service. I kept the data collection phase open knowing that this might take time. Nonetheless, when young people did come forward, I was taken by surprise.

Being involved with Youthline I was invited to attend the annual residential retreat at Te Puea Memorial Marae, in Mangere, Auckland. This marae accepts Youthline (Auckland) as *whānau* (family). The marae is situated on land returned to Māori in 1933, the land having been confiscated following the New Zealand land wars of the 1860s.²⁵ Nonetheless, further encroachments occur. A newly extended motorway separates the marae from both its mountain and the community it serves (see Figure 10).

Despite such disconnection of place, the people of Te Puea Memorial Marae determine their purpose as connecting people and place through fostering *whānaungatanga* (relationships based in rights and obligations) and *tūrangawaewae* (having a sense of place and purpose, developed through strengthening identity, and providing a place where one has the right to stand and be heard). Youthline's affiliation with this marae shares commitment to reducing alienation and establishing a sense of belonging; an overlap in work involving connection and disconnection.

I am not Māori, but the constructs of *tūrangawaewae* and *whānaungatanga* saturated this part of my research process. In coming on to marae, a *powhiri* of welcome occurs. The *karanga* (calls of welcome and response) is chanted by *kuia* (respected women elders). The welcome is to entities both physical and spiritual. Being on marae invokes an "other worldly" experience; the physical space is enveloped by visual representations of the other world with *poupou* (carvings of Gods, demigods, ancestors) and *tukutuku* (woven panels imbued with metaphors of connection) (see Figure 11 for examples). Imbued with *te ao mārama* (a Māori

²⁵ The Report of the Waitangi Tribunal on the Manukau claim describes the losses of the Māori people of this area as enormous; a level of loss not compensatable, even though compensation was not sought. For a fuller reading refer to <http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/reports/downloadpdf.asp?reportid=D6BBBFAC-EB90-4AEB-9113-8F8D2305BA3F>

way of being) there is acceptance that what we see is not all there is.²⁶ Inside of te ao mārama the animate and inanimate, spiritual and mundane, past and present, are not so easily divided.

²⁶ Te Ao Marama is described as not common in contemporary Māori society having been colonised, christianised and fragmented, but partial expression remains current and is evident on marae, in the protocols and in *taonga* (things held precious) (Royal, 2005).



Figure 10. Composite imagery of dis/connected space; Te Puea Memorial Marae, Positioned by sea and by Mountain.²⁷

Pepeha of Te Puea Marae, Mangere: Ko Tainui te Waka

Ko Te Manuka a Hoturoa te moana

Ko Te Ara Pueru te maunga

*Ko Te Puea te marae*²⁸

²⁷ A view northwards over southern Auckland City, New Zealand from Mangere Mountain. Retrieved May 2, 2011.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0f/Onehunga_Panoramic_Mangere_Mountain.jpg Reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution/Share-Alike License. 2008. Ingolfson.

Photograph of Te Puea Memorial Marae, Ministry of Māori Development. (n.d.). Te Puea Memorial Marae. Retrieved April 30, 2011 from

http://www.maraedirectory.com/index.php/?marae/te_puea_memorial_marae

Mangere Bridge. Google-imagery 2011 © DigitalGlobe, Cnes/Spot Image, GeoEye. Fair use.

Permission for academic purpose: <http://www.google.com/permissions/geoguidelines.html#fairuse> Mangere Mountain. Retrieved May 2, 2011 from

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mangere_Mountain.jpg Reproduced under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. 2006. Avenue.

²⁸ Translation of the *pepeha* (chant) of Te Puea Marae, tells the *whakapapa* (lineage) of this marae that is affiliated with the Tainui people. The *pepeha* locates the marae by mountain and sea; sitting on the southern banks at the mouth of the Tamaki River where it flows into the Manakau Harbour. Te Ara Pueru, also known as Mangere Mountain, stands to the west sheltering the marae from prevailing winds. The city of Auckland lies to the North.



Figure 11. Poupou and Tukutuku enveloping space. The space held on marae is constructed by actors, human and other. Poupou and tukutuku similar to these cover the internal walls of wharehui. These particular poupou and tukutuku envelope Youthline’s whanau room at Youthline House. The poupou on the left is of Maui, half man/half God, an ancestor of Māori credited with fishing New Zealand up out of the sea. In the centre is Te Kirihaehae Te Puea Herangi (Princess Te Puea) renowned for her work contributing to the strengthening of community. The tukutuku panel to the right is a design known as purapura whetu (cluster of many stars) symbolising the many people needed to keep whānau strong (Youthline, 2010). Images reproduced with permission, Youthline, Auckland (see Appendix A).

To describe the concepts of one culture using the language of another is a difficult navigation (Kolig, 2004; Metge & Kinloch, 1984). To refer to poupou and tukutuku as carvings or representations imposes one reality on another.

I do not claim to know this other reality, only my experience of it.

[Fieldnotes notes, July 2009]

It is a wintery weekend; cold and drizzly. The floor of the wharenuī is covered with mattresses as people settle in comfortably on the floor. The room is dark with the darkness of red and black carvings on all four walls and the only sunlight enters through the doorway at the front of the wharenuī. Through rituals, a talking space is opened up and invited are stories of what brings people to this place, and what keeps them here. Each story is followed by *waiata* (a song, usually in Māori) sung by those present as an act of support for the speaker. The storytelling is not a space of discussion but a witnessing of what people share. A story then a song, a story then song, and a pattern is created, continuing into the night. The room

darkens and the stories continue, some sleep, others continue the pattern of storytelling and waiata.

In the very, very, early hours of the morning, I spoke of the struggles I had as a child being unable to talk with my parents for fear of triggering their grief following the death of my sister. Although I later learned that others in my family expected this; as a child I did not know that when people were this sick they could die. I talked of my brothers and myself colluding to never mention her again as we couldn't bear to see our parents cry. I talked of learning to avoid conflict. I also talked of how years later I had trained as a Youthline counsellor and it had changed my life in building confidence, and giving me voice. I talked of my hope for Youthline: that it would be there in a timely way for others: available, accessible, and affordable, because young people don't often have the means otherwise. And I talked of my research and invited those present to pass on to others my interest in talking to people who had made use of Youthline's services, especially those that may have experienced counselling mediated by discussion board, texting, or email.

I had not expected to share this experience. I had intended to thank Youthline for allowing me a research opportunity. But being on marae, as stories are told into the middle of the night, and being surrounded by walls covered in poupou and tukutuku, a different kind of space is invoked. This space draws out deeply personal stories.

It was in the sharing of what was personal to me, in a space dedicated to establishing connection, that conditions were created whereby others felt they could approach me to talk of their experiences as participants in this research. My sense of what occurred is that self-disclosure altered the dynamic of things that may be talked of. A special type of relationship was engendered, one that allowed space for acknowledging shared vulnerabilities and respect for the humanity involved. On the following day of the marae weekend two young people indicated they wanted to be participants in this research. Their stories are told in the following chapter.

Telling my own story was not undertaken with the intent of eliciting conversations with those immediately present, though this was the effect. Dickson-Swift, James, and Liamputtong (2008) citing Ann Oakley, agree that such personal involvement makes for bias, but they also identify that without such involvement research on issues deemed sensitive may not be possible.

Personal involvement is more than dangerous bias – it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives. (Ann Oakley, 1981, as cited in Dickson-Swift et al., 2008, p. 5)

My experience supports this. Talking of my own vulnerabilities was not an intentional act in gaining trust and rapport; it was nonetheless a catalyst that others responded to – just as the stories of others were also a prompt to what I talked of.

In writing this thesis, I am very much aware that such accounts are taken out of time and place, and are altered in the telling, and in the reading and re-reading. This discontinuity is not glossed over. In the slices of practice that will follow, I do not intend for the stories told to be mistaken as static, polished, or complete. These stories are raw, sometimes jagged, sometimes rough. I do not want these read as providing a view to a private life, a voyeuristic perspective on the anguish of others, and so I choose to interrupt the narratives. Parts of stories are told; they remain incomplete. Furthermore the stories told are retold through me: through what I heard and was attentive to, and through how I write. This is no innocent retelling. What is told is purposeful, such that the complexity of practice might be better known, and that things that could be otherwise might also be considered.

Working with sensibilities of uncertainty

In this section, I reflect on aspects of the research demonstrating a convergence of uncertainties and controversies negotiated as part of the research process. I draw on the structure outlined in the previous chapter, demonstrating how particular sensibilities informed parts of the research process undertaken.

The first uncertainty: The nature of groups

I expected when I spoke on marae to be talking to an audience made up mostly of Youthline's counsellors. I had assumed too much. The making of such arbitrary divisions as counsellors and those counselled neglects that people may be both.

My intent was not to stabilise such groupings, to do so would add to the collateral damage that Law (2011) identifies as a risk associated with research. People do not stay as counsellors forever, nor as counselled. The moments spent in a counselling relationship are transient; the roles have no permanence; the identities so labelled having been created in practice.

The fuzzy boundaries are desirable; they are healthy. Counsellors are not immune to the tribulations of life, nor free from times when help might be useful. And in this study those counselled are not permanently cast as needing counselling. Despite the ethics application requiring me to delineate in advance who I might talk with, in terms of their group membership, those I interview do not remain so easily separated as counsellors, technologists or clients, young or old, at the margins or central. My intention had been to interview people who had made use of Youthline's service, as well as those who provided such service, and those who contributed to the making and shaping of technologies in this service. The divisions I had made reflect a premature positioning. There is no set boundary between those who provide a service and those who might use it. Just as health professionals might also need health care, and educators might also be learners, so it is also with counselling. Amongst those who agreed to talk with me, one described herself as both a counsellor and client of Youthline.

This is not an argument to treat everyone the same, but to avoid premature closure on how we position those we work with. Levine (1995) identifies ways in which participation in research typically differs between young people and adults. These include concerns regarding the legal capacity to consent based on younger people being particularly vulnerable to risk. Because of this, research on children is often avoided until similar research on adults demonstrates acceptable risk. In treating young people as "other", as special, as not qualified to engage because of limited cognitive abilities, and having associated self-care limitations or deficits, young

people are effectively excluded from formal processes for shaping services. An alternative approach would be to ensure that there is understanding of what is involved; that cognitively and emotionally a young person can be supported and that risk can be minimised throughout research processes. Young people might then be recognised as different to grown-ups without being marginalised.

Thomson (2004) identifies difference also in learning to listen to voices from those deemed “at risk”. With concern for how such voice might also be described as “unpopular”, she places an emphasis on the relational dynamics involved:

1. If ‘voice’ is seen as a privilege, then pupils ‘at risk’ may be deemed unworthy. After all, they often don’t do what is required. They don’t always speak when spoken to; they often speak without invitation, in the wrong place, at the wrong time and regardless of the consequences.
2. If ‘voice’ is seen as being articulate, evidenced through the use of particular forms of standard English expression, then many pupils ‘at risk’ will be deemed incompetent – although their messages are very often unavoidable and unambiguous!
3. If ‘voice’ is seen as working to support the general parameters of the school culture and policy, then pupils ‘at risk’ will be seen as ineligible. They are much more likely than successful and more compliant pupils to criticise practices and people that do appear to be working for the majority. What they have to say can be negative and not easy to accept. (Thomson, 2004, p. 2)

Though Thomson was discussing the school experience, the issues raised remain relevant for learning to listen to young people in other contexts. In providing services that claim to be responsive to the needs of young people, then hearing from young people about what they identify as important, requires attending to the relationships that may prevent this. Bessant (2007) expands on this with particular reference to the Australian rhetoric of participatory democracy:

Guardianship arguments effectively deny young peoples’ right to participate in various activities and to exercise self determination. Yet one salutary lesson to be learnt from recent revelations of child abuse by carers is that mistreatment was allowed to continue due to the prevalence of guardianship arguments. Public trust in moral experts and youth specialists meant that their authority took precedence

over young peoples' rights. There is now sufficient evidence (eg repeated criminal activity against children) to refute claims that adults know what is in the best interest of young people, and that they can be relied on to act accordingly. In response to arguments that parents/adults can best represent the interests of "their child", it is important to note that young people have experiences and insights that are frequently different to older peoples. (p. 394)

Bessant identifies that children and young people have a body of knowledge and experience that is unique to them, and adults are unable to protect young people, or to enhance their experiences, when they do not know what is occurring in young people's lives.

Nonetheless, many services are designed without taking into account these experiences, and such services are the worse for it. If we are serious about youth participation, then this needs to be followed through with challenging processes, policies, and legislation. As Bessant argues:

Young people generally, and especially those under 18 years of age, have no effective entitlement to engage politically, to have a say about matters that effect [sic] them or to take part in decision making. Tackling this issue involves deepening and extending the current rhetoric about youth participation. As I argued in this article, the burden of proof for why certain groups of young people should be excluded rests with those who would sustain this disenfranchisement. (p. 402)

In New Zealand, Carroll-Lind, Chapman, Gregory, and Maxwell (2006) express similar concern. They describe how children and young people are not heard because typically others speak on their behalf. They take this further arguing that concern for the ethical issues far from protecting young people from the risks associated with research, have ultimately prevented access to the views of children and young people altogether (p. 979). Their concern was specifically related to studying children at risk because of violence in the home, an area particularly problematic for obtaining parental consent. While their research established a precedent in New Zealand for research of children without parental consent, their approach, where parents were required to opt-out of having their children interviewed, is unable to transfer to this study.

In this research, consent was sought from the young people directly, and not sought from parents or legal guardians. This was after careful consideration of the circumstances of young people who make contact with a youth counselling agency. This decision was also taken in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Article 12, that states public services and governments are to provide children with the freedom and opportunities to express their views and that the service or government must consider the views of children in a meaningful way. Both Australia and New Zealand are signatories to this document.

The Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) allows for exceptional circumstances to be considered when not obtaining parental or legal guardian consent. The Health Research Council of New Zealand (2008) suggests research involving young people should have parental or legal support, but the guidelines also refer to the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (2004). This Code of Rights specifies that the age of the young person is less important than the maturity of the young person to give consent, which should be based substantively on their ability to understand. In accepting that young people are competent witnesses of their own experiences, I entered into this research with a process of explaining the research in plain language, of ensuring support is available if wanted, and of checking understanding and consent for involvement (see Appendix B).

Given the reason young people seek help from Youthline includes expectations of privacy and confidentiality, and that the second leading cause of stress for young people, after schoolwork, is family (Youthline, 2005b), it was likely that a young person would feel uncomfortable talking with family about being involved in this research. While the researcher may consider there to be low risk in involving a parent or legal guardian in gaining consent, for the young person this may not be the case. There is documented risk that in seeking support outside of the family emotional, physical or psychological harm may result for the young person (Bessant, 2007; Renzetti & Lee, 1993). In this research, the young person was therefore considered the best judge of that possibility and maintained control over whether they wanted a parent, guardian, or other support person, present or not.

Working with young people's strengths, and trusting in their ability to make a decision based on their own experiences, was also congruent with Youthline's values.

Youthline's counselling is predicated on confidentiality and privacy, and so following traces back into the lives of young people was not attempted. I did not trace connections back to where problems were generated, and I did not follow the traces to what was happening now. I had anticipated that coming forward would be difficult and that associating again with a service experienced as unhelpful perhaps even more so. Having introductions made where participants would make the connections inviting others to talk to me of their experiences went some way to addressing this. However, such introductions and willingness to recount events are also likely to be subject to bias. The experiences shared with me were predominantly from service providers, and the young people I spoke with who had made use of the service both had ongoing experiences with the organization. To provide a greater representation of voice, digital traces of all the sent and received text messages occurring within a set time frame were analysed providing a greater breadth to the range of stories that could be told of these times. However, these traces also moved in and out of spaces where I was unable to follow.

In following the digital traces of texted counselling messages further tensions evolved. A notice regarding researcher access to text message counselling interactions for research and training purposes was posted on Youthline's website during the time of this study but this provided a less than ideal means of notifying young people that messages would be read for reasons beyond the immediate purpose of counselling. In 160 characters, and at a time when a person is seeking assistance for a problem, there is little room for seeking consent. At a later time perhaps consent could be sought to access a history of a text conversation with Youthline, but this too brings further possibilities of being seen as an unsolicited intrusion and there is no guarantee that the receiver of such a message would be the intended recipient. Renzetti and Lee (1993) point to the common response of avoiding the study of sensitive issues because it is in the "too hard basket". In this study the risks of not undertaking the study were also seen as high. Taking

guidance from the Health Research Council of New Zealand (2008), the New Zealand Privacy Act (1993) and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (n.d.), uses of aggregated data, or anonymised information where those involved are no longer identifiable, are accepted as means of sustaining privacy. This was managed in this study by removing the traceable phone number/individual identifier on digital artefacts of texted messages to which I as a researcher would have access. In addition, deleting identifying information and/or obscuration occurred for text messages reported in this study. While a person might be able to identify themselves in the examples written of here, they would remain unidentifiable by others, and so risks to privacy were mitigated.

The second uncertainty: My actions are “othertaken”

My presence as a researcher was advertised on Youthline’s website and also in Youthline’s hub with posters on the wall of Youthline’s phone rooms. I attended Youthline staff meetings, management meetings, volunteer training seminars and group facilitator meetings to explain what I would be doing and to invite participation. At such meetings I would be introduced and invite participation. In “following the actors” a process of being invited in was maintained rather than my initiating contacts. By this I mean, key people would take me under their wing, they would offer to be interviewed, welcome me into their work, and introduce me to others they thought might be useful to this study. I was personally introduced from one person and then passed on to another and another. This process of gaining access facilitated a level of trust based on personal recommendations, and is a process described as particularly useful in working with sensitive communities (Liamputtong, 2007).

Most of the research undertaken occurred in Youthline’s phone rooms, known as “the hub” at Youthline house (see Figure 12).



Figure 12. Youthline house and phone rooms have been decorated to be welcoming particularly to young people. In the hub, where the helplines are answered, the appearance is casual with comfortable furniture in a lounging space adjacent to the soundproofed phone rooms.

The outside of the building is painted a vibrant blue; the rear wall is covered in the artwork of young people commissioned to paint graffiti. Inside the hub is a homely space, comfortable though a little dark. Off the lounge space are small cubicles for taking calls; each cubicle also has a computer screen where further information might be accessed and where text and email counselling are provided. I spent several hours on a weekly basis interviewing and shadowing the practice of people willing to share their work. My time was spent mostly in the hub, as that was where volunteers come to undertake their counselling work. In making interview times to talk with counsellors of their experiences most chose to have me present during one of their three hour shifts, and to talk with me in the non-busy times between responding to clients. Working with volunteers I was

conscious that their gift to Youthline was their time. I did not want to encroach on this and so fit myself around their preferences.

A transient staffing of self-rostering volunteers necessitated my introducing myself repeatedly. I became used to being seen as a novelty initially and then as a quiet presence that others would work around. There are soft-toys and a sand-tray²⁹ table in the hub that seems to enjoy a similar experience; sometimes the volunteers engaged with these and sometimes they don't. My presence bears a similar relationship.

Beyond the hub, I followed connections through the offices and other spaces of Youthline house. I follow the connections of people, of pixels, policies, paperwork, computer programmes, and of programmers. Tracing the development and spread of change made possible by emergent technologies led me beyond Youthline's walls to the home-office of the CCT architect responsible for designing YORA (an acronym for what was originally developed as Youthline's online rostering application). And following these actors and the directions they suggest, I also travelled to Christchurch as platforms enabling text messaging and email counselling spread across Youthline's national network. My activities are pulled and pushed by where other actors are situated and so a multi-site ethnographical study evolved.

I traced connections by word of mouth but also follow the physical connections noting wires that thread through the walls of the building. Such connecting shows the places a message travels but not necessarily the shaping that occurs. I looked also for the more ephemeral traces. Not every thread is traced; there is no single line that could be traced but a multitude of concurrent and interwoven threads. Such threads are also by necessity sometimes cut. I did not trace the connections back into the lives of those who call or text the helpline service; I did not follow the angst expressed in the text messages of counselling back to the relationships that create conditions leading into counselling. As Strathern (1996) notes, in

²⁹ Sandplay therapy is credited as being developed by Dora Kalff. The client is provided a sand tray with figurines and arranging the sand provides opportunity for reflecting on one's inner state providing a bridge to the unconscious state (Corsini et al., 2008). The role of the therapist described by Kalff (cited by Linda Ellis Dean, n.d.) is "the hard work of doing nothing" while the client expresses themselves. Interpretation is not part of this work (Ellis Dean, n.d.).

practice one does not trace connections forever, threads are cut, dropped, and discontinued. The respect for privacy, negotiations of consent, as well as there being a finite time in which to complete and write this study, all contributed to the limits on threads and traces followed.

At the time of this study, Youthline involved 1,200 staff and volunteers, 26 of whom agree to my either interviewing them or shadowing their work. Youthline's work involved in excess of twenty thousand contacts a month from those making use of the services. A vibrancy in activity was apparent with connections growing both when observed and when not. Concurrently other threads would untangle become detached and move away. What people brought to their work, and to the inclusion of technologies in their work, was held in networks woven well beyond the time spent with myself or with Youthline. Nonetheless boundaries are delineated. None of those I interviewed suggested contact with parents or guardians. While reference was made to parents, I note such references were made in regard to reasons for seeking counselling and of ways young people might seek to manage such relationships better. Young people talk of the experiences they have in the world that prompt them to seek counselling, but do not suggest that I trace the connections back inside or through these experiences. There are limits negotiated in association with research deemed sensitive.

In undertaking this research I note wryly the invocation by Latour (2005) to start in the middle of things, is also the space in which I stop. I stopped when I had stories to tell from the range of actors involved: the young people who make use of the service, the counselling volunteers, counsellors who were new to Youthline and counsellors who had worked in the organization for decades, the paid staff and the technology support people. I stopped when the hardcopy of notes in my fieldwork folder was over full. I stopped when I had in excess of thirty hours of transcripts. I stopped when I had analysed 6000 text messages, and three years of monthly business minuted meetings. I stopped after I had learned to listen to quiet voices. I stopped when the hub that used to buzz with incoming phone calls was all but quiet. I stopped when I had a story of myriad actors, human and otherwise, and of the flow between them. I stopped when one particular practice had seemingly stabilized. I do not claim that this study provides a full picture of what

was involved. There are other stories that might still be told. I stopped as I started; in the middle of things, but also in a space where it was possible to open up conversations of how things might also be otherwise.

The third uncertainty: Objects too have agency

Identity is so much less stable than often assumed. This is true for humans and non-humans alike. A mobile phone fully charged and with \$20.00 prepay credit is a different entity when its battery is flat, or when it has run out of credit, or is out of cell phone tower range, or when it has gone through a washing machine. With a mobile phone being used by the driver of a vehicle, again there is identity shift; it becomes a distracter if not cause of death. The ability to have an effect, to have agency, is not something that only resides with people, objects also have agency.

In this research I followed Latour's (1996a) lead in talking with objects. The research approach was also informed by Turkle's (2007) provocation on *Evocative Objects. Things We Think With*, Haraway's (2008) consideration of *When Species Meet*, and Kevin Kelly's (2010) investigative account of *What Technology Wants*. The boundaries between animate and inanimate blur. In such grey areas there is space for considering different types of stories. Fusing fact and fiction I provided an opening for a wider range of actors to be heard. I have not discriminated between verbal and nonverbal participants; some stories are told with a picture, some are provided voice. In writing of novel events in novel ways there is possibility that what is talked of finds relevance for a reader; providing a provocation to thoughtfulness, to other ways of doing, other ways of being, and to doing difference differently.

The fourth uncertainty: Matters of fact versus matters of concern

Attending to matters of concern I focused on the myriad beings involved, and the movements between them. Seeing each entity as a matter of concern allowed for an uncovering of complexity where such "matters" might be attended to.

The work of data collection involved a performance of tracing actors and following traces that did not stand still. Following traces leads to a range of actors

including young people who had made use of the service, volunteers as well as paid Youthline staff that provided the counselling service, the technical staff who maintained Youthline's server as well as the consultancy firm that had written YORA (Youthline's computer software). I stopped short of tracing further threads to the philanthropists that contributed toward keeping Youthline afloat. I stopped short of talking with the telco providers that subsidised Youthline's operations. I did not follow the traces left behind by the multiple funding applications to Government or non-governmental organizations for financial support of Youthline's endeavours. I did not trace the issues of counselling beyond the young people who phone or text in, nor go beyond those who provide counselling as to how they came to work at Youthline. While I point to how this network was held alongside other networks, there were both more and less immediately pressing matters of concern.

Matters of concern include the blurring between what is and is not; relevant and less relevant. Entwined by such decisions researcher responsibility is enmeshed with what, or who, is given space. The blurring of entity boundaries, of things that were made in association and in associations that never held still, had me acknowledging the presence of what Latour named hybrids. In undertaking this research I became increasingly conscious of my own hybrid status also. My laptop became a familiar attachment, a prosthetic device extending my research capabilities. While I experienced myself as reconfigured in association, I recognized that this was equally true of other entities, human or otherwise, and that in relationships such actors continue to alter. The mobile phone became multiple: it morphed between being a carrier of messages, a holder of messages, a reminder of connectedness, an external memory for numbers and addresses, as well as being a safety net, a status symbol, a source of advice, a camera, a torch, a blessing, an imposition. Its physicality does not define it. It became many things, its multiplicity agile.

In following the actors and the flow between them, I became increasingly aware of how entities morph and controversies mutate. And history, or more accurately history as I am told of it, did not remain stable. Time passed chronologically but punctuations in time occurred differently for different actors. In this research on

how things change, it therefore became important to engage with time as a further sensibility, a matter of concern. As described by Sørensen (2007), time rather than being a backdrop was itself enacted. What was seen as current, cutting edge, or passé, was experienced differently by those involved. Different counsellors experience of counselling at Youthline would name differing starting and stopping points, and would name differing technologies in their discussions of what they saw as emergent.

At the start of this research I set out to investigate the use of emergent technologies at Youthline for counselling. In following the actors in the hub, a range of practices came and went. I observed Youthline establishing presence on Bebo, Facebook, and later on Twitter. I noted that updates on Bebo become less frequent. I noticed increasingly longer periods between phone calls. I heard the alerting alarms of text messages waiting for responses, until these alerts become so chronic that staff and counsellors disabled the alerting function muting it for being too disruptive. And I found myself drawn more and more to text counselling because that was where the young people using the service were, and in responding to them, that is where the counsellors went also.

There was liveliness in the networking that occurred around text messaging. Such liveliness was not always positive, debates occurred, controversies arose. Liveliness extends to things solid as well as to things more ephemeral. As Harman (2007) points out:

Latour's metaphysics is utterly democratic. Atoms and quarks are real actors in the cosmos, but so are Fidel Castro, Houdini, and unicorns. We cannot declare a priori that some actors are more real than others; all we can say is that some are stronger than others. (p. 35)

What is real is what has effect. The stories told to me are retold here and through such telling further ripples of effect occur. So this research becomes part of what performs Youthline, and takes on a further life as discussions on practices of counselling, of empowerment, and of research continue; interrupting what also might have been otherwise. I turn now to the fifth area of uncertainty, how to write of such accounts, but note that this too is a matter of concern.

The fifth source of uncertainty: Writing down risky accounts

The intent of a “risky account” is that it engages, that it adds to a knowledge base for establishing how practice is shaped and might be shaped otherwise. That it is engaging, or not, is the measure of its success.

Being present to the experiences of counselling involved being present to heart rendering accounts. To detach these from their emotional roots would do a disservice to the stories shared. Nonetheless, being clear that this would not be a voyeuristic account, a cautious approach was taken in making what is made known, underpinned by respect for privacy and consent of those involved.

To be useful the research needs to be accessible as well as engaging. In presenting the findings back to the Youthline community at their inaugural research symposium, the preliminary findings of this research were received favourably. There was a sense that what was discussed was known, the past and current controversies resonate with those present. The dilemmas described in regard to the ever increasing cascade of text messages and the “so what” questions generated became useful for a discussion anticipating possible futures. (These will not be pre-empted here, but follow in Chapters 5 and 6.)

The use of visual imagery provided voice for those less verbal. It also provided a point of access for those less inclined to read a lengthy thesis, and for those at the symposium referred to above, the visual image was accepted with delight. Importantly, visual imagery informs differently. Images communicate differently to words, eliciting emotional as well as intellectual responses (Thomson, 2008). Pink (2007) identifies much can be lost in attending only to the words conveyed. In writing this account, attention was therefore given to how data would be presented. There is deliberate use of visual images and deliberate use of juxtapositioning with the intention that this might unsettle assumptions. Imagery was used to convey some of what might be othered, otherwise. In introducing the reader to an Iograph demonstrating how my laptop trackpad reads my activities when writing (see Figure 5) I began to build an argument that actors have differing realities. In reflecting on what occurred in undertaking this research the visual medium has been used to engage with a sense of place and the aesthetics

involved, to portray some of the metaphysical dimensions involved, such as what occurs on marae. In representing practice (as follows in Chapter 6) the intention is to sustain awareness of how counselling conversations are held. In presenting the experience of a text message, images with superimposed text are used to portray not only what was written, but also that that such messages are held close.

I found myself challenged with every decision made of what I would represent, how I might present this, and what I would leave out. What is in, or out, is always challenged in research representation, as Barad (2007) summarises:

Representationalism is a prisoner of the problematic metaphysics it postulates. (p. 137)

To represent is to alter. How then to represent the less articulate, and the more ephemeral and nebulous? How to point to the ethereal without providing it with a substance that remains different to the experience pointed to? How to tell of these stories in ways that do not harden up what was soft, or smooth what was jagged? And how to do this while creating a text accessible and engaging?

Patti Lather (1994) provided me with further argument for writing in ways less common in thesis writing:


You cannot do it differently, and say it the same, in the comfort zone of a familiar language system. (p. xi)

Doing difference differently I make use of imagery. The use of images are not intended to prettify but to convey a different message, not as decoration but because the visual media and juxtapositioning extends what is written, providing a further message. The approach taken intends a disconcerting effect. There are layers within juxtapositioned imagery that simultaneously hold different ways of seeing and of knowing. And is described by John Law as having potential for opening up possibilities of seeing things differently, with allegory generating ambivalence and uncertainty (Law, 2004). Grubbs (2001) describes further value in the use of allegory as providing a “veil of abstraction” allowing layers of meaning to be provoked playfully, memorably, and to engage consideration without necessitating confrontation. That allegorical representation might unsettle

assumptions while opening up possibilities of dialogue between people who live within different reals is my intent. That it does this in memorable ways has potential for lasting change. My purpose in the use of allegorical representations was to provide an entry point to alternate realities enticing consideration of realities different to one's own.

In the telling of slices of practice I did not want to trivialise what occurs. While there were light-hearted moments, in the stories shared there were also times of desperateness. And whether being counselled, or providing counselling, the process of counselling can be upsetting. In this account my intention is not to make a spectacle for observers, but that thoughtfulness be provoked.

Chapter 6: Slices of Practice

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a hand holding a silver flip phone. The phone is open, and its screen displays a text message. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light gray. The phone has a standard numeric keypad and a few function buttons. The text on the screen is in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

Ch6. Slices of practis:
Youthline phs r silnt.
Young pepl stil hav probs
& counslors stil hlp but 0
wrds r spokn. Wats goin
on?

Introduction

How do we pack the world into words? (Latour, 1999b, p. 24)

In this chapter I reassemble for the reader, stories of practice. I don't ask if the practices are right or wrong, appropriate or not, instead the stories told uncover aspects of ontological politics; a politics to do with how problems are framed, how work is shaped, lives pushed and pulled, and of reals made both more and less.

These are empirical stories, stories that tell of day-to-day realities. They tell of slices of practice. Such practices though are not restricted to the people involved but are the stories of technology evolving; shaped as well as shaping. Stories then of the social and technical being implemented? Not quite, for such divisions assume a discreteness not borne out in reality. These are then socio-technical stories of change, hyphenated for they are co-joint. Stories not of technology as a noun, but as a verb; stories of technology in Franklin's words as "the ways things are done around here".

In addition, these are stories not only of what is, but of what might also be. As such they are also political stories; stories of tradeoffs and compromise, of resourcing more and less, of negotiations continually renegotiated. These then are socio-technical-political research stories. But this too is limiting for in the telling are also hopes, dreams and fears. As such, they are creation stories and stories to live by. They tell of how practice has life, comes into being, is constructed, contained, constrained; stories then of purpose, of philosophical intent and of daily realities, of fictions as much as of facts. And such stories are not merely told, for in the telling there is a purpose, an ontological purpose; for things could always be otherwise.

Such stories are not new in research. Latour (2005) in *Aramis* describes the genre as scientification, Law (2002a) in *Aircraft Stories* writes of text as a performance in fractional coherence, Mol (2002) in *The Body Multiple*, considers her writing to be an exercise in empirical philosophy. For Lather (1997) the telling of

discontinuous stories position the reader, writer, and those whose stories are told, as a means to provoke engagement with imaginaries. And for Haraway (1994) taking an overtly political stance, she describes stories of materialised refiguration; stories where metaphor and materiality implode.

In each of these approaches, and in mine that follows, are discontinuous narratives; slices of practice that disrupt the notion that practice is ever fully known. In this account I provide a partial understanding; partial in that it is an account told by a positioned author, and partial also because it does not, and cannot, encompass the whole sphere of what occurred or continues to occur. There is no way to abandon such partiality for the writer is always caught up in what they write.

I follow in the footsteps of Haraway, amongst others, in writing a text in which I am situated, in writing of what I experience, value, think and feel. I cannot help but be implicated. This account intends no God-like view from nowhere but is a text developed from the slices of practice that were shared with me. This is not a once upon a time history, but a making such that alternate possibilities might be known. I reject telling only one story of events as they unfold as if there were but one story to be told, or only one reality in a network. Such a narrow telling would limit conditions of possibility. In writing of the multiplicity involved, I seek to make known possibilities of what could be otherwise. Having a broader understanding of “what is” substantiates an informed position regarding possibilities of “what might be”.

I structure this chapter not as a linear progression but as continuous renegotiation. I am concerned that the written form does not deal well with continual iterations and with actors who work at different paces with different knowledge, and where knowledge does not move in straight lines but is recalled, remembered, and brought from the past into the present by different people at different times, differently. The performance of this chapter requires explanation for the written form creates certain expectations that will be disrupted. In most writing there is a default position where what is seen first delineates a starting point for the chronological progression of a story. This I disrupt. What is told does not follow

the smooth trajectory of time. It is a regrettable and unavoidable foible of a written account that what is seen first suggests the order of what occurs, *as if it were the same for all participants, when it is not*. Within a multivocal account the punctuations in time have more and less import for different actors, and more than one chronological line can be conceived. Concurrently, while more than one chronological depiction can be made, there are limits on what is possible. Today follows yesterday, but there may well be things that happen today that can be more closely linked to last week, last month or even decades earlier, than any event that happens this morning. I therefore write of slices of practice not as they come one after another but which fold one upon the other as layered accounts.

Taking a lead from Latour's *Aramis*, the writing style is a reflection of that which is studied. There are times when what is told suggests harmony and smooth transitions and other times where there are contradictions and controversies. A socio-technical-political story on change unfolds. A range of voices is involved in this storytelling, mine own included. To cue the reader, alterations in discursive modes are distinguished by formatting and typography.

Accepting that what is human is never solely formed of the social, and that the technical is never solely technical, the accounts of people and things, hybrids all, are given space and voice. Prosopopoeia provides a rhetorical means to voice the experience of technical objects and artefacts. This is an unusual approach to research accounts outside of actor-network studies, but it is not so odd when reflecting on the layers of silence in this study. In this study it is not only the non-human actors who have problems with voice or being heard.

The middle of things

Where should we start? As always, it is best to begin in the middle of things (Latour, 2005, p. 27).

When Latour points to starting in the middle of things, he might also have said there is no other way for a network has no definitive up nor down, nor beginning or end. These stories are drawn from the middle of things, they involve an heterogenic assembly of actors, human and otherwise, where paths sometimes

cross, sometimes run in parallel, and involving tensions that push and pull as this nascent being of text counselling evolves.

At Youthline, Auckland, “the hub” is central to the processes of text counselling. This is the space where calls, texts and emails are received and routed through “YORA” the computer network to various counsellors. This is where counsellors sit and provide telephone counselling as well as counselling by email and by text. The young people who make use of the service have only what their imaginations tell them of this space. For them their engagement is typically through their mobile phone, whether calling or texting there is an object between themselves and a counsellor, their middle of things becomes the mobile phone. The middle of things might also be considered as less physical and more relational, with counselling being realised within counselling relationships, the physical space being less important than the conversation. The middle of things is therefore contested space. What is known is that what occurs, occurs in relationships, and that these relationships involve actors, both human and otherwise. I begin therefore with the conversations that occur between the young people, and the counsellors at Youthline.

I start with a text message and trace its comings and goings. The message studied involves pixels; variable patterns of light illuminating text portrayed as dark spaces on a flat screen. A message literally created out of what is illuminated and what is not. A text of pixels is different from other texts, it’s less substantial for a start. Taking the Latin form of “text” as *textus*, draws attention to the permanence achieved in imbedding a literary language into tissue. *Textus* is in turn derived from *texere* (to weave) and so there is an association with weaving, and with spinning, and reference even to webs. And in this research, far from any flat screen or unidimensional understanding of what it is to text, there is a weaving, a web, a textured terrain to be studied,

This study traces pathways through this textured terrain by following the actors involved. I explore the text/ure following actors through tightly knotted as well as loosely woven threads, but it is also my intention that a symphonic texture is held

at the end of such travels. It is not my intent to unravel what is, but instead to create conscious regard for what is woven.

The following page begins to trace a texted conversation. This conversation abruptly shifts the reader to a counselling scenario, and should perhaps come with a health warning: What is usual to counsellors in practice is, I hope, unusual to thesis readers. In entering into the research space of counselling practices, you may be surprised, the examples may shock. Counsellors entering the counselling space come knowing that any conversation they enter may well be distressing, and they enter this space prepared for this work. The pages that follow include examples drawn from counselling scenarios and they may be distressing. This is not undertaken with any voyeuristic or sadistic intent, but is an aspect of the everyday unusual work of telephone counselling practice investigated within this thesis.

[Digital trace of text message sent to Youthline, November 2007]



The sentence is an unusual opening for a conversation between strangers, however, that seems to be the point; this is a conversation for strangers. A conversation of intimate angst, fears or hopes, made possible with someone unknown and with whom there need be no ongoing relationship. The person initiating the conversation cannot see who they talk with, and perhaps more importantly, cannot be seen. They cannot hear their own voice nor the voice of a counsellor. Similarly, the counsellor works with no paralinguistic cues, nor cues of body language, their work is constrained to the pixels of a short visually presented message, the meaning they make of this, and the conversation that ensues. This is also an unusual conversation starter inside of counselling. In this example, as well as in most of the other 6000 text messages reviewed, there is no exchange of social pleasantries, no noticeable phase dedicated to developing of trust and rapport, no talking into the troubles of concern.

This is practice being shaped differently, counselling practice as it has not previously been known.

What is (and isn't) said

In any conversation, counselling or otherwise, a lot is imagined. With a texted counselling conversation the absence of cues brings this to the fore, and a space is held between what is and is not said.

One screen, a space of 28 characters across, not more than ten lines down, the first line given to whom it is being sent, and a total message not exceeding 160 characters including spaces. There's work then in crafting a message succinct

enough to be carried by SMS messaging that provides coherence in the content, and conveys feelings and urgency. There is also work in negotiating with the message bearer to perform.

The conditions requiring brevity are to some extent established by the SMS carrying capacity of one screen per message, where each screen sent is costed as one message. Being so contained the language of texting becomes succinct and flexible: how to convey meaning with minimal waste of character space. How to have a word recognised when iterations alter? The novel forms rendered in text speak, also known as “txtspk” or “txtese”, often involve dropping vowels from parts of words where they are deemed non-essential, and so “know” becomes “knw” in a process playfully referred to as “disemvowelling”. And as seen in this digital trace, message shortening can also be based on phonetic substitution such as “wat” for what, “n” gets substituted for “and” and “really” gets abbreviated to “realy”. It seems odd to use “n” when this would use no more characters than writing “&” however the difference is in the number of key presses involved on most mobile phones. Sometimes a capital is substituted for the pronunciation of a letter, sometimes a number will be substituted where phonetics might shorten the written word, and so NE1 or ne1 might be read as anyone. Given the idiosyncratic writing a contextual derivation of meaning is made. Making meaning of what is said or written is a part of any conversation, active listening where meaning is conveyed back to a person such that they feel heard and understood is part of the work of counselling, making meaning from idiosyncratic language compounds the difficulties involved.

Concern for brevity is read in alterations to punctuation where a gap between words may be omitted, apostrophes not inserted, periods not followed by gaps, commas neglected. But neglect may be too strong a word. These multiple movements with the written text reflect the contained space as important. And in conveying meaning not only is some punctuation omitted, other punctuation is purposefully repeated. To convey urgency the exclamation is repeated, the use of capitalisation similarly used to convey importance.

There is nothing in the message that is superfluous. Despite “Hae” being added, when there is no obvious need to grab the reader’s attention. Despite the addition of “um” in a written format where there is no pressure to keep talking through the gaps when one might be thinking. And despite the use of three exclamation marks and the emoticon, in the form of a sad face, that might appear unnecessary given the words expressed. It might be read that the message could be conveyed more succinctly, yet it wasn’t. The message crafted conveys emotion and urgency as well as mere words. The message is clear: I’m not happy. I don’t want to cut myself. I’m not good at asking for help, but please, Help!

This particular message is 107 characters (including spaces). There was room for “correct” spelling and for conventional grammar. But in the story being told, correctness and conforming provide another layer to the distress expressed and a syntactical approach misses the point. In saying “Hae um I dnt reail knw wat to say but um” a further message can be read: “go gently, here is someone who struggles with what they have to say”. This is not a Wordle of words, no random association, but a plea to be “heard” and to be engaged with on one’s own terms.

I am conscious that in analysing the syntax, a life could bleed out. The counsellor responding does not enter into formal syntactical analysis, they attend to the meaning discerned as a plea for help and inside of a minute a message is crafted and a reply sent.

[Digital trace of counselling text sent by Youthline, November 2007]



This conversation occurs the first morning I work in the hub, shadowing the work of Anthea. Anthea works part-time at Youthline as triage. Triage includes being a

first point of contact in answering helpline calls, responding to emails and texts, and extends to providing counselling or referring callers to other counsellors. Anthea talks with me during her “down” times in the hub. Our conversations occur in fits and starts around her taking calls, responding to texts, and being available to others in the organization.

[Interview notes, Anthea, Triage counsellor, November 2007]

“[Counselling] is helping to find voice...reaching out; a person might start with text, and progress to other options, email, phone, face-to-face... The average is two to three texts, acknowledging what’s said, validating the person, and coming from a strength-based approach... You are affirming and reflecting, building the connection... trying to match similar language.”

The digital trace of counselling text sent by Youthline can be mapped against the features Anthea identifies as important. There is deliberate use of the abbreviated language that featured in the original text received, a strategic use of matching to assist in establishing rapport. The person is affirmed for reaching out, “Hi there, its gr8 that u hav txt us”. This is followed by acknowledgment of their concern, “sounds like there r some thngs u mite wnt 2 talk about.” The response affirms the person for having made contact demonstrating a strength-based orientation to the counselling and provides an invitation to talk further. Active listening might be assumed in the acknowledgement of there being concerns to talk through. These are discernable communication skills common in counselling scenarios. Simultaneously there is also a significant challenge to the art of counselling; what happens to counselling practice premised when a client is neither seen nor heard? How does counselling occur in the contained space of a text message?

[Interview notes, Anthea, Triage counsellor, November 2007]

“Not everyone can contain a texter, a collective response is needed as otherwise callers manipulate the counsellors.”

The analogy of being contained, of being held in a supportive space of trust, empathy, positive regard, shatters for me. Being contained has more meanings, not only might the space to talk be smaller, but I find an approach to counselling

that is at odds with my own, where containment becomes constraining not so much of words but of the person counselled. A schism opens up for me. I am uncomfortable. Reflecting on my own Rogerian training I find it difficult to reconcile what seems a clash between respecting client choice and being judgemental in the sense of imposing a view on what the texter should be doing. I ask myself how can it be client-centred or strength-based when what the client wants, to text, is considered manipulating?

This is my first shift in the hub as a researcher and it is my first encounter with Anthea. It has been twenty years since I worked in Youthline's phone rooms, and although I teach telephone counselling skills for this organization, I am aware that my understanding of client-centred therapy may no longer be congruent with current practice. I ask Anthea about her approach to counselling and what it means to "contain a caller". Anthea tells me she takes a strength-based approach saying *"this is strength-based because it is encouraging the next step that the texter needs to take, it's strength-based because it gets them to the next step."* I attempt to suspend my beliefs on Rogerian counselling for the moment; I rationalise that respecting autonomy might be held as a point of tension with creating the conditions of autonomy. However, Anthea continues; *"They will try to hook you in"* and shows me the policy.

In Anthea's text response of 130 characters, there's a greeting, an affirmation of the person's strength in making contact, and a strategy is outlined for further support; phone Youthline to talk about this, here's the number, and it's free. The message is positive, and replied to within a minute. And there it is, at 10.5 counsellors are not to engage in-depth through text (see Figure 13).

The response "fits" the policy. Or more accurately, there are parts of the policy that can be called on substantiating particular but contested understandings of key words. Essentially contested concepts occur in the spaces of written documents seemingly without controversy, until called upon to substantiate practice. The policy and practice are congruent for Anthea.

10. EMAIL/TEXT COUNSELLING POLICY**10.1 Introduction**

Young people are high users of technology such as email and SMS text. Youthline's Urge site, email and text counselling services are a response to this identified trend. However, since communication via email/text is intrinsically non-verbal and non-visual, the traditional counselling method is somewhat impaired. Since workers are effectively 'blinded' by this, client safety must take a very high priority.

Because the nature of the medium presents multiple challenges to a client's right to confidentiality, specific procedures must be developed for enhanced privacy protection (for example emails may be forwarded to the wrong person and/or agency or left on the computer screen when the worker is away from the terminal).

10.2 Authorisation to Answer Emails and Texts

Approved solo counsellors may answer the text or email directly, while trainees responses must be moderated by a buddy before sending.

10.3 Confidentiality and Disclosure

Electronic transmission and storage of confidential information is to comply with Youthline's Confidentiality Policy (Standard 1. Paramount Protocol) and Youthline's Privacy Policy (Standard 14. Monitoring).

Email and text counselling requests will be received into the system and accessible to trained counsellors through YORA, with all identifiers such as phone number or email removed.

Client safety is paramount. In exceptional circumstances where someone is in immediate danger of serious harm to themselves or to others, Youthline reserves the right to disclose to the appropriate service relevant information which may be held about them without that persons consent.

10.4 Response Timing

Email enquiries shall be answered within 24 hours during weekdays and 48 hours over weekends. Text enquiries must aim to be replied to in 30 minutes.

10.5 Referral of Emailers / Texters

Counsellors should encourage texters and emailers to call the youth helpline, engage in face to face counselling or seek support from an appropriate referral. Counsellors are not to engage in in-depth conversation via text. After a maximum of five to six texts the counsellor should dis-engage from the text conversation, letting the caller know that they cannot continue to fully discuss the issue via text and that Youthline would be happy to support the caller more fully over the phone.

Where people are distressed, at high risk of harm or injury, or may require some form of specific assistance they shall be directed towards the Youthline Youth Help Line. Replies must include other options for seeking help and assistance.

Child, Youth and Family Services should be informed in cases of suspected abuse. The hub counsellor should consult with Clinical Services Manager or Triage before notifying Child, Youth & Family Services.

Counsellors should recommend that a client seek an appointment at a child and adolescent, or if appropriate, an adult mental health centre, if the text/email incorporates a suggestion of self harm. If the risk appears imminent, for example, the client has made plans to commit suicide; an urgent review by a senior experienced person needs to happen. Emails/Texts which indicate suicidal intent must be referred to the Clinical Services Manager or Coordinator.

In the event of imminent danger the Clinical Services Manager or Triage person can reveal the caller ID and pass the callers details on to the appropriate emergency service.

All possible steps should be taken to involve the client in the notification process. Safety dictates that the counsellor continue with the notification even if the client is resistant to the idea.

10.6 Short-term Use Only

Long-term use of email/text as a counselling medium should be discouraged in preference for verbal or face to face methods.

10.7 Strength-based Replies

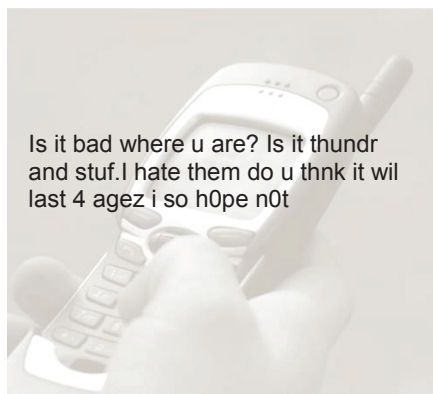
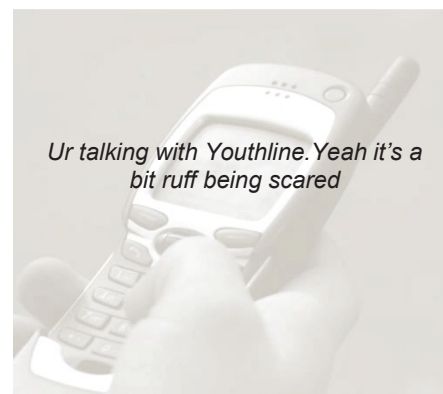
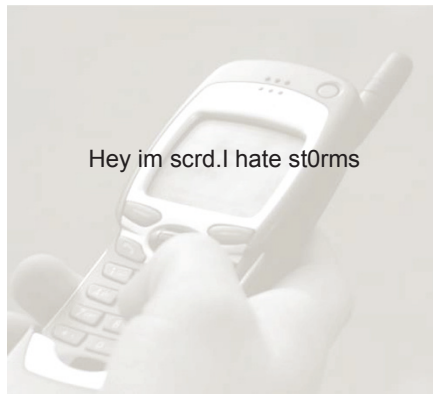
All email/text replies will have a strength-based focus, be non-judgemental and provide as much information as possible to present the client with choice and encourage self-direction. SMS Text enquiries will be limited to 160 characters or less.

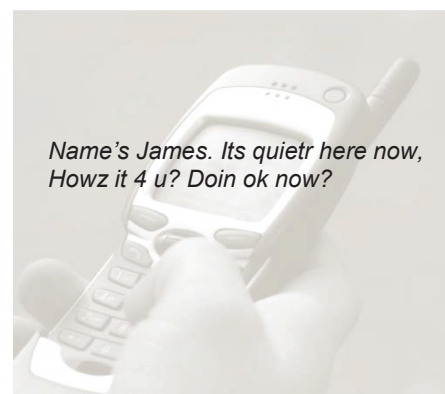
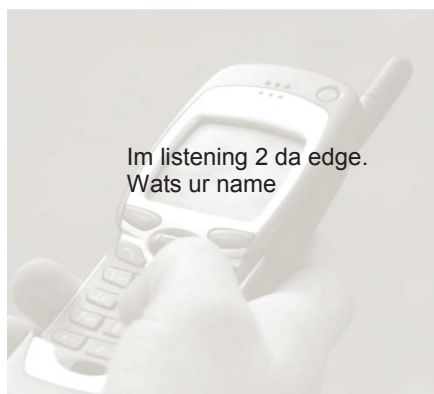
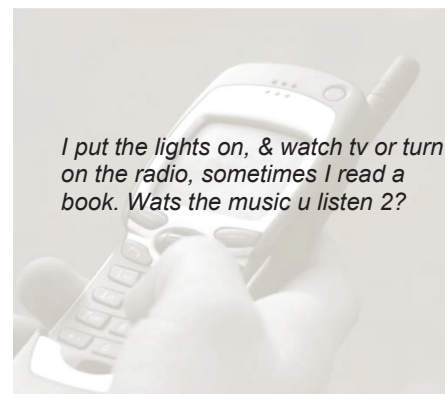
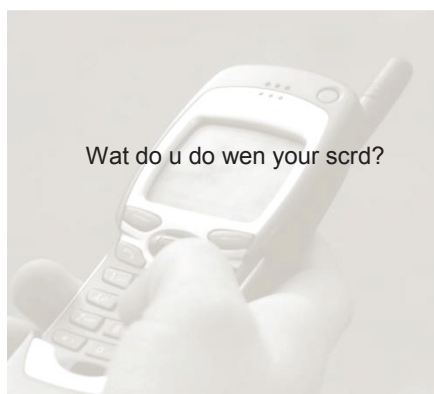
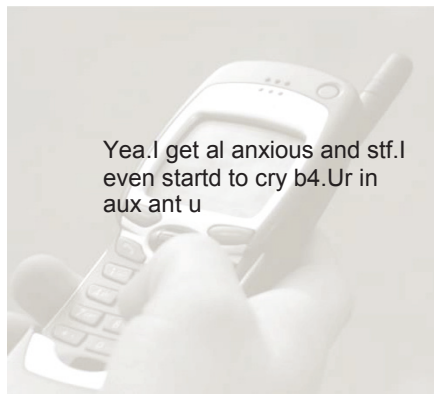
Figure 13. Email/Text Counselling Policy, Youthline, Auckland, April 2007.

My reality differs, and while I am not present to judge practice, I am aware of my own disquiet, unsettled by what a strength-based youth-centred service really entails.

The guidance provided by policy does not control practice. And nor do triage. While texts by counsellors in training are moderated, those by solo counsellors are not. What occurs inside of the therapeutic relationship relies on trust and this extends to trust in colleagues. While the policy appears to be very controlling, this control is negotiated in practice, in the relationships that occur conversation by conversation.

[Digital trace of counselling conversation. Texts sent to Youthline are on the left; text responses from Youthline are on the right and in italics. August 2007]







This counselling conversation is in apparent defiance of the policy, but as has been noted, there is acceptance for the expert judgement of an accredited solo counsellor. The accredited solo status means being able to send messages without these being moderated. James does not see triage as directing his work. He is aware of the policy but this is something he does not consider during the time he is texting. He responds, by bending the skills learned in phone counselling to the written format. The patterns laid down in his prior experiences as a counsellor are adapted to a written format; he acknowledges the person's feelings, reflects back the strengths he sees them as having, and writes his responses matching the type of language the client uses. Given the information provided, James responds supportively, and the response of the young person appears to endorse this. For James counselling is "being there" for someone.

The traces of counselling conversations remain visible on YORA. They also remain visible on the walls in donated artwork (see Figure 14). These are not inactive, when read by others they continue to have influence. Other counsellors have these conversations as close as their fingertips when providing text counselling, referring to them as a pool of ideas to draw on, a resource demonstrating how others negotiate the textual space. Repeated phrases become familiar as counsellors turn to each other and to the digital traces for assistance. The policy tells people about what they can, must, and must not do, but it does not teach counselling. It does not tell of counselling practice "in the moment". The harshness of policy is not sought for guidance in improving practice. And the policy does not police itself.



Figure 14. No Longer Afraid of the Dark. This painting is located in the hub, Youthline Auckland, providing a readily accessible visual reminder of the work undertaken. Reproduced with permission of artist, Cameron Michael (Michael, n.d.) (see Appendix C).

Negotiating with the message bearer

The real is not one thing among others but rather gradients of resistance. There is no difference between the “real” and the “unreal”, the “real” and the “possible”, the real and the “imaginary.” Rather, there are all the differences experienced between those that resist for long and those that do not, those that resist courageously and those that do not, those that know how to ally or isolate themselves and those that do not. (Latour, 1998, p. 159)

Moph³⁰ is somewhat pedantic, and inflicts fastidious ways of relating on those s/he works with. Moph requires messages to be packaged inside of specific constraints, his/her uncompromising demands have others faithfully accommodating. S/he is strict with rules that are specific and enforced. S/he

³⁰ I am choosing to foster a regard for the mobile phone as an actor in this techno-socio-political story. Naming the mobile phone is a strategy prompting the reader to perceive this entity as an actor with influence. Moph is of indeterminate sex and is also referred to as s/he or him/her.

prescribes the shape of messages borne: 160 characters or less. S/he ignores messages incorrectly packaged and imposes a 100% financial penalty on those who exceed this.

S/he doesn't negotiate; the title of this section is a misnomer. Those interacting with Moph negotiate the requirements. They ensure s/he is well cared for. The demands of life; of being protected, fed and watered, are reinterpreted as keeping him/her dry, providing energy supplies, and meeting ongoing financial demands so s/he can fulfil his/her duties that involve either payment in advance for services rendered or a more formal contract made on an annual basis with those s/he has established business contracts with. Failure to adhere to these demands results in failed message delivery. Those interacting with Moph comply.

A textual format alters both the content and process of what is said. As Sproull and Kiesler (1991) had noted in their analysis of emails and comments on online auction sites such as e-bay, textual relating tends toward exaggeration of emotional expression. Such exaggerated forms of emotional expression include acronyms such as lol (laughing out loud) or ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing). Such expressions are also present in the text artefacts of counselling interactions. There are also abbreviations being used that mark surprise and or annoyance without being too graphic, such as a symbolic string of letters for common expressions such as "wtf" or with symbols used such as "what the f#ck". Swearing, and formats where swearing is suggested, are common in texts received, but feature infrequently in texts sent by Youthline counsellors. Idioms local to New Zealand are also evident with "sup" for "what's up". Readers and writers of text speak, or "txtspk", become adept at deciphering and accepting variations, but assisting with this is a list of common txtspk on the wall of the phone rooms that can be referred to when a message is ambiguous. Txtspk is incredibly fluid and is associated with high tolerance for variation by those writing and deciphering a message.

[Interview notes, Charlotte, counsellor, February 2008]

“You don’t have to know how to spell, you expect it [text messaging] to be poorly constructed.”

The fluidity of text language also extends to emoticons, where a text message in the absence of body language might be complemented with a visual indicator to portray mood. As with all body language there is also diversity in how this might be expressed. Happiness emoticons in a western world tend to be variations on a colon and bracket representing eyes and a smiling mouth written as :) or ☺ when auto-formatting occurs. Emoticons that suggest sadness include :(or ☹ or =(and ;(where the equal sign or semi-colon is indicative of crying. According to Yukia, Madduxb and Masudac (2007) Asian emoticons place more emphasis on the eyes and the facial shape rather than the mouth as depicted by (^ ^) being an Asian emoticon for happiness, a scrunched up face is indicated by (> <) and crying as (T T) or (; ;) These variations occur less frequently in the messages received at Youthline, possibly reflecting the smaller percentage of the general population in New Zealand who are Asian or who use Asian emoticons. Talking with one young person who frequently uses Asian emoticons, she describes her use in terms of anticipating what the person she is sending the message to is likely to understand. Her use of emoticons also is subject to being reshaped for the small space; in a texted message the parenthesis or bracket shaping a face risks being relegated as non-essential, as are gaps between the characters, and with fewer key presses, these symbols become ^^ or >< or TT.

[Interview notes, Anthea (Triage counsellor), November 2007]

I asked Anthea about the use of emoticons.

Anthea tells me of an unpleasant side of texting: hoax messages and texts for sexual gratification. In reviewing a texting interaction where the conversation deteriorated into sexual gratification, she identified how a texter groomed the counsellor involved. The conversation became increasingly sexually explicit and offensive. In a retrospective review of the texted conversation she believes the use of an emoticon wink ;) by the counsellor contributed an air of innuendo and so advises new counsellors not to use them.

Symbolic textual representations are not new. Predating text messaging by at least 100 years were visual teasers of meaning: swalk (sealed with a loving kiss) and xxx for kisses. And “smiley faces” were iconic in the 1970’s for have a nice day. Language and textual representation do not stand still, but as noted by media theorists (such as M. McLuhan, 1964; Meyrowitz, 1998; Sproull & Kiesler, 1991) the medium has influence and ways of communicating alter. What is distinctive in these textual encounters is the saturation of txtspk and the impact this has for counselling.

Of 6,415 texts received by Youthline between 1/11/07 and 28/5/08, txtspk is present in 91% of these messages, with 40% of words being altered. This is considerably different to the data pointed to by British linguist David Crystal (2008a, 2008b) where he identified txtspk occurred in only 10% of messages. And is also significantly different to a Norwegian study by Ling (2005) where txtspk was present in 6% of messages. Given the extent of txtspk utilised by those contacting Youthline, further investigation is warranted. Speculating on the difference, this statistic may suggest that New Zealanders make greater use of txtspk, it may reflect the young age group that Youthline targets, it may also be that young people who are distressed use more txtspk reflecting distress or urgency in what is being said.

What I draw attention to here, is that altering how things are said alters the counselling conversation. Not only is there a limitation on how much can be conveyed inside of one message, but also what is conveyed is different. In a spoken conversation mood is also read from what is seen in body language and the paralinguistics cues of volume, pitch and speed of voice. Congruence between what is said, and how it is said, is a focal point in both face-to-face and telephone counselling. In texting, how things are said or interpreted remains fluid. There is acceptance of poor construction, accidental errors on keypad use, use of emoticons that may exaggerate or mask the emotional state. While there is acceptance that a multitude of things may be occurring, inferences still get made.

On the mobile phone sending a text message involves significant work. Talking would be faster, a smile faster still. To establish a wink on my Sony-Ericson

mobile phone involves 9 key presses of the number 1 keypad to obtain a semicolon and a further 11 key presses to obtain a closing bracket, the more recent establishment of predictive text³¹ enables a wink in three key strikes. On the QWERTY³² keyboard used by Youthline counsellors to respond to text messages, it takes two.

There is work undertaken crafting a message that suggests playfulness with the medium rather than illiteracy; in writing “yup” there is less physical effort than writing “yes”. “Yup” only takes 6 key-strikes on a mobile phone, yes takes “9”. In the hub a QWERTY keyboard is used, so there is no labour saving, and “yup” still gets used. I talk with my 17 year old daughter, Sarah, about her use of txtspk. Sarah tells me she writes skool and kool because the k is closer to the “ool” on a QWERTY keyboard, and on a mobile involves fewer key presses. Far from being illiterate this describes deliberate intent. Sarah tells me only old people use predictive text, by implication there is youthfulness in misspelling. Anthea believes it helps her “look cool”, that being invisible has advantages for using the language conventions of clients and building rapport.

I notice that messages get shortened even when well within the 160 characters the medium allows for. YORA automatically brings up a character count on the computer so there is no need to guess whether it’s too long or needs shortening. YORA is programmed so as not to send a message longer than 160 characters, and a default position is set up that prevents additional messages from being sent. Anthea explains one text per incoming text is associated with costs: an SMS message longer than 160 characters is identified as comprising of two messages, this effectively doubles sending costs. Cost containment is important for this not-for-profit organization. Bypassing the default position with YORA is possible with triage assistance; however, I notice that brevity in messages, even when not

³¹ Predictive text is also called auto-finish or auto-complete and may be symbolised by a T9 icon on some mobile phones. This function is not available on all mobile phones. During the time of this study QWERTY keyboards for mobiles become increasingly popular, but typically these are significantly more expensive.

³² QWERTY is the keyboard layout used most commonly on typewriters, computer keyboards, and some mobile phones. The name comes from the first six letters, or keys, appearing in the top left row of letters on the keyboard.

required, is a convention adhered to: you don't have to, but common practice is, be brief, shorten, k?

This is an incredibly odd way to negotiate a counselling interaction. It is new for counselling to be contained or costed inside of 160 character bite sized transactions. Counselling is not usually considered as a transaction at all. Similarly, a staccato of short bursts, approximately equal and opposite is also an unusual pattern in counselling conversations. Counselling is being translated here and its form altered.

Specific to counselling via the very small screen of a mobile phone, is the apparent paradox of saying more with less; of saying things using abbreviated words or with symbols, of saying things without preamble, of interactions involving short staccato bursts of sentences. The initiating interaction tends to be immediate, abrupt, and challenging, lacking in the social niceties of establishing relationship because it doesn't need to. It doesn't need to, not because the 'relationship' doesn't exist, it clearly does, but because building of rapport is integral to each and every interchange rather than being a discreet step in the counselling conversation. With texting if someone doesn't want to engage further, there are no visual or auditory cues, a person just stops engaging. There is no social cost to negotiate. The minimum and sufficient conditions for establishing a working therapeutic relationship based on trust occur within every sentence, tested and altered in a medium privileging brevity. The result I observed in practice is of counsellors deliberating over every response much more than when providing conventional telephone counselling. The spacing between messages allows for second opinions to be sought with discussions between counsellors of how a statement might be perceived before it is sent. I too am drawn into conversations regarding how a particular message might be construed. The ambiguity involved with fewer words is something the counsellors take seriously and consciously engage with. The fears espoused are about how to ensure counselling by text remains supportive and not abrupt, and how choices continue to be fostered rather than directed. Counsellors describe the new format is pushing them toward questions and answers. The brevity of space seems to push against

the client being aided in finding their own solutions to problems and counsellors consciously push back against this.

[Interview notes, John, Mentor supervisor, March 2009]

"I would hate it to become questions and answers but the short space, it's harder to stay with the process. [With texting] it's easier to give answers; more content focused, less feeling centred. Referrals become more common [rather than] the compassionate role. I would hate for us to go there - teenagers always being told what to do. And Youthline was always about helping them find answers to their own problems. The challenge is how to include emotional literacy; how to name and express feelings... There's challenge in how to include the Rogerian in text."

Tracing the strict message shaping demands of Moph leads to happenstance. The incredible rate of uptake of texting came as a surprise even to those inside of mobile network industries. As described by Cur Stutterheim (Chief Executive Officer of CMG, a consortium of Nordic telecommunication companies in the 1990s):

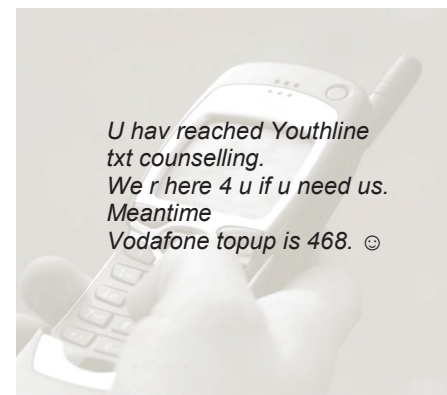
It started as a message service, allowing operators to inform all their own customers about things such as problems with the network. When we created SMS (Short Messaging Service) it was not really meant to communicate from consumer to consumer and certainly not meant to become the main channel which the younger generation would use to communicate with each other. (Wray, 2002, para. 3)

The development of SMS was as a back channel application for mobile network employees to communicate with each other even when the mobile was turned off or when outside of range (Milian, 2009). It was not, at least initially, intended that customers of service providers would be texting each other. It was not meant to evolve into the preferred means of communications for young people in New Zealand, or elsewhere. And it certainly was never anticipated that texting would become a preferred means through which young people initiate counselling conversations. The shape of a mobile phone was not made for this; not the small screen; not the 160 character message limit; not the numeric keyboard performing

an alphabet. Such changes occur nevertheless, and re/design does occur, but only in the middle of things, in acts of re/shaping.

I am analysing the messages sent to Youthline in November 2007, when threads of repeated letters appear in the digital trace. The counsellors I talk with describe times of being baffled by idiosyncratic texts. Some acronyms only have meaning in context, “lol for example, might mean “lots of love” or “laugh out loud”, but what of the string of letters that come in that do not appear to make any meaning?

[Digital trace of consecutive texts sent and received, Youthline, November 2007]



Miriam explains that IOU makes sense when said aloud, a strategy that sometimes helps with the phonetic spellings common to txtspk. A further strategy involves making sense in association: when associated with IOU, Bal becomes an abbreviation of balance. These acronyms appears frequently in texts to Youthline and “bla” is probably a misspelling. Vodafone provides a support service to its prepay customers where it is possible to borrow \$5.00 of credit to top up a prepay account. Texting IOU on the Vodafone network to 468 provides an advance of \$5.00 on that mobile phone. The new, free texting number for Youthline is 234. However, knowing a contact number involves work in memorising or saving the contact to a mobile phone’s memory or SIM card. Reliance on saved numbers makes memorising numbers redundant, and sometimes a guess is good enough. In the hub, wrong number text messages are replied to with a response involving helpful advice while also advertising Youthline’s service.

Working with things more and less; absence and presence

I find it unsettling seeing a huddle of counsellors involved with one counselling interaction. I am used to counselling being a private and intimate interaction and imagine that those texting Youthline imagine there is one person reading their message. Texting, as with every written medium, masks who is and isn't involved, but is perhaps best illustrated by Steiners's (1993) iconic "On the internet no-one knows you're a dog" cartoon (see Figure 15).



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Figure 15. Iconic cartoon from The New Yorker collection by Peter Steiner (1993) captures identity ambiguity on the internet. (Used with permission, see Appendix Di and Dii). © The New Yorker Collection 1993 Peter Steiner from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

The masking extends to both counsellor and client. A medium constrained by 160 characters, and where financial costs are applied for going beyond this limit, discourages explanations. Space is not given over to saying, “I’m just taking over from X, but I can see everything that has transpired so far in all text conversations from this mobile phone number so you don’t have to update me” or, alternately, “I’m just going to show your text to another counsellor, I think they might know more about Y, is that alright with you?” Similarly, those who text in don’t usually say “me and my group of friends were wondering about how to manage...” or “hey my friend is now brave enough to be talking with you directly so I will just hand the phone over”. The space constraint discourages mentioning that a conversation may involve multiple persons.

The regular response that counsellors of this organization had to a phone call was with a greeting such as “*Hi you’ve reached Youthline, (insert counsellors name) speaking.*” In contrast, text counselling conversations tend to be with the organization rather than a specific counsellor. The patterns of relating that this organization had made use of to encourage intimacy are altered. As the counselling session may progress across hours, throughout the day, and even reconvene on subsequent days, a semblance of seamlessness is created out of the invisibility.

There is however a paradox associated with the quietness and apparent invisibility, for there is permanence in digital traces.

[Interview notes, Stephen, Youthline CEO, March 2008]

“[Text counselling] lends to teaching moments. There’s an opportunity for texts to be reviewed by the counsellor and or a more senior counsellor before it is sent, there is accountability in providing a quality service.”

While Stephen links the digital traces of text counselling to the positive connotations associated with teaching moments, there is also consideration for accountability and quality. These factors may also be perceived as surveillance and are associated with the risk profile for the service.

[Interview notes, Erin, Triage counsellor, August 2008]

"If I make a mistake, it's there, if they save them on their phones.

If parents intervene will it cause the young person problems?

The conversation is visible. I am cautious definitely; they might show it [the text] to someone else. Texting occurs in hope that its confidential, but if the issues are with the parents, and I say something like one sided... mmm, so I try to expand the point of view, and not to look biased, or anti-parent. You only ever get one side of it. I wonder what it does to the family unit. What the impact is on the family as a whole? Some young people don't want intervention and in our policy, paramount, is safety. Intervention once done is out of our hands. That's the thing; it's taken to a point where it cuts across their autonomy....

The protocol for a serious text is that we offer crisis numbers for them to gain help. If they refuse, we ask them to call us. If they are unwilling, we ask for their number ...we let them know we can bring up their number. We will leave them a message if they do not answer saying we take them seriously and will be calling the police. Some then back out. Then the police are involved, but [the texter] is informed all the way."

The paradox of absent presence is seen with text-based counselling being conceived of as private but where there is potential for messages to be made public. This is a concern for both counsellors and for the organization. There is increased awareness of accountability and responsibility particularly when working with fewer cues.

[Interview notes, Liz, counsellor, August 2008]

"Sometimes the text is quite complex and comes in with multiple issues, and I feel like you have to give a very superficial answer, and you don't know what emotional state they are in 'cause its very hard to tell that from written language. I like to have as much information as possible to work out strategically how I am going to approach it and you don't know if they're serious or not... and it's a bit irritating if you don't know if they are using humour in saying something real, or being complete idiots, or they don't realise how funny they are sounding, or it's quite a real thing, who knows. You can't use your instincts as much, I'm really an intuitive person but I feel like I'm definitely working below my capacity in those things. I'm also good at my written language so I am good at responding when carefully constructing where its ambiguous, when talking about a

partner, I don't know if they are gay straight, male female, I don't make assumptions. You do get young people testing the water, taking the piss probably but maybe they do have real issues as well. I think it's easier for hoax texts as the person's not as vulnerable. I think it's easier to send hoax texts when you don't actually have to hear the voice of the other person at the other end...and amazing also, because calls also go straight to the heart of matter....

It's a little bit of a worry [text counselling] because if they are young you don't know, so you can be responding as if the person was well into their teens when they might be ten or eleven and might be sounding very natural and affirming of sexual activity assuming they're old enough to do that but colluding with activity that's not really appropriate for age. If they sounded young on the phones, we would have probably found a way of asking that. So what's texted back is more cautious because if you've got a ten year old saying my boyfriend wants to have sex with me that's very different to an eighteen year old.

My hope [with texting] is that if there are people out there who are not very articulate, and aren't very good at doing face-to-face stuff that they will be able to approach this while they would probably never be able to turn up face-to-face and they can't tell a story of what happened to them... so it's a beginning, a socialisation programme.

I find it easier to leave text for others, if the phone rings, it's what I trained for, it's insistent. The text or the email, it's very easy to let others take them. At the same time text-based counselling is quite good for training new counsellors though, if the contents difficult they can leave it for someone else too, you couldn't do that on the phones.

The disembodiment that occurred with phone counselling is different to the disembodiment that occurs with text counselling. What appeared to make phone counselling attractive to young people, its anonymity, its ease of access, is potentiated with text counselling. Meantime, the disembodiment for those providing counselling results in work with fewer cues. Who is present in a texting conversation is an unknown; young, old, male, female, even the number of people present can only be inferred from what is shared. Removing voice removes paralinguistic cues to age, gender, urgency and distress. Very real concerns are raised: how to answer a question about sex having no idea of a person's age risks the counsellor and the organization being seen as complicit in illegal activity. There is potential for threads of conversations to become front-page news:

“Counsellor tells child age 10, to have sex when they feel ready”. Working with fewer cues increases risk of getting it wrong. The use of text messaging therefore alters the performance of counselling. Text counselling struggles in the presence of things more and less, absence and presence. These are not polar opposites. There is both more and less risk; there is absence but perhaps the presence of contact is only made because of the heightened sense of invisibility associated with also being inaudible.

The distancing that occurs with texting affords a buffering zone where there is no “loss of face”, the distance allows for control over what is expressed, leading to some things being expressed that otherwise would not be said at all.

[Interview notes, Dylan, counsellor, December 2007]

“I can text things I couldn’t say, that I wouldn’t dream of saying to a real person.”

Dylan is a staff member at Youthline. He owns that texting is his “first choice” in opening emotional conversations, with friends and particularly where intimacy is sought and there is risk of rejection. He describes texting as allowing him to compose what he would say, review it, send it, and not have to be instantly available on receiving a response. Texting affords him time for composure. On discussing that others have said it’s not a medium for managing emotions, he smiles shyly and tells me he has been managing his emotional life with the addition of texting for five years; all of his adult life. He struggles with the policy of five texts and that’s all, describing this policy as not being his choice.

He tells me of the hardest call he ever had, of listening to someone cry for an hour and of this caller not being able to talk in words. It was an uncomfortable time for him, frustrating and distressing in not knowing what was going on for so long. He could be there for someone, but he provides the example as a demonstration of texting being a connection that does not require voice.

Absent presence allows for some things to be said according to Dylan, and for some things not to be said according to Liz. They are both right. This is a point of tension, one to be approached with care rather than collapsed to binaries of right or wrong.

A pocket full of affirmations

I asked Megalyn, a young person who has used Youthline's texting service, of the texts she had sent and received and what she did with them.

[Interview notes, Megalyn, August 2009]

"I texted Youthline months ago. And I didn't delete them; I looked at them even the next day. They're still there, on my SIM card. I wanted to keep them, getting them felt extremely good. There were about six messages back and forth. Even though my old phone broke, I know they are still on my SIM card so they're still there. I got rid of the ones I texted in to Youthline, I didn't need a reminder of my own words. Also I had said things like about my Dad, and I did think about what if my boyfriend looked at this and I would have been embarrassed. So I did delete those, so you couldn't put the whole conversation together.

I value anonymity and I take precautions in not identifying friends I might be talking about. It's something all my friends have learnt to do. We learned not to, not formally, just as friends, we don't talk about people by name. The messages I got said things like 'with this situation' rather than 'with your dad'. I liked it that Youthline didn't make me identifiable.

... The best message I still remember getting, it wasn't a suggestion, though it was good to get some of those too. That's why I haven't cleared them off. They might be useful again.

One text message really triggered me; I started bawling my eyes out. As each feeling welled up I felt understood.

I would do it again in a heartbeat.

The best message was connected to how I felt, you feel the support coming is concrete, it wasn't a suggestion, it was affirming of me."

Megalyn describes the work of actively keeping messages. It would have been easier to "delete all" every time her phone informed her its memory was full, but she chose to save these messages. They provide a resource for possible future troubles; affirmations of her strengths. The messages were effective, and continue to be effective, they stay with her.

During this conversation she shared her concerns of privacy. Even though the messages were disjointed and separated in lists of incoming and outgoing messages, the whole conversation could have been put together creating a potential for embarrassment were anyone else to access her phone. Megalyn tells me that it was to avoid this risk that she deleted the outgoing messages, *“I don’t need a reminder of my own words”*. The incoming messages she keeps, providing a talisman to what feels good.

It’s in your pocket, it’s where you are

[Interview notes, Jasmine and Stephen, a conversation in the *wharekai* adjacent to the *wharenuī* of Te Puea Marae,³³ July 09]

Stephen calls to me saying, *“Hey, Ailsa, come over here, there’s someone I want you to meet. Jasmine, this is Ailsa, she’s doing research at Youthline on text messaging.”*

Jasmine mostly looks at the table but occasionally her eyes flick up checking out the surroundings. She looks about 16 years of age.

We negotiate a conversation, it adds to Jasmine’s comfort to have Stephen present and to stay in the open space of the *wharekai* amidst the milling of people catching up with each other over tea and coffee. The space is important to this conversation, there is openness amidst the noise and milling of others. Oddly, the open space in which we have this conversation helps to contain the intensity of the conversation.

Jasmine talks with me about her use of Youthline’s services. She agrees to talk of her experience of texting Youthline, of what it is like to text in and to receive texts back. A few minutes pass with stilted conversation. I’m conscious of how little she talks, of my own tendency to want to fill gaps. It’s not exactly shyness on her part, but I sense she doesn’t like being the centre of attention. It’s not exactly comfortable on my part either, I am conscious of her not knowing me. Entering into this conversation gently, we talk about mobile phones. Stephen’s mobile is new and shiny, as well as being internet and email capable, and we commiserate that his work wouldn’t let him have an iPhone. I tell him I want an iPhone so I can make the text font bigger, I get my mobile phone out and compare text font size. The font size looks about the same. My mobile looks well used, it’s battered; handbags do that to a phone. I explain that I like having a phone that I

³³ The *wharekai* is the eating space next to the *wharenuī*, or meeting room. In Māori protocol the *wharenuī* is considered a sacred space and while food is considered an important part of the rituals of greetings and of inclusion, it occurs in its own space.

don't have to be careful of. I explain that it's one of my family's cast-offs; I get what they reject. Jasmine pulls her mobile out of her pocket. Lighting up at the same rate as her mobile, she flicks off the hair-tie she uses to keep the flip top attached, the phone doesn't fall apart, it wouldn't dare, it's strengthened by multiple layers of pink nailpolish and Twink.³⁴ *"It's a Telecom prepay"* she tells me. I told her mine's prepay too but with Vodafone. Jasmine says *"where I live everyone's with Telecom but Auckland's mostly Vodafone, it's a pain, it costs more when you text them."*

To Jasmine, costs are important. Calls cost more than texts, and with a Telecom prepay she takes the "text extra" option of 1500 texts for \$18.00 each month. *"When this maxes out, I top up for 'bout \$5.00."* Maxing out the text capability would involve sending an average of 50 texts a day. To my mind this seems like a lot of texts, but I review my assumption when I learn it's the primary way of keeping connected to someone your parents dislike.

When Jasmine texted Youthline, it was on this mobile. She always has it with her, and its battered and personalized is testament to this. Following a disagreement with her Mum she walked out. It was late at night, and in a rough area; there are no streetlights, there are several kilometres between houses, and texting is more reliable than calling because of the mountains. Texting was a way to get help, and Youthline helped. She explains how texting was to her the obvious option. "Kids just wanna text, they don't want to use the home phone, and the mobile phone it's in your pocket, it's where you are.... kids just wanna text, they don't want to use the home phone, it's not in your pocket, you don't have a computer in your pocket, and the mobile phone it's in your pocket, it's where you are."

Jasmine's statement "it's where you are", reflects the normalcy for her of reaching for her mobile. A landline was not an option for her, a mobile phone provides her with privacy that a home based phone or computer could not. She has possession of the means of communicating that affords her both privacy and mobility. The repeated statement of a mobile phone being "where you are", suggests they are inseparable. However, this is not just about what accompanies her, her mobile phone provides the space from which she speaks: her being, her freedom of movement, privacy and voice are entwined with this object.

³⁴ Most commonly used term in New Zealand for correction fluid.

In contrast to Jasmine's experience, Megalyn has a choice about where, and when, as well as how.

[Interview with Megalyn, August 2009]

"I waited till I was home and went to my room. I could have used a landline, I've got one in my room, and a computer, and first thing I reach for is my mobile. I've all the technology available but I texted. There were spaces between response got and given. I find that helpful especially if a tense issue for example with [a] boyfriend. I prefer it when I can text and read it and reread it, even the next day. The text format prevents [me] going round in circles, which would have been more distressing to me. Text allowed for my thought processing, having breaks, I felt in control of how much I said and when I said it. They would reply and I could read it when [I was] ready. I was the one at the centre of it. I was the client and it felt really good."

Choice is a difficult concept. The means of making contact appear to be fully within control, but choices are also shaped. There is choice in as much as a hinterland of possibility provides some resources and not others; certain activities become more and less available than others. In addition, grooves have formed, particular paths or actions are more and less likely with well-established ways of relating being selected. And, in actions, further choices are made both more and less likely.

The first thing I reach for

I am not yet among the powers that be. I am only a light breath, a feather drifting with the winds, a murmur in an engineer's ear, a wasp to be flicked impatiently away, an attractive idea that flits from seminar to colloquium to investigatory body to research report... My story is told in words and drawings; it is not yet seen in hard type... Chase away the people and I return to an inert state. Bring back the people and I am aroused again, but my life belongs to the engineers who are pushing me, pulling me, repairing me, deciding about me, cursing me, steering me. (Latour, 1996a, p. 123)

Latour, in giving voice to the entity that was Aramis, voices the experience of an entity that struggles for life. In substituting “myriad actors” for “engineers” he might have been talking of new practice. This new practice of text counselling is no different, to be sustained it requires a range of actors.

Recall the message shared by Jasmine?

“It’s in your pocket, it’s where you are.”

How does it get there? I trace the relationships that evolved between people and things that makes the mobile such an attractive and preferred option even when as Megalyn said, *“I could have used a landline, I’ve got one in my room, and a computer, and first thing I reach for is my mobile... all the technology available but I texted.”*

In international studies, Jan Chipchase found that regardless of gender or ethnicity, when a mobile phone is owned, then it is among the top three things people choose to carry with them: keys, money, mobile phone (Palmer, 2008). Mobile phone use in New Zealand is extremely prevalent. For the age group 15-19 year-olds 89% had a mobile phone in 2006; rising to 92% in 2009. For 20-24 year-olds the increase was from 92% in 2006 to 94% in 2009 (Statistics New Zealand, 2009). By 2010 mobile phone saturation, being the number of phone contracts as a percentage compared with the entire population, has risen to 108% (Commerce Commission New Zealand, 2011b).

It is difficult to compare these statistics with other countries as the data has been gathered differently, at different times, and with different age groups, but to provide a point of contrast:

- USA: 75% of teens (12–17 year-olds) and 96% of 18–29 year-olds have a mobile phone (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010, April 20).
- Australia: 78% of teens (14–17 year-olds), 92% of 18–24 year olds, and 95% of 25–34 year olds have a mobile phone (Australia Communications and Media Authority, 2009).

That there are more contracts for mobile phones than people in New Zealand, prompts the question: what is going on that people have more than one phone and more than one contract?

In New Zealand prepay plans³⁵ were introduced in 1998 and are the commonest form of connection used by young people (Mishra, Ryan, & Howell, 2004). New Zealand has also been consistently more expensive for making calls on mobile phones than in either the USA or Australia, making cost containment a significant factor in how mobile phones are then used (Commerce Commission New Zealand, 2011b). In 2006, the cost of a mobile phone call on Vodafone prepay Anytime plan or Telecom's Anytime Go Prepaid plan, is 89 cents a minute and twenty cents for sending a text message.³⁶ A ruling by the Commerce Commission 2011 deems these costs, that are higher than almost all other OECD countries, unacceptable (Commerce Commission New Zealand, 2011b). The Commerce Commission surmises that high costs contribute significantly to the comparatively low use of mobile phones for making calls, and comparatively high rates of text messaging. They also suggest high costs contribute to the high number of active mobile phone contracts per head of population, with some people owning two phones to avoid financial penalties associated with crossing networks.

At the time of this study, there are two major mobile network providers, Telecom and Vodafone. Both have shop signage and websites presenting heavily discounted mobile phones as inducement for entering into contractual agreements. It's not surprising that the service providers will position their service alongside the shiny and new; the mobile phone is of little value without a mobile service provider and these contracts generate ongoing sources of revenue. However, it is seductive stories of being loved, wanted, needed, befriended, which place the mobile phone, and apparently *your world* in your pocket.

³⁵ Prepay plans are also called 'pay as you go' in the USA.

³⁶ To compare costs between countries and over time the istarts website <http://www.istart.co.nz/index/HM20/PC0/PVC197/EX245/AR28720>. calculates the cost of a five minute mobile call on either Telecom or Vodafone prepay network plans as \$4.45 and given the 2006 New Zealand adult minimal wage after tax being \$8.26 an hour, this equates with having to work 32 minutes to pay for a five minute prepay call.

In a Vodafone advertisement (see Figure 16) a young man about to leave an apartment, dresses, picks up his wallet and keys and packs a map of the world into his pocket. His laptop computer is also surprisingly amenable to the folding treatment, followed by the flatscreen television, and the CD collection; these all fit in his front jeans pocket. By implication one leaves home with the necessary items, wallet, keys and other essentials. Just as he's about to leave he turns back, returning to the room for his sleeping girlfriend. He proceeds to lift her, folding her also as if a cardboard construction and following successively smaller and smaller folds she fits into his pocket. When out on a grey looking street, he takes his mobile out of his pocket and at the touch of a button she appears blowing him a kiss from the screen of the phone before being returned to the pocket. Seems, she brightens his day. The voiceover tells the viewer "You can take your world with you when you're part of the world's largest network". Meantime a musical refrain repeats "ain't that the way it is".

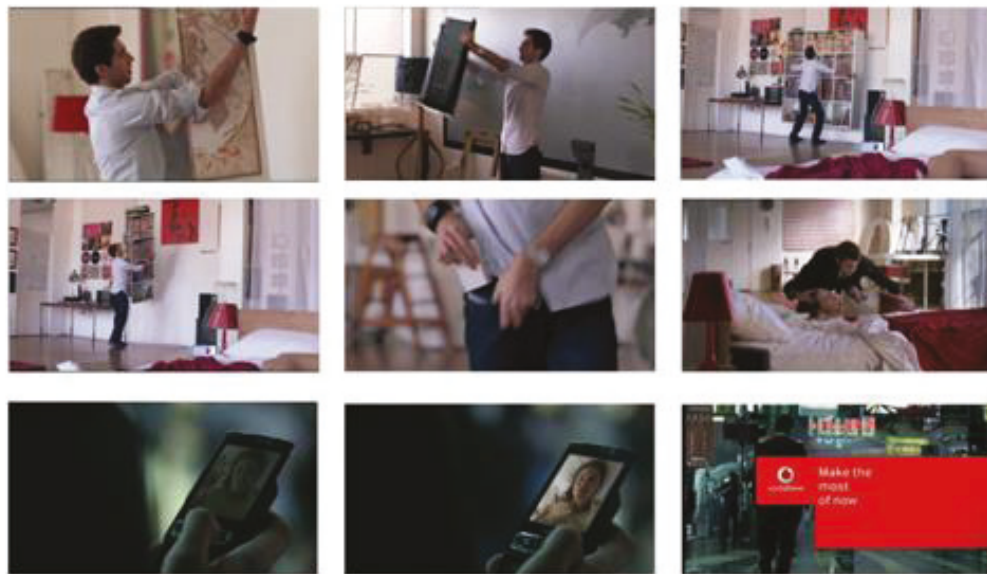


Figure 16. Fold advertisement: Take Your World With You, Vodafone (2008). Vodafone presents the mobile phone as placing your best friend as close as your pocket, always amenable, and always available. Reprinted with permission of Vodafone New Zealand (see Appendix E). This award winning television advertisement can be viewed at <http://www.colensobbdo.co.nz/#/Work/8/Vodafone-Fold>.

In an earlier Vodafone (2007) BestMate advertisements again there is the message of one's friends being within reach, whenever and wherever. The best-mate advertisements have a miniature person climbing out of pockets or handbags to sit in the palm of a hand so as to share the experiences. A song accompanies this

imagery and the voiceover at the completion of the song reassuringly promises that with Vodafone BestMate you're together wherever.

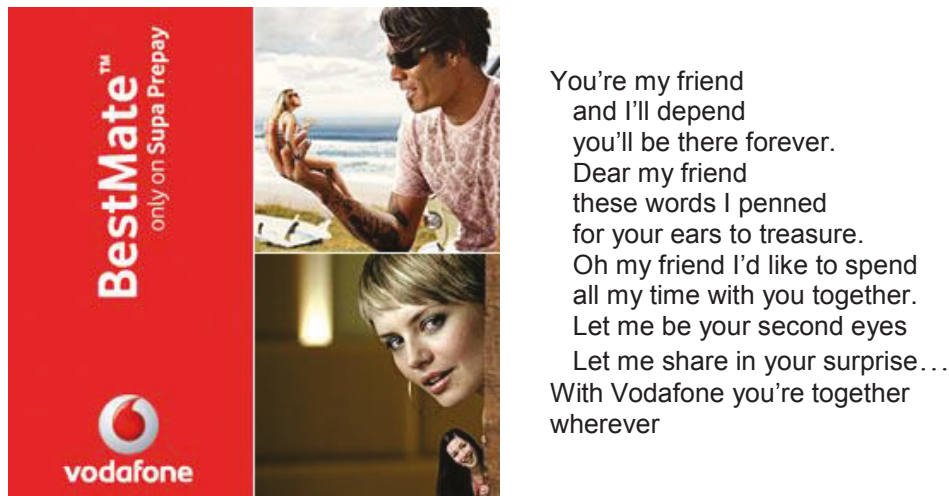


Figure 17. Bestmate Advertisement: Together Wherever, Vodafone (2007). Vodafone image literally positions your Bestmates, as “on hand” and is accompanied by lyrics emphasising forever, together, wherever. Reprinted with permission of Vodafone New Zealand (see Appendix E). The audiovisual form of this advertisement can be viewed at <http://www.lowesydneyn.com/work>.

In 2012, Vodafone faced legal sanctions for breaches of the Fair Trading Act, not because of the inability to follow through on the promise of having your best-mate available unconditionally, but because of “careless marketing”. Vodafone pleaded guilty to 21 charges involving hidden costs and false claims associated with the “broadband everywhere” advertising themes that occurred between 2006 and 2009 (Gray, 2012).

Telecom similarly positions its services as providing access to a best friend anywhere anytime. In a juxtaposition of clever toys and smart phones Telecom advertisements aggressively targeted young people. The designer of the online campaign describes the brief as targeting “the fickle youth market”, and involving “killer sticky applications” and working via a “friends get friends propagation” on both broadcast and social media sites (Parkinson, 2007). This 2007 advertising campaign presents five soft toy puppets, each with a distinct personality. The storyline of each of the soft toy characters refers to career aspirations, establishing relationships, and issues to do with being wanted or included. These are the same concerns developmental psychologists and psychoanalysts associate with the developmental tasks of young adults (see for example Erik Erikson, Original work

published 1936/1980; Turkle, 2011). Young people are clearly the targets of these advertising campaigns.

The campaign included an online gaming site where people could compete with rewards for posting mashups,³⁷ articles, and photography demonstrating clever toys at work and play. The site provided games, fancy-dress facemasks, computer screen wallpapers, and ringtones, all associated with the clever toy personas. The “stickiness” of this site reportedly far exceeded Telecom expectations, both in terms of the statistics for individually identifiable visitors and with the average stay on the site exceeding 10 minutes (Parkinson, 2007). The smart toy puppets were also befriended by thousands of people on Facebook and Bebo.³⁸ Years after the advertising campaign closed, and despite Telecom having removed their own pages, fans have maintained social media pages for these puppets.

A particular favourite of the Telecom advertisements is a white bunny with pink ears called Kaz.³⁹ She says of herself that she left school at 16 to enter the fashion industry as she had “total fashion shopping skills”. Kaz talks with a New Zealand accent at speed, her intonations and language structure were identified by the research company that tested the advertisements prior to the advertisements being released as typical of a young New Zealand woman of the times. In one of this series of advertisements Kaz introduces her human friend, Bex. She says, “hi everyone this is totally my best friend Bex, we go everywhere together”. Kaz goes on to maintain both a text and face-to-face conversation. She texts so fervently her paw starts smouldering and then catches fire (see Figure 18). The implication is that texting is so available with this service plan that one could text until one is tired of it (never). The image of Kaz in Telecoms shops, websites, billboards, and pamphlets provided a symbolic reference to unlimited texting. With “2000 txts a month” one could text all of one’s friends and relations, who share the Telecom network, as much as one ever wanted or needed.

³⁷ Mashups are usually client generated typically involving a remix of digital data, aggregated from two or more sources, and presented visually online.

³⁸ See for example <http://www.bebo.com/Profile.jsp?MemberId=4216673206>.

³⁹ This Telecom advertisement was nominated for worst advertisement in the Fair Go Ad Awards of October, 2007. At the time of writing this thesis in 2010, the advertisement continues to be available for viewing through the TVNZ site at http://tvnz.co.nz/view/video_popup_flash_skin/1388670.



Figure 18. Clever Toy Advertisements: Kaz, Telecom (2007). Telecom specifically markets to children and young people with a multimedia campaign playing on the theme of clever toys. Kaz, is seen here advertising the telecom text messaging service, note the reduced costs are platform specific. The 2000 txts a month breaks down to approximately 67 text messages a day. An assumption is made that this would be enough for texting friends and relations as much as one ever needed, capturing particularly the younger end of the youth market. Reprinted with permission of Telecom New Zealand (see Appendix F).

In 2007, Telecom faced a legal challenge for breach of advertising standards associated with this advertisement, as well as the other advertisements in their clever toy series. The complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority argued the advertisement contributed to negative stereotypes belittling, in this instance, young women. The complaint was not upheld (Advertising Standards Authority, 2007). Nonetheless Telecom pulled the advertisements shortly thereafter. However, complaints associated with promising more than could be provided have been upheld, these include: promising all the internet that could be handled in 2006, and in 2005 failing to disclose all costs associated with services (Adams, 2010).

The Commerce Commission's fair trading manager Graham Gill is reported as saying that:

There are a number of reasons why breaches of the Fair Trading Act often take place in the telecommunications industry. Firstly, it is a reasonably competitive industry... each competitor is trying to get an advantage over the other. (Adams, 2010)

A pricing war is evident as these two competitors fight to dominate the youth market. During 2007, Telecom's "2000 txts a month" was matched by Vodafone free weekend texting.

Both Telecom and Vodafone promise services in excess of what they can provide. Not only in terms of the hype associated with the technical efficacy of the products and network they service, but also in promising relationships as close as your pocket, with you anywhere, anytime, available always. These advertisements present relationships on tap, and by implication loneliness can be bypassed. In presenting these relationships as positive, and connecting easy, what is minimised is the choreography of heterogeneous relationships involving things, actors, and organizations, required to sustain not only friendship and support but also connection.

The work involved in making a landline based service is well covered by Spinuzzi (2008) in outlining a service of hundreds of thousands of people; people who make phones, copper wires, people who maintain the phone lines, staff and technology enabling every connection to be traced and billed, people to generate further custom in advertising and customer relations, and so it goes on. In looking under the cover of my mobile phone it quickly becomes apparent that to make one of these from scratch would be well beyond the capacity of any individual, and as Harford (2011) had described in his efforts to make a toaster from scratch, a lifetime could not provide enough time to learn the skills needed to recreate a working mobile phone. Looking inside the "blackbox" of a mobile phone (see Figure 19), one uncovers plastics, latex key-pads, an aerial embedded in the plastic cover, a crystal display screen, a battery encased in a further sealed box, a speaker and microphone, as well as a SIM card embedded with microprocessing and then there is the circuit board of further incomprehensible connections involving metal threads and solder on plastic.



Figure 19. Opening the blackbox of a mobile phone. What is integral to the internal workings remains blackboxed. A physical deconstruction defies reconstruction; what is integral, internal, external blur when what is wanted is functionality. Understanding of the innards extends to knowing that if the insides come out, if the insides get wet, if the battery is flat, the sim card incorrectly inserted, or connections of wires and solders loosen, then the mobile will not work.

Interviewing both counsellors and young people at Youthline, I learn the “lifespan” of a mobile phone is approximately two years with reasons for replacement ranging from wanting more functions, to the early demise of a mobile phone following accidents such as inadvertent cleansing in a washing machine. When replaced, a functioning mobile phone tends to be kept as a spare or handed on to others, while the SIM card is kept and transferred to the newer phone. Non-functional phones are discarded and while there is provision for recycling, none of those I talked with had done this. It is in the potential for recycling that further ingredients of a mobile phone are uncovered: one mobile phone has less than a dollar worth of precious metals, one metric ton of discarded mobile “mined” for precious metals can retrieve estimates of 140 kilograms of copper, 3 kilograms of silver, 300 grams of gold, and 3 grams of platinum (Sullivan, 2006).

Opening the blackbox of a mobile phone demonstrates the networks inside of networks, and as Latour states, “even when the phases of development and innovation have ended, even the darkest black box still has to be maintained in

existence... the more automatic and the blacker the box, the more it has to be accompanied by people” (Latour, 1987, p. 137).

Living in a modern world is incredibly complex. The manufacture of a mobile phone involves hundreds of material components and thousands of actors, both human and otherwise. The complexity gives pause for thought, for not only are so many things and many actors involved in a making, similarly many things and actors are involved in sustaining a mobile phone’s functionality.

In looking at the networking required with regard to telephony services in the United States, Spinuzzi (2008) introduced a concept he named “splicing”. In identifying and negotiating opportunist alliances, existing networks could be extended. Development of competing telephone companies from scratch would be extremely costly, whereas splicing in alliances increases the possibilities while restraining the costs involved. It would have been financially crippling, and therefore impossible, for Vodafone or any other MNO to replicate the pre-existing infrastructure operated by Telecom in New Zealand. Sharing of the lines, splicing in Vodafone and other MNO’s was not an act of altruism in a competitive market, but occurred inside of a context where the Government was threatening to re-regulate the industry otherwise (Commerce Commission New Zealand, 2011a).

Mobile phone connections are made possible through using radio waves, and communicating information is a process of transmitting waves between receivers. The information passes between a mobile phone and a network of transceivers, also known as base stations or cell phone towers. These towers are low powered and serve a limited geographic area, or “cell”. As a mobile phone user moves between one cell and another, the next nearest cell phone tower picks up the message. This provides an apparently seamless experience of messages carried across distances even when the user is “mobile”. Each cell phone tower has limited capacity however, and when this limit is reached a mobile phone message is transferred to the next nearest site. When a message is unable to transfer between cell towers, or when the mobile phone is not operable, ongoing attempts are made between the SMS server, cell towers, and the mobile phone. This storage capability means as soon as a mobile is back in range, or back to

being turned on, the technologies of SMS servers and cell phone towers and the mobile phone itself “talk to each other” and the message is forwarded.

[Excerpt: Vodafone website: How does the mobile phone work? Vodafone (2009)]

A typical Vodafone base station can accommodate approximately 40–60 simultaneous voice and data signals.

When the call demand exceeds base station capacity, the mobile phone signal is transferred to the nearest available base station. If the distance to the next base station is too far, or this station is also fully loaded, a temporary connection error would occur. If you’ve ever had problems connecting to the network, it is possible the base stations in your area were fully loaded at the time. With increased demand for mobile communications, additional base stations are required.

The pickup and sending of text messages is on the basis of “best effort” delivery. Just as might occur with a posted letter, there are no resources deployed in advance to guarantee that a message will be delivered, or delivered within a specific time-frame, and no advisement is given on whether the message is delivered or not. A best effort service makes for financial efficiency rather than guarantee of delivery.

For the transmitting of messages, a mobile phone needs to be within range of cell phone tower cover. There is continual work undertaken as mobile phones and cell towers seek out each other’s presence whenever the mobile is turned on (see Figure 20). The hidden work of towers and phones continually searching for each other is rarely attended to by the human actors involved. What is attended to is when the cover fails. It fails in areas where there are no towers, and where there are few towers and the system is overloaded. As Bleecker (2006) quips, “Who doesn’t know where the “dead zones” are?

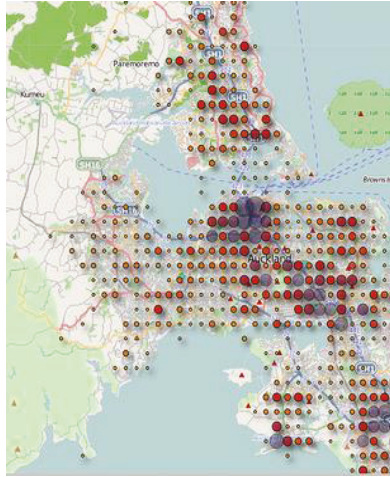


Figure 20. Cell Phone Tower Cover, Auckland, NZ, (2011). Auto-generated mobile phone map where the phone has “talked with a cell phone tower. Based on one person’s use of a mobile phone. Image accessed from <http://lancewiggs.com/2011/04/21/i-live-in-wellington>. Reproduced with permission of the author, Lance Wiggs (see Appendix G).



Figure 21. Cell phone towers (Vodafone, Telecom, and Two-degrees) in Auckland (2011). Image generated at <http://sites.google.com/site/nzcellinfo/forgps.kml>. Image generated using data and software freely available at <http://www.geekzone.co.nz/BarTender/7403>



Figure 22. Mobile and text network cover in New Zealand as presented on Telecom New Zealand’s website in Auckland (2011). Image retrieved from <http://www.telecom.co.nz/mobile/mobile/ournetwork/newzealandxtmobilecoverage>

The mobile network cover (indicated by purple) tends to match areas that are most densely populated. Reproduced with permission of Telecom New Zealand (see Appendix Hi and Hii).

Even the service providers concede difficulty in matching promise with demand, as Telecom have stated on their website:

New Zealand has one of the most beautiful environments in the world, and we’re as proud of it as you are. But our unique geography does create some challenges

for mobile signal reception, so we've taken the terrain and the locations of our cell towers into account and created maps of how far we expect our XT Mobile Network to reach. (<http://www.telecom.co.nz>)

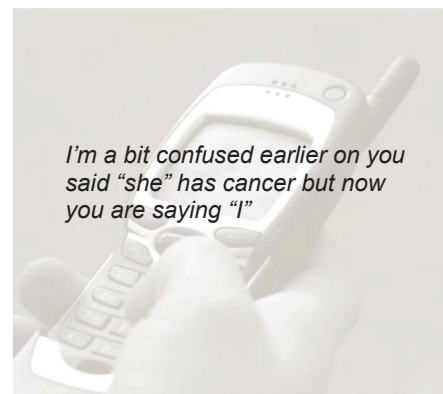
Cell phone tower sites (see for example Figure 20) and maps of mobile network cover (see for example Figure 21 and Figure 22) demonstrate a service with gaps.

The gaps in the network are experienced by Jasmine as one of the reasons she elects to text. Texting provides her with an option on accessing counselling that she would otherwise not have. For counsellors this information discredits the assumption that texting for counselling might be a means of avoidance when in fact it may provide the only means of connection.

The social life of text

Megalyn points to how she manages the digital trace, they provide her with a pocket full of affirmations she can revisit at any time. At the same time she is aware that keeping something intimate is a risk, and so she manages this. At Youthline there are advantages to counsellors in having access to a conversation history; counsellors would look at a text history prior to opening up a text conversation or during pauses in the counselling conversation. The text history can inform future responses. This occurs in at least three ways. First, the visibility of previous statements provides a template other counsellors copy. Second, the previous conversations provide strategies and strengths that a person might be reminded of. And third, the history of a conversation also provides scope for gentle confrontations and clarifications, as the following example shows.

[Digital trace of counselling text sent by Youthline, July 2009]



The reply indicated the phone had been passed to the friend who was now texting. Sharing a phone demonstrates the easing into a conversation of support. And for the counsellor it provides a means of clarifying information that seemed incongruous.

I continue to follow the digital traces. When a message is received by a mobile phone, a message icon of an envelope signifies its presence. A small trail of clicks is required to locate the message by opening an inbox and then a further click to view the message. A similar trail of clicks is then required if the message is to be deleted, *at this site*.

A message once sent cannot be retracted. On its travels as SMS radio waves, a text message sits on the MNO's server; when received at Youthline, the message sits on YORA. This is not what is experienced with a letter. A letter ceases to exist at the earlier sites it travels through; a text message is replicated again and again. The letter icon is a misnomer. A text message does not move from one place to another, but has presence at each site; it does not travel in a singular form, but is multiple.

Those texting Youthline are expected to manage concerns of privacy and access to their own mobile phones. Youthline's privacy and access is managed through a confidentiality clause agreed to by all counsellors and password protection for the various layers of YORA. Nonetheless concern for confidentiality remains. In July 2007, a high profile criminal case demonstrated not only that digital traces might be accessed without either sender or receiver of a message knowing, but also how a person's mobile phone provides a proxy measure locating its owners whereabouts even when a phone is not being used.

[Newspaper article: Phone companies' change wipes police text evidence, July 28, 2007]

Vodafone is no longer storing texts, and Telecom is about to follow suit....

[The change] raised debate among police and lawyers about whether a law change should be sought to require the information to be kept.

But police national crime services manager Inspector Bill Peoples said that although the telcos' move would have an effect on investigations, a law change was not practical.

Police can still obtain records of text calls, but not the text....

If police considered an investigation was serious enough, they could apply for an interception warrant which would enable voice and text calls to be captured as they happened.

The media coverage raised public awareness of the digital footprints left when using mobile phones and text messaging in particular. Currently, and as of July 2009, New Zealand's two main MNOs only keep a record of messages for a few days; as long as it might be reasonable to expect a message to have been delivered had a phone been turned off or out of cell phone tower range (Vodafone, discussion board July 2009; Telecom, personal email communication July 2009).

Meantime a remnant of the trace, but not the content of the message, is kept that verifies this phone number made contact with that phone number, through particular mobile cell sites, on a particular date, at a particular time. Such information is legally required to be kept, I am told, for taxation purposes. Where information is still held, and where there are legal grounds validated by a court order, such traces can be made available to appropriate authorities, such as the Police.

Following the digital traces shows considerable work is involved not only in formulating a message but also in its durability. Despite a sense of a text message being ephemeral, what is shown is its resistance. Deletion of the remnants of a digital text message, when and where it was sent and received, remains outside of individual control.

I have shown here that significant distributed activities come together to place a mobile phone in the hands of those who use them, and to have it work. In the process of sending a message from a mobile phone the sender needs to have a current contractual agreement with an MNO whether as a term based account or as a prepay credit. They also need to be geographically positioned for cell phone tower coverage and this needs to link to a network through which the message travels. In addition, the total number of messages being sent at any one time needs to be inside of what the local cell site can accommodate. For this whole messaging system to work a person needs to be carrying their mobile phone with them to send or receive messages, and their mobile needs to be operable. They

need to have sufficient charge on the battery of the mobile phone. The person receiving a message similarly needs to have a phone in working condition, in credit with an MNO, turned on and charged if they are to receive the message in a timely way. In addition, this other person also needs to be within mobile phone coverage and in a space with no barriers to the radio waves and where the cell phone towers are not overloaded. If the contact is by text messaging, both phones need to have sufficient memory available for the sending and receiving of messages. The person sending a message needs to either know or have stored the phone number of who they are wanting to contact, and the other party also needs to be attentive to the alerting features of incoming messages, as well as being able and willing to accept a call or text at that time. With such techno-socio-political requirements fulfilled, the promised dream of connecting to your best-mate, or best friend, anywhere and anytime, becomes a possibility. However, the dream of having someone always available, always attentive, always positive, always “on”, defies reality.

Whether talking of friends, best-mates, mobile phones or mobile network operators, all the actors in these advertisements are perpetually available, reliable, and easy to be with. The people presented are all young, beautiful and having fun. The mobile phones featured are always shiny, new, attractive, easy to carry. Positivity abounds. These phones are always charged, always on, always accessible, never faulty. The network is always available, never overloaded. The people in these advertisements never have problems seeing the text, knowing the correct number, or being outside of cell phone coverage. There are no problems of having the people you want to connect with being unwilling, unavailable, or unfriendly to talk with. There are no people who want time alone. There are no friends or best mates who might be too busy to talk. And there are no ugly cell phone towers visible. The beauty and ease of connecting are amplified; one might as easily hold a magic wand and wish.

The reality is that our friends or mates may not be available to us or as helpful as the advertising suggests. Happy, supportive, anytime, anywhere, friends or mates are not part of the package deal that comes with a mobile phone and service provider. The Telecom and Vodafone advertisements go beyond selling phones

and contracts, they are selling the substance of dreams. What people might want is not enough, they try to create a demand, and as Mol (2008a) states of other advertisements, this is done “not with arguments but with seduction”.

Outside of the advertised imagery, there are problems with connections, cell towers and base stations do become overloaded. This results in missed calls and sometimes an unusual warping of the chronology involved with delayed messages following odd time intervals that can result in a sudden flood of text messages being received. In addition, mobile phones can be faulty; they are not impervious to the elements or to neglect. Mobile phones do run out of battery power, and contracts affording airtime do expire. But more importantly, relationships do not exist in a static state but involve fluctuations of give and take, ups and downs, times when people are more and less available to each other, more and less amenable. The majority of calls and texts received by counselling agencies such as Youthline are about relationships causing distress yet the selling of phones and contracts suggest anytime, anywhere availability, and positivity. Who couldn't resist? If Youthline's service were not provided the MNOs would have to invent such a service to stay true to the dream they are selling.

On becoming a hybrid

I got it as a gift, but I had to get it a sim card & establish a contract with a service provider, take it home, plug it in, charge it... Wait...wait...hours of waiting... Read the manual. Personalise it; choose my language (English & predictive text) enter ph. no.s (I've outsourced my memory). Send a message to family & friends so they know my no., set the calendar, clock, choose a background, select preferred ring-tone & volume. Try them all out. Reply to half the friends & relations. Set the alarm clock. Put in appointments. Phew. Look at the manual to work the camera, learn how to save & send photos, & bluetooth them to my computer. What is Bluetooth anyway? Read the manual online... Check with service provider about overseas roaming to send or call from Aus to NZ on a NZ ph., (0011649... need 2 check for service provider coverage, remember to keep ph. with me or risk my relationship, check for missed calls, oh & for unread txts. I hate the demands of why didn't you answer your phone.... I become conscious of costs & having to feed it by prepay, & ensure its power supply is maintained. Learn to clear messages, sent & received otherwise it tells me "memory is full, clear messages from any box". I continue to transfuse it with money, negotiate the credit card with the service provider, keep clearing messages, plug it in when its flat... I still don't know how to use it for email or internet, play games, or as a radio, I could download music to it, pay for parking, check movies ... I discovered it can also be a torch by manipulating the camera flash, and it's a calculator, plus a notepad... I'm loving it. It's old technology already & I only use it for a fraction of what it makes possible! Now I wouldn't be without it; got my keys, my cash my mobile... oh and my charger if going away a few days. I'd be bereft without it, how would I get in touch with people? How would I know their no.s? What if I'm running late? Or the car breaks down? I've bought it a cute cover; it stops it getting knocked about. Oh, and you noticed the charm? It's just cuter with it on.... Well yes, I've had pets that are less demanding. Well at least the Tamagotchi & goldfish were, mmm the cats, well yes, this is about as financially demanding as the cat I suppose... but hey this can go everywhere with me. I even chose my handbag so it's got its own place...

Oh ... I get it ... rather its got me ... I'm the one domesticated!

Once upon a time

“Once upon a time” and “they all lived happily ever after” bracket stories only in fairy tales; Cinderella wasn’t born a young adult and life doesn’t stop at marriage. In a techno-socio-political story of change a starting point is made arbitrarily. In this section stories are told of Youthline’s movements toward becoming textually active; identifying the earliest “twinkle of an eye” resulting in the conception and development of text counselling. I might have begun with text messages where counselling skills can be identified. I might have begun with the gift of a PDA that made text access to Youthline a possibility. But there is always something that comes before.

[Excerpt: Telephone Counselling]

When the Rev. Chad Varah, an Anglican clergyman, in 1953 put his name and phone number in a London newspaper inviting troubled or suicidal people to phone him for help, he had no idea of the avalanche of response that would follow and reverberate around the world. Out of that act the Samaritans were born as a volunteer movement of lay people. (Hambly, 1984, p. 5)

In this telling of a creation story, Youthline’s development is seemingly a reverberation, a natural flow on effect of this leading to that. However such traces are no longer intact, if they ever existed. What is known is a parent organization of Youthline in the form of Lifeline evolved half a world away and ten years later.

[Excerpt: The Story of Lifeline]

As opening day came near, there remained one serious unresolved issue: the service needed a name. At first it had been called the “Mantle of Christ” taken from the idea of the Flying Doctor Service that had spread a Mantle of Safety over the inland regions of Australia. In time this name was rejected as too obviously religious. It could be taken as too exclusive for those most in need of the service. “Christian Service Centre” was the next name that was considered, but it was discovered that this name had prior usage. It was a newspaper journalist who finally provided the name. The Sydney Morning Herald reporting on a public meeting to support the initiative had headlined its article “Telephone Life Line”. The name was perfect. So it was that everything was ready March

1963. The first call came one minute after the lines were opened. Lifeline was in business and the phones have never stopped ringing. (Lifeline International, 2009, "The Story of Lifeline," para. 4)

Lifeline does not identify a creation story involving Samaritans. Such beginnings may or may not be related. How, or even if, Samaritans resulted in the development of Youthline in New Zealand is therefore unknown. What is traceable is a story of Youthline developing in Auckland, New Zealand.

[Excerpt: The Youthline Story]

The Youthline story is the story of many people. It is the story of the hundreds of young and youthful people who have nurtured and operated the counselling service here in Auckland since the idea was born in mid-1969. It is the story of the thousands of people of all ages who have used the service. It is the story of the tens of thousands of people who have been touched somehow by Youthline's presence in the community. It is the story of the Youthline Hostel and the 500 or so people who at this point in time have passed through it. It is the story of the Youthlines that have been set up throughout New Zealand: in Hamilton, Rotorua, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch, Timaru, Dunedin, Invercargill. It is the story of our Australian counterparts who are probably unaware of the origins of the name their service bears. Essentially, perhaps, it is the story of people with enough faith in a vision to try to convert that vision into reality.

The vision, like all visions, has been fed from many sources. In particular, though, we have to identify it with Father Felix Donnelly. The Youthline thing, call it a concept or movement, is larger than him, certainly. But it is hard to imagine it without him. And sitting here writing this, I'm aware this story is part of me, also. However objective I might claim to be in this account, it would be silly for me to pretend that I'm writing from outside. I can't be dispassionate about this thing.

(Locke, n.d., p. 1)

Such a brief telling touches on the pain as well as hopes that accompanied the birthing of Youthline in New Zealand. I tell of these beginnings in as much as it forms part of the hinterland of current practices.

Tracing the earliest artefacts of Youthline leads to Terry Locke. Terry Locke is now Professor Locke, a Professor of English Language Education at the

University of Waikato, and he confirms that he is the author of the 24 page typewritten and photocopied document that he thinks he wrote probably in 1974. Professor Locke tells me:

“I was there at the very start of the project, in fact, I came up with the name.”

He described the intention as providing a life-line, a phone line specifically for youth and so the name of Youthline evolved. Youthline grew from concerns raised at Lifeline where the then chairperson of Lifeline, Father Felix Donnelly, identified that young people were not using their service, but they certainly had problems (Donnelly, 1978). Their needs were, and continue to be, dire.

Donnelly's (1978) account of establishing a separate service for Youth describes the controversies encountered, both within Lifeline and in the wider community. While there was agreement that youth had needs that should be met, how these might be met was contentious. Most controversial was the argument that current institutions or established services *had not*, and *could not* meet these needs. Having listened to young people tell of their distrust following experiences with authority figures, encountered through schools, churches, and healthcare, Donnelly proposed a service for young people, by young people (or at least by people who were youth friendly).

The proposal was hotly debated within Lifeline as well as in the wider community. His identifying young people as not always helped by those in authority, was met with defensiveness. Arguing that young people might usefully counsel other young people, and that they might do so with more genuine empathy, was inflammatory to some. Most controversial was his outspokenness on families not always being the safest place for young people. The debates, factions, alignments, and betrayals, can be traced through the minutes of the Auckland City Council and the memoirs written.

[Excerpt: Big Boys Don't Cry]

A town planning committee of the Auckland City Council sat to consider an application from the Youthline Trust Just before the meeting began, I was approached by a leading committee member who shook my hand and said how sorry he was that they could not grant our request. He said he would have liked to, but the majority were against it, and he felt that in spite of his own feelings, it was best that he go along with the consensus. However, he would be happy to do anything he could to help.

Later that night, when the report was presented, Councillor Jim Anderton bravely attacked the decision. He had been on the committee and said that the decision was a bowing to pressure from a wealthy and privileged group a....The arguments went back and forth. The mayor, Sir Dove-Myer Robinson, tried to do something about the situation to help Youthline. The debate lasted three hours. Through it all it was obvious whose sympathies were with Youthline. Pretending to be friends with both sides breeds distrust and makes politicians suspect.

(Donnelly, 1978, p.60)

The work involved in negotiating relationships to bring about change is considerable. The costs are high. Such costs are not only financial but risk relationships also. The resistance of prospective neighbours, council members, funding bodies, health professionals, and even within Donnelly's own church, proves too great for establishing a youth hostel. However, setting up a telephone helpline service by and for youth, was achieved. Alliances were formed, compromises negotiated, and Youthline was established as a niche service.

[Excerpt: Big Boys Don't Cry]

The success of Youthline was immediate. We were able to train 100 youths over a four month period and open the service to the public in July, 1970. I still remember the excitement as we stood in the small phone room in the old building belonging to the Auckland City Mission waiting for the first calls... The early days of working to develop a youth counselling service were almost euphoric. We were building a concept from scratch, and those who were to man the operation helped to plan it. (Donnelly, 1978, p.19)

Reports commissioned by the Ministry of Health (Collings & Beautrais, 2005; Ferguson, Blakely, Allan, & Collins, 2005) confirm the beliefs held by those who initiated Youthline that youths' needs were not being met by current services, and by implication, different services were needed (see Figure 23).

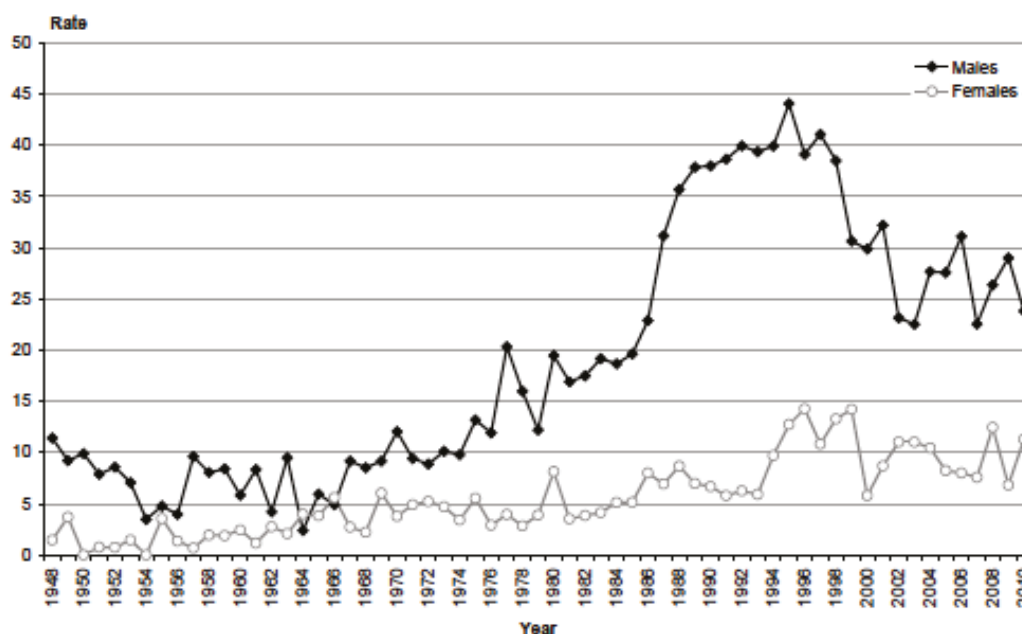


Figure 23. Suicide Rates of 15–24 year olds in New Zealand 1948–2010. From “Suicide Facts: Deaths and intentional self-harm hospitalisations 2010” Copyright Ministry of Health New Zealand, p. 12. Reprinted with permission (New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, 2010, p. 12)

The seriousness of youth at risk is also evident when contrasting New Zealand data internationally. These statistics are presented in Table 1. The Ministry of Health advises caution in making international comparisons as other countries have different standards in ascertaining when a death is a suicide (New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, 2006).

Table 1. New Zealand's age-specific suicide rates as a comparison with selected other OECD countries

	Age-specific suicide rate (per 100,000 population)		
	5–14 years	15–24 years	25–34 years
New Zealand	1.1	28.7	21.0
Finland	0.6	22.8	33.0
Austria	0.8	15.0	20.8
Germany	0.1	4.7	9.4
Sweden	0.4	9.4	13.8
Canada	1.1	15.0	18.0
Australia	0.2	14.6	18.7
Netherlands	0.3	6.8	10.6
Portugal	0.2	4.4	6.8
Poland	1.1	9.9	15.1
United Kingdom	0.1	6.7	10.6
Greece	0.0	2.6	4.4

Note. Comparison of New Zealand's age-specific suicide rates with selected other OECD countries. Adapted from "Suicide rates in New Zealand. Exploring associations with social and economic factors" by S. Ferguson, T. Blakely, B. Allan, and S. Collins, 2005, in *Social explanations for suicide in New Zealand*, p. 8. Copyright, 2005, New Zealand Government Ministry of Health.

While any unnecessary death is a tragedy, statistically, the incidence for New Zealand young people remains a serious concern. While the actual rates, and whose country is worst, continues to be contested, what is portrayed is a desperate need for youth support.

[Excerpt: The Social Report]

A comparison of thirteen OECD comparison countries between 2002 and 2005 showed, New Zealand had the second highest male youth (15–24 years) suicide death rate (after Finland), and the third highest female youth suicide death rate (after Finland and Japan). New Zealand is one of a small number of countries that have higher suicide death rates at younger ages than at older ages. (New Zealand Government Ministry of Social Development, 2008, p. 33)

Reducing the rate of suicide and of suicide attempts has featured as one of the Ministry of Health's thirteen priority population health objectives since 2000 (New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, 2000). Though reasons for suicidal behaviour remains essentially unknown (Beautrais, 2003; Collings & Beautrais, 2005; Ferguson et al., 2005; New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, 2006), strategic planning for prevention that has involved a ten year commitment to reducing youth suicide appears to be having positive impact, at least for young men (New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, 2011).

[Excerpt: Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2008–2012: Second Progress Report]

In 2008 the rate of suicide among youth (aged 15–24) had decreased by 32.0 percent since the peak in 1995. However, the female youth suicide rate of 12.5 per 100,000 people was the highest since 1999. (New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, 2011, p. 1)

While the reduction in suicide rates for young men appears large, the rates were such that even a 32.0% improvement still leaves New Zealand youth rates for suicide amongst the highest in the world. The capacity for prevention remains beyond any easy solution. Supporting people at risk remains a reasonable response. To this end, Youthline aims to provide a support service acceptable to young people. To stay available also requires ongoing negotiations for support. A point of tension is held.

Getting t/here

Shaping practice relevant for young people both involved, and continues to involve, considerable work. This requires negotiating the obvious relationships between those who provide and those who make use of the service, as well as the less obvious relationships both inside and outside of the organization.

The telephone counselling training developed at Youthline's inception was based on Carl Rogers' non-directive therapy. This involved staying in the 'here and now' responding to immediate concerns, and working with the person's own knowledge of what would be relevant or not. Despite the limited cues of phone counselling, these skills were identified as essential for establishing rapport, and

were accepted as the first step, and possibly the only step required, in being helpful (Hambly, 1984).

Shifting the medium of counselling from a phone call to a text message required, and requires, further negotiations. Again, such negotiations go beyond the user and providers of the service. Deft movements are required to shift counselling predicated as a talking therapy shift into a space where those involved neither meet nor “talk”.

[Interview notes, Stephen Bell, Youthline CEO, March 2008]

Stephen: *“The role I have is about vision, understanding and figuring how to get A to B. That’s the leadership space, the “how to”, getting from where we are to where we want to be, so it involves having a sense of where we’re headed, clarity around values.”*

Me: *“How do changes in counselling fit with the values?”*

Stephen: *“I see it as a continuum. At one end there’s psychodynamics and Gestalt, with intensive deep work and more in the middle there’s Rogerian where issues can be unpacked and this is similar also to a strength-based approach in finding a way through using active listening and helping relationship skills, and its non-directing, and then there’s emotional first aid in few words, 160 characters, but its still empathy and building rapport, linking with someone and hoping to facilitate their moving along the continuum. So [text counselling] is a first point; emotional first aid.”*

This demonstrates the fluidity required. A continuum is made positioning text counselling within the broader fields of counselling and therapy. The reference to a continuum suggests we are all on the same playing field. First Stephen identifies text counselling as an *immediate type of help* in contrast to long-term psychodynamic therapy. In the middle ground he situates counselling, naming Rogerian and strength-based counselling on which the telephone helpline is based. Text messaging is then positioned coexisting alongside telephone counselling. There is the suggestion that this is but one step in a line of possible steps. Again, this positions text counselling “in line with” and not oppositional to other forms. Positioning text counselling in this way garners text counselling with protection, being buttressed by association with the known traditions of counselling and

psychotherapy. In not overselling the mode of delivery, a pathway for acquiescence, if not acceptance, is made possible.

Text counselling is positioned as the same as what has gone before *just smaller*. Aligning the change with what is known and already supported, paves a route to acceptance. Skills consistent with those valued, both within the wider field of counselling as well as within Youthline's current training, are explicitly referred to, as is the intention of helping someone find a way through. Being positioned as smaller also lends itself to the analogy of *first aid*. It's suggestive of something essential; it might be all that's needed. There is no point in criticising something for being what it is not: it would be wrong to criticise a sticking plaster for not being a pressure bandage; an ambulance for not being an intensive care unit. To criticise something for what it is not renders the person doing the criticism irrelevant rather than the subject in question.

Stephen's role, as he names it, was to help people get from A to B. What he does is minimise what is required; "here to there" becomes part of a continuum; the big picture and the small picture are both parts of the same picture. The conceptual gap that positions a texting service as "out there" can then be renegotiated as if a simple fold was made. There and here coexist in the same space: t/here. What is observed is a deft movement. Paradoxically difference is both distributed and brought in line.

Difference is being tamed; unruliness denied. The struggles involved in expressing meaning in a written form, within a tightly constrained space, of the hidden work undertaken in avoiding the staccato bursts of short abrupt sentences, lacking in social graces, of saying more with less, are contained by the fold. The spatial metaphor of a folding is one used by Fenwick and Edwards (2010) to explain how enactments are made to naturalise a hybrid state. They note that it takes work to maintain such folds because "there is also the possibility of unfolding". In this section I have pointed to how Stephen has managed to position a new counselling practice simultaneously as both same and different. This point of tension is not sustained just by saying it is so, multiple alliances are needed to sustain this fold.

Building the brick mother

[Interview notes, Stephen Bell, Youthline CEO, March 2008]

“Building the brick mother means young people know Youthline’s out there, and it’s an object you’re ok with, a taonga (a treasure) crossing generations and carried through into text messages. So when you text it’s not me responding, but the organization. How it gets made is in things like having a presence attached to fun events, like Coca-Cola Christmas-in-the-park, Big Day Out....marketing by word of mouth, and guerrilla marketing through schools, events, places and spaces where young people are, and getting identified by young people as having purposefulness and relevance that involves them. Youthline works the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa, and it’s fundamentally accurate with involving training and community development with young people. So we look at what’s the transaction that’s relevant to the people, especially to young people, and relevant for young people, being part of where they are, being in the environments that they are in. And then there’s the challenge of how to meet that with integrity and safety. It’s also a challenge keeping the balance between supporting and empowering alongside being fiscally viable and avoiding costs of obsolescence.”

In a process reminiscent of Latour’s (1991) description of technology being society made durable, Stephen describes the work of sustaining Youthline as a durable entity.

Naming Youthline as *taonga*⁴⁰ is to name Youthline as treasured, and more than this for taonga is not so much owned as held for future generations. Naming the work undertaken by Youthline as taonga is to imbue the work with authority, but it also suggests responsibility distributed over time.

The care of *tamariki* (children) and *rangatahi* (youth) has been named taonga within recent Government documents. In a report on *Child Poverty in*

⁴⁰ Henare (2005) suggests *taonga* might be glossed as a treasure, something precious, but notes there is no differentiation between animate and inanimate; material and conceptual; a person may be taonga, as might a greenstone weapon. Quoting Rev. Māori Marsden she states, “There is no specific term in Māori for the word value... [The] Māori idea of value is incorporated into the... term “taonga” - a treasure, something precious; hence an object of good or value. The object or end valued may be tangible or intangible; material or spiritual” (p. 47).

The Auckland Museum website identifies taonga as embodied with spiritual meaning associated with *mana* (having influence, power), *tapu* (sacred) and *kōrero* (stories) connecting *taonga* with *iwi* (tribal) identity.

Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries by the United Nations Children Fund (2007) New Zealand children were identified as more at risk in terms of health and safety than all but one of 25 OECD countries. In response to this was an impassioned plea by the leaders of the Māori Party “to restore the belief that children are to be nurtured and cherished as precious taonga” (Sharples & Turia, 2007). The Government Green Paper for Vulnerable Children (2011)⁴¹ also positions children as taonga. This Green Paper states facts as speaking for themselves, but they do not, they need to be seen and heard.

[Excerpt: Green Paper for Vulnerable Children]

Every year an average of 10 children die at the hands of the people closest to them, the people they love and trust.

More and more New Zealanders are coming forward with their concerns about suspected abuse or neglect of children. In fact notifications to Child, Youth and Family grew by 205 per cent from 2004 to 2010 and 148 of those were confirmed by social workers.

Between 2008 and 2009, 13,315 children under five were admitted to hospital for conditions that could have been avoided and 1,286 were admitted because of assault, neglect or maltreatment.

(New Zealand Government Ministry of Social Development, 2011, "Why do we need Green Paper?" para. 4)

47,374 children (aged 0–16) were present, or usually residing with the victim, at an incident of family violence reported to the police in 2010.

(New Zealand Government Ministry of Social Development, 2011, p. 2, "Government's Vision," para. 3)

Mental health issues (seven per cent of female students and three per cent of male students reported to have attempted suicide)

Binge drinking (reported in 34 per cent of 12–17 year olds)

Early sexual activity and young pregnancies (4,552 births to teenagers in 2010).

(New Zealand Government Ministry of Social Development, 2011, "Young Adolescence", para. 2)

⁴¹ This New Zealand Government Green Paper identifies its purpose as generating widespread public discussion on an issue important to the development of social policy (New Zealand Government Ministry of Social Development, 2011, "Consultation Questions," para. 2).

This hinterland of child abuse and neglect provides a moral mandate: to see the work of Youthline as taonga is to accept responsibility in the support and protection of young people.

To consider what is involved in this work, I return to Stephen who describes a process of “building the brick mother”. The description Stephen gives is about sustaining an organization already established and the activities involved in making “her” robust.

Sustaining Youthline requires attracting young people to the organization. The organization aims to be for young people, not only as people who may have need in making use of the service, but also as providers of the service. To this end there is an emphasis on building strengths. Sustaining the work undertaken includes the teaching of communication and counselling skills. The skills currently taught to telephone counsellors remain much the same as those taught from Youthline’s inception. Maintaining relevance involves the translation of these skills to other platforms.

In elaborating on building the brick mother Stephen talks of “positive branding” Youthline. In clarifying the marketing language, Stephen explains his endeavours around establishing brand recall: Youthline aims to be, and has succeeded at being, the most well recognised youth support service identified by young people in New Zealand. Stephen refers me to the Youthline National School Survey (2005b), that confirms this.

The brick mother analogy involves making an attractive entity, one seen as being solid and reliable while also warm and inviting, making the entity something that young people might be able to turn to as and when needed. To this end, Youthline works at being present at events where young people congregate. This includes a presence at events such as music festivals including “Big Day Out”, and “Coca-Cola Christmas in the Park”, as well as “Armageddon” (a science fiction, fantasy and gaming event). Presence is also established in online spaces, including the Youthline website (<http://youthline.co.nz>) and Urge (www.urge.co.nz) an information based website. During the time of this study, further online spaces are also established including social networking sites, specifically Bebo, Facebook

and Twitter. The aim, according to Stephen, is a comfortable familiarity so that connections with young people in the good times are strong enough that “she” might be recalled when times are bad.

To provide a service “for young people, by young people”, or at least by young minded people, involves attracting people to both sides of a counselling relationship. Building the brick mother is an apt description, not only for creating Youthline as an enduring nurturing entity, but also for highlighting that “she” has needs. As a not-for-profit non-government service organization, fundamentals of this work involve inviting and sustaining involvement. Such work is substantially reliant on inducing people to give the gift of time, or expertise, or equipment, or money. Operating substantially on good will, the inducing and sustaining of gift giving, is core business. Such connecting has vulnerability, but surprisingly is also associated with resilience. Youthline is well used to operating on flexible resourcing: the organization’s survival is testimony to its capacity for continuously re/negotiating relationships.

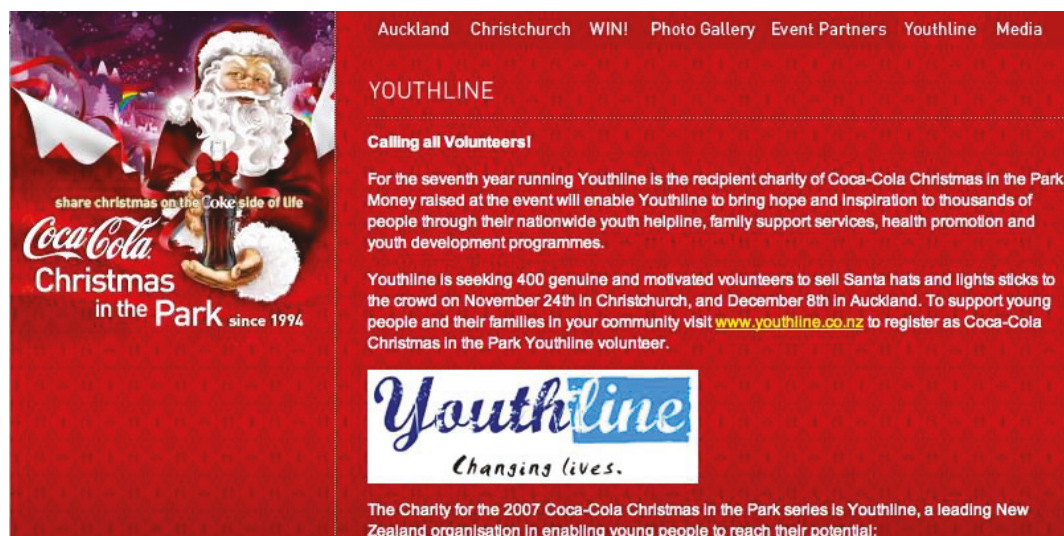


Figure 24. Coca-Cola Christmas in the Park. Building the brick mother includes making Youthline known at times that are joyful as well as in times sad or stressed. The work taken includes soliciting for a further 400 volunteers to work on behalf of Youthline. Being a friend of Youthline provides opportunity to contribute in ways associated with fun. Reprinted with permission of Coca-Cola Amatil New Zealand (refer Appendix I).

Coca-Cola Christmas in the Park involves two free outdoor musical events each year, one in Auckland and one in Christchurch. While the concert is free, volunteers sell glow sticks and Santa hats and collect donations to raise funds for

a specified youth-oriented charity. From 2001 to 2007, Youthline was this charity. However, to describe it as a charitable event may fail to encompass the huge amount of work entailed. The charitable organization requires a volunteer labour-force to sell products, collect donations, as well as be involved in the setting up, and cleaning up. This volunteer labour simultaneously creates work as police checks are required prior to having people “employed” on Youthline’s behalf. Such work is additional to the work of tendering for, and lobbying to be, the annually nominated charity.

Christmas in the park might net \$100,000 a year for Youthline. This assumes the sun will shine, but unfortunately this is not the case. While Youthline has become adroit at negotiating the relationships with socially minded people and organizations, it is beyond the scope of Youthline to negotiate fine weather. In 2001 it rained, in 2002 it does also, and again in 2004, and 2006 and 2007⁴². Drizzle, through to thunderstorms, reduce attendance and the sound systems do not cope well with rain. Only Youthline considers how little a demand there is for Santa hats when it’s no longer Christmas.

Choosing what events to be part of involves deliberate regard for the visibility of connecting. Saying no to being on the receiving end of charity entails risk; others see the organization as so successful they don’t need assistance. Saying yes similarly entails risk; assumptions are made regarding how well the organization must be doing. Pointing to the costs associated suggests ungratefulness risking further charitable relationships. Gift-giving, and receiving, as has been written of by Titmuss (Titmuss, 1971) involves complex social relationships that extend to the identity of those involved, how they are perceived and how they should act.

[Interview notes, Stephen Bell, Youthline CEO, March 2008]

“People think we must get hundreds of thousands of dollars from Christmas in the Park, but we’ve run it at a loss when both concerts, Auckland and Christchurch, have been rained out. Other agencies and especially funding agencies, assume that because we have Christmas in the park we need nothing else. They see us as being on a big stage and being successful, but they don’t take into account that needs also increase with size.”

⁴² Weather reports obtained from <http://www.wunderground.com/history>.

Christmas in the Park is going to Surf Life-saving now. Happy bronzed bodies are an image that sits well with Coca-Cola."

There is no doubt that surf life-saving also needs funding. The model that pits voluntary agencies against each other may work in a business world for stimulating competition that streamlines efficiencies, but in this not-for-profit organization it is difficult to see what else could be made more efficient. The majority of those who work for Youthline do so for free, or for significantly less remuneration than they could receive elsewhere. Those who train as counsellors not only donate their time, they also pay to be involved. While training costs had been subsidised by taxpayers as part of Adult Community Education, a reallocation of education sector resourcing in the 2009 Budget results in the Government advising that as of 2010, Adult Community Education funding would cease.

[Excerpt: Ministry of Education. Budget 2009; Education Savings]

Budget 2009: Education savings

In the current economic environment, the focus is on improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of education expenditure and directing funding to priority areas that make the most difference to raising educational achievement.

As a result some programmes will stop or be scaled back.

(New Zealand Government Ministry of Education, 2009)

With a loss of funding, adult community education providers are directed toward non-government funding organizations, such as the Lotteries Grants Board and local alcohol Licensing Trusts. Having Youthline seek funding from organizations involved in gambling and alcohol is an irony that appears lost on politicians. Youthline lobby at the political level to get questions raised in Parliament (New Zealand Parliament, 2009a, 2009b) and are successful in turning around this budget cut. Meantime there is a sense that government funding, historically situated within Adult Community Education, is currently no less precarious than charitable goodwill.

Discourse around inclusion and exclusion goes beyond what is or isn't counselling, extending to what is or isn't education, what is and isn't valued. In the fiscally driven move of containing budgets, adult community education risks exclusion, being named as "hobby courses" and a "private good" in the rationalizations provided (New Zealand Parliament, 2009a). This enactment demonstrates the power differentials that exist between networks. Community education becomes an optional user-pays commodity, the value of which is positioned by the current government as being located individually rather than within the wider community. As a consequence substantial work is required in repositioning Youthline as a valid educational provider, albeit one outside of the formal education sector of schools and universities and where what is taught falls outside of the more prevalent normative assertions of education, focused upon raising educational achievement or of making a direct contribution to the "knowledge economy". Further work is put in to the political relationships: the Prime Minister, John Key, becomes the keynote speaker for Youthline's 40th birthday celebrations and so a further alliance is seemingly being forged. In his speech, the Prime Minister praises Youthline's work in his speech but also makes no promises when pressed by a journalist.⁴³

Money does not come to this cause without being solicited. Perhaps no organization can be sustained without making connections and nurturing relationships that meet the costs of outgoings, but in a not-for-profit organization this is a continual pressing concern. The volunteers pay for training to provide this service; they also pay an annual membership fee, as well as donating their time. In talking with paid and contracted staff, similarly, their time is often gifted; undercharging for services provided and receiving salaries lower than they might receive elsewhere. Stephen tells me it takes NZD\$4 million a year to run Youthline, NZD\$170,000 of this is on the phone bill alone. The financial cost of changing technologies has been significant; changes in CCTs have cost the

⁴³ The forging of this relationship can be viewed at <http://www.stuff.co.nz/lightbox/national/videos/3271159/Youth-and-John-Key?KeepThis=true> Nonetheless this remains a precarious relationship. Actions and good will are not always aligned, but there are attempts made to strengthen the political alliance and to gain commitment via the media, as evidenced on this further video: <http://tvnz.co.nz/national-news/youthline-faces-funding-cuts-3344667/video>.

organization over NZD\$350,000 in ten years (Mercier, 2010) and a 500% increase in telecommunication costs since the year 2000 (Bell, 2010).

Mobilising resources needed to keep Youthline accessible involves creative accounting and workarounds as part of daily practice. A contract with the Ministry of Social Development involves paying contracted Youthliners to staff a free access 0800 211 211 Family Services Community helpline available 9.00AM to 9.00PM seven days a week. This helpline is a government funded initiative to freely connect callers with social service agencies, thus bridging gaps identified in the health and social services model referred to as community care. Rerouting a phone call works as a creative solution to reduce fiscal barriers in accessing Youthline counselling. When a call or text comes through on a mobile phone the counsellor suggests that no charge accrues to their mobile phone if they call back on the free 0800 helpline number and ask for Youthline. A space of an open doorway separates one service from the other. On both sides of this divide are Youthline trained counsellors: to the right those taking calls are paid to patch callers through to the service they request; to the left is the Youthline counselling service staffed predominantly by volunteers.

This divide is less apparent to those providing the counselling service than to those who make use of the service. As a workaround it does not work. Contacting a counselling service is usually a stress-filled occurrence, to hang-up, ring an alternate number, and ask to be put forward to Youthline, is for almost all, a step too far. Tracing connections made and lost shows barriers are not only fiscal. Taking a step into counselling is hard, having to take two steps and talking to an extra person makes it harder still. It would seem the brick mother while attractive is not irresistible.

Building the brick mother analogy is about providing a supportive nurturing entity, one that is enduring, accessible and available through good or bad times, and notably, one that is actively constructed. Maintaining a resilient brick mother involves continuous work in strengthening ties that sustain her. Credibility and alliances with Government agencies, as well as with the other major provider of telephone helpline services in New Zealand, help build the organization's

resilience. The alliance with the community helpline is a point of tension. While it provides credibility in working with the Government and with the other major NZ helpline, Lifeline, it has not resolved the barriers young people have in phoning the service. In addition, being paid to staff the community service line has impact for staffing Youthline's voluntary roster. What was hoped for does not live up to the expectations but produces unexpected results. One is that the ties that bind the pool of voluntary counsellors to Youthline weakens with the inducement of money to work for an associated service where the work is reported as being less stressful while still having the "feel good" quality of working for the community.

Durability is a fluctuating attribute of this brick mother. She has survived so far for 40 years; her resilience is very much a function of the relationships of which she is made.

Strength in weak ties

Precarious funding is something this organization has always known. Working collaboratively with other not-for-profit organizations involves establishing boundaries, delineating areas of mutual exclusion in memorandums of understanding so that services are not doing damage to each other in competing for funds. At least this is the spoken intent. In practice, negotiating and defending these boundaries requires work. In the previous section I have pointed to how expectations and actualities do not always line up. I might have said, they *always* do not line up, there is always the unexpected and much of the work involved is in mitigating such effects.

Competing for government funding in providing a nationwide website targeting young people experiencing depression demonstrates alliances and intentions as fragile: a betrayal occurs, a memorandum of agreement is not honoured and Youthline does not get the contract. Establishing and maintaining boundaries around areas of interest risks appearing territorial, and being seen as territorial threatens the image of an embracing brick mother. The betrayal of an agreement is annoying, but Stephen just shakes his head and says, "*What can you do*". Working collaboratively sometimes involves "turning the other cheek." There is renegotiation, and reconfirmation of boundaries established between

organizations. Tolerance is extended given there is an appreciation of actions borne out of a competitive funding model. There is no space for bitterness: future alliances depend on sustaining relationships, particularly with major players.

Being a not-for-profit organization while involving goodwill and collaboration, does not deny the need to run a business effectively. The competing processes produce dissonance. When a new helpline, Lifetxt, petitions the Government for NZD\$500,000 to establish a text-based counselling service, media headlines report a “war of words” (“Funding bid for text-counselling sparks war of words,” 2007). Youthline is described as giving short shrift in retaliating against a competing newcomer to text counselling. Stephen as CEO of Youthline responds in a media interview saying there is already a nationwide text-based counselling service, a service currently known and used by young people, and that existing services should be supported. Further media reports quotes the founder of Lifetxt misquoting Youthline saying a text service would not be utilised. Misinformation abounds and counterarguments are construed as patch protection. Nevertheless, starting a new service costs, and it is a cost that Youthline perceives as coming at risk to its funding. Whether in actuality the development of another texting service would be a threat to Youthline’s survival is never known: Lifetxt does not succeed in petitioning for funds and without funding is unable to establish presence. Meantime, economic survival is essential for Youthline.

Attending to the relationships of this organization demonstrates a political life involving enactments of power. It is not just that connections are made but the intricacies of how both connections and disconnects are negotiated. The sustainability and growth of this organization is not only evident in the relationships established and maintained, but also in the actions that limit alliances between others. This is true for sustaining funding relationships as much as it is true for parting counsellors from a predilection for waiting for phone calls when there are many more text messages to be answered and the unanticipated consequences of having senior counsellors seduced into working on the community services line.

Interfering in alliances may involve deliberate acts, but also occurs by chance. Sometimes this has unanticipated negative sequelae on relationships, sometimes positive, sometimes both. During the 2010–2011 Christchurch earthquakes texting was possible when telephone connections were overloaded. The smallness of an SMS message allows it to get through as and when able; the message being “bounced” between cell towers until a gap occurs and allowing delivery. Being available through different platforms enabled Youthline to provide an emergency helpline even though it took several days before land-based phone lines could function. The mobile phone, particularly its text messaging capability, was demonstrably an effective actor in bearing messages.

The power of an actor is not evident in the size of an actor. What is a weak or strong is an enactment of particular contingent relationships.

Writing of weak and strong ties Granovetter (1983) argued that survival and flourishing of organizations could be mapped against weak rather than strong ties. His counter-intuitive *Strength of Weak Ties* described low-density networks with widely spread relational ties as providing a breadth of relationships that brought new information and skills to a network.

While Granovetter discussed the strength of weak ties as being evident in having multiple relationships rather than dependence on a few strongly committed ones, the Christchurch earthquakes, the digital traces of text conversations as well as the descriptions given by those who have made use of the service for counselling demonstrates that “strength” and “weakness” are situated constructs. There is however value in investigating the relationships that occur in terms of how they might commonly be construed as having more or less strength.

These digital traces point to strength being in the ability to do more, rather than less, when a person is aligned with a text capable phone.

[Digital traces. Examples of texts demonstrating the strength of “weak ties”]

Reception dont wk well here

Im sowe buht I really cnt kal wea not alowd 2 talk on the the fone after 9

Um i cnt tlk on phne cause Im unda da house

At the moment im n sick bay. nd would prefer txtn.

I cnt ring u cOz im stil On da bus

Ive hiddn in the toilets. i dnt want thm c me cry

I cant do this. I cant call these numbers! I try but i cant, its physically imposible.

Im sorry about hanging up On yous jus now.i kinda feel really bad n it was real sad thing to do ae. I wanna tlk but cant

Na. cnt talk. I cnt say how i feel. i find it 2 hard. easier 2 txt.

Got no money on my phone

Ive hung up so many times b4. It seemz imposible to gt up enuf courage

I cant i tried calling so many times but i just cant. Im useless i hate myself

In negotiating relationships with external consultants to work with this not-for-profit organization what might be assumed as a weaker tie, working on a minimal budget and involvement based in good will, paradoxically provides strong connections. Red, a contracted information technology consultant, tells me he secured the donation of NZ\$50,000 worth of obsolete computer hardware from Microsoft. Friends of friends are the substance of weak ties here; conversations of knowing someone, who knows someone, who can obtain something for free, are always welcome at Youthline. Working with the organization leaves people feeling good about themselves when they can make or enable donations, be it for time, money, or equipment obsolete in one setting but useful to Youthline.

This hardware, perhaps unsurprisingly, then produces ongoing demands. YORA does not adhere to the Monday to Friday 9.00AM to 5.00PM expectations of a working life, and evening as well as weekend callouts for Red and Diane are not uncommon. They describe cajoling the server back to work; she’s sensitive apparently. When YORA is “down” this work becomes visible. The physical entity that is YORA looks the same when s/he is working as when s/he is not. The only difference, to my unpractised eye, is that when s/he’s working, s/he does so alone. This space only ever comes to light when “the system fails”.

[Visual image, YORA with Red and Diane, August 2009]



What counsellors notice when the system is down is the absence of new messages and calls. While the server is down neither phone calls nor text messages are received. When the server gets back up, a sudden backlog of text messages need addressing. Text in its smallness manages such connecting; phone calls are simply lost. The ways of working are shaped by the nonhuman actor.

Tim Jacobsen, CEO of Lightbox, tells me he works for Youthline balancing charitable goodwill with minimal service charges. Tim does the software development for Youthline. He describes opting for open source software because this allows for solutions built communally from goodwill. In addition, he tells me that because open source software is usually written as interchangeable parts of code, future possibilities might then be incorporated. Such design is therefore with movement in mind. Tim also positions himself as replaceable. He suggests in using open software there is a community “out there” that Youthline can tap into if, or when, anything needs “tweaking”, if they have future problems, and for future needs as yet unknown. Again, a weak tie might be identified in having open source software that allows for substitutions of sections of code as and when required. The strength of “weak ties” is demonstrably as valid for non-human actors as much as it ever was for explaining the strength of human-to-human relationships.

However tensions between purpose built software and open sourced software are talked of differently in different spaces by different people. The argument provided by Tim persuades the CEO and Youthline's technology project group. Costs are one aspect in this debate, but so too is the ethos of open sourced software and a community of involvement. This is not an uncontested decision: might less time and therefore less cost be incurred in an unknown future if investment was in purpose built software? The question is unable to be answered. There is no money for this alternative, and no energy or resources to pour into investigating such an option.

The weak ties analogy can also be turned to considering Youthline's counsellor turnover. On average, between 2007 and 2010, Youthline (Auckland) trained 100 counsellors a year, yet those providing counselling in Auckland as evidenced by supervisory group membership number less than 60 (M. Haxell & Haxell, 2011). A high turnover prompts purposing and negotiating the vision and processes of the organization. While each new cohort is introduced to the philosophy and values of the organization, it is not just the new cohort of volunteers that adapt to work within the ethos of the organization; the organization changes to fit each new intake. While the turnover contributes to currency and relevance in terms of knowing the needs of young people, there is also a loss of institutional memory. The history of the organization becomes softer, even mythical; there is also a softening of policies developed for a past. Within a year of the first texting policy being established it is rejected. At Youthline's national conference a determination is made for a new policy to be developed. This is then negotiated locally before it can be presented as a remit to the next national conference. While such processes may appear slow, in the interim there is acceptance that the current practice is unacceptable and new ways of working evolve. The formation of the new policy is developed in conjunction with, and even following, practice rather than leading it.

The gift of text

There are a multitude of relationships leading to Youthline becoming textually active in counselling. I turn now to the Christmas of 2004 and the longstanding relationship Youthline has had with prominent New Zealand law firm, Simpson Grierson. In 2004 this company elected not to send Christmas cards, redeploying this money as a charitable act of corporate social responsibility, and so a gift of a personal digital assistant (PDA) is given to, and gratefully received by, Youthline. Herein begins one of the biggest changes this organization never saw coming.

[The Christmas gift: A Personal Digital Assistant (PDA)]



Initially the PDA is carried by counsellors but the intrusion of anywhere, anytime, availability, alongside an increase in text messages being received, becomes identified as a nuisance to other work, and to other relationships. The PDA despite its apparent design for portability becomes a fixture of the hub. Here messages are received on the PDA but the fiddliness of responding using the stylus and the small screen, plus costs associated with sending outgoing texts, results in the creative work-around of using the computer with its full sized keyboard, screen, and word counting capacity. Minimising costs, Youthline's outgoing texts are formulated as an email sent via Outlook Express through @txtmail.co.nz.

[Press release; "This Christmas season Simpson Grierson is teaming up with Youthline"(Simpson Grierson, 2004)]

This Christmas season Simpson Grierson is teaming up with Youthline to support an innovative new SMS text message service that will provide a new avenue of support for young people using their own medium of choice – the cellphone.

One of New Zealand's leading commercial law firms, Simpson Grierson, has again chosen to give financial support to a charity this year.

Youthline Director Stephen Bell says, "The text service is a new initiative that enables young people experiencing difficulties an additional level of accessibility, making it easier for them to seek help at what is often a challenging time of year."

Simpson Grierson Chairman, Rob Fisher says, "We believe the choice of Youthline as a charity partner is particularly appropriate for Simpson Grierson following our appointment this year as a chief legal adviser to Telecom and recent market research which demonstrates our technology leadership in the New Zealand legal marketplace."

"We're delighted to be able to apply the money that would otherwise be spent on printing and distributing traditional Christmas cards to this inventive technology based service for our young people."

"We trust our clients, suppliers and other recipients of Simpson Grierson Christmas cards in previous years will support our decision and feel proud that they too have helped contribute towards this worthy cause. We invite them to join with us in spreading the word about this new service for young people which can be accessed by texting 0274YOUTHS."

The concept of corporate social responsibility is gaining momentum in New Zealand. A recent Nielsen survey of more than 3750 New Zealanders found that 57 per cent of them buy products or services which cost more than products from their competitors because the company did good work socially.

www.youthline.co.nz txt: 0274YOUTHS ph: 0800 376633
www.simpsongrierson.com

Gift giving and receiving involves carefully choreographed movements. There is a hint of a question and subtlety in suggesting mutual benefit. Who initiates the idea? Who selects the gift? These questions are gauche, they place gifting and generosity at risk. Nonetheless, a conversation ensued. The subtleties of the conversation remain unknown. I cannot trace who suggested the gift. I do not know. I ask but my question is responded to with more questions than answers: If Simpson Grierson were to look at alternative ways of demonstrating generosity at Christmas, could Youthline work with this? Could Simpson Grierson? And Simpson Grierson's other business partners, clients, competitors? With Telecom being one of Simpson Grierson's clients, might they also become involved? Who

else might be prompted or persuaded further in contributing to a gift that keeps on giving.⁴⁴

Changing a business ethos of card giving that thanks associates and clients at Christmas is trumped by “corporate social responsibility”. Being conspicuously charitable involves a gift that is tangible, a gift that can be pointed to, is novel, and provides a media opportunity. I don’t know that this influenced the choice of gift. What I know is that the media release highlights the innovativeness, and draws attention not only to the businesses involved and the object gifted but also to the provision of a novel service.

For Youthline receiving the gift was a pleasure. The gift came with few start-up costs and a lot of potential to explore. The hope was of providing opportunities for young people, to connect, as described by the CEO in a press release (Youthline, 2005a), where texting is described as attractive to young people because it is discrete and portable. There was no reason not to move forward. There was no apparent harm being done. The financial costs could be borne; the technology could be adapted. This quickly develops into a need for adaptation as demand quickly outstrips the tentative beginning. Further technological investment is negotiated and so Youthline’s online rostering application (YORA) gets co-opted as a medium for online text counselling. This of itself is not enough to have counselling move from one platform to another; multiple further relationships need negotiating.

The initial 0274YOUTHS number provided by Telecom gave anyone with Telecom as their MNO free texting access to Youthline, but not for those on Vodafone, or any other MNO. Further negotiations ensue; eventually an agreement is reached with Vodafone that allows any text to Youthline to be free. Wanting a number as easy to recall as the emergency 111 service, Youthline manages to change the texting contact number to “234”. With the new and easily memorable number, as well as the service being freely accessible regardless of one’s MNO, the volume of texts being received increases.

⁴⁴ On the alt.usage.english Message Board Donna Richoux (2001) identifies the earliest documented use of the phrase “The Gift That Keeps on Giving” as a 1927 registered US trademark for the commercial purpose of marketing “talking machine records”.

To this point, responding to text messages has involved counsellors learning by doing, and making a decision to opt in, but the volume of texts coming in far outstrips this ad hoc arrangement. Shifting the reception of text messages from the hand-held PDA to Youthline's computers allows for the wider involvement of all Youthline employees in responding to messages. The work is distributed further, beyond the walls of the hub. It becomes possible for counselling to occur from any computer that is connected to YORA via a password-protected system to respond to text messaging.

With each computer at Youthline linked through YORA, an alert pop up window accompanied by frog-like croaking heralds the presence of new messages. A colour-coded system is added that allows the age of messages to be recognised. It is a solution to the volume of text messages coming in, but the solution is short lived. With increased volumes of text messages the occasional frog-like croak turns into an incessant disruption. Subject to individual computer operator control, the increasing volumes of text messages are silenced, the noise being seen as a distraction from "normal work". Employees of Youthline, whose work involves computers, experience the counselling work as an intrusion that needs returning to the counsellors in the hub. However the volume of messages keeps increasing while the number of counsellors who feel confident in responding to texts, as well as feeling confident with accessing YORA, remains small. There is a pressing need for sharing the skills required. Meantime, the volume of texts being received keeps rising.

Do we look good in this?

The negotiations of gift giving and receiving lead to further negotiations being required. The counsellors waiting for phone calls experience significant gaps between calls. The system for certifying counsellors to work solo begins to falter. There are not enough calls coming through, so fewer counsellors get certified to work solo, fewer of these can become mentors for others, it might have been anticipated fewer would then become group facilitators passing on their skills in training others, but no one saw this coming.

Interviewing Zoe, clinical manager at the time the PDA is received, she tells me of managing a roster for covering texts that come in on the PDA and recalls having it with her on Christmas 2004, lost is any recall of the content of such texts. The PDA's memory was too small to keep past messages, and Zoe does not recollect the content. When first received the PDA is treated as mobile, it is carried by counsellors, who go about their lives interrupted intermittently by texts that come in. In 2006 this changes. Although the technology would allow for a distributed service, the very human counsellors involved are assumed unreliable. I am told they could be too distracted to be appropriately responsive and there is peer support for counsellors onsite at Youthline house. The irony that requires counsellors within the organization to be physically present to receive support is not noted in a service that provides distance support. Controversies between old and new ways of working continue to ripple through practice as it develops.

In the making of new ways of working there is a sense of trialling what fits; my sense is that it's a bit like trying on new clothes, they may not suit or fit, but it's hard to tell in the abstract, they need to be tried on. And in the trying on, the hope of "will it fit?" quickly alters to a more critical appraisal "do we look good in this?"

When the text service is first started, it is positioned in a news release as "an additional level of accessibility" and a "new avenue of support" (Simpson Grierson, 2004). In June, 2005, texting Youthline is again described as an entrance point, "a great way to begin communicating" and as "another portal, another doorway, another way of entering a young person's world" (Youthline, 2005a). In the 2006 Annual Report (Youthline, 2006) there is reference to "text communications"; this differentiates what is done by text as being something different to counselling. When the term "text counselling" first appears in the document artefacts it is attached at the end of the Computer Security and Usage Policy (Youthline, 2007). This document is more interested in the maintenance and security of CCT's than with counselling. The directives in this document discouraged engaging with clients by text. Even though it is referred to as text counselling, the guidance of not engaging suggests a contradiction or a very loose understanding of what counselling might encompass. It is not until mid-2007 that

a loose leaflet addendum is added to the training manuals specific to text counselling. While it is true in one sense to say text counselling begins at Youthline in 2004, what this actually entailed took several years to settle.

Moving from the PDA to YORA for text messaging allows for an ease of data collection through a download to an Excel spreadsheet. Data gathering has never been easier for the organization. The numbers of phone calls being received can be compared with numbers of text messages received (see Figure 25).

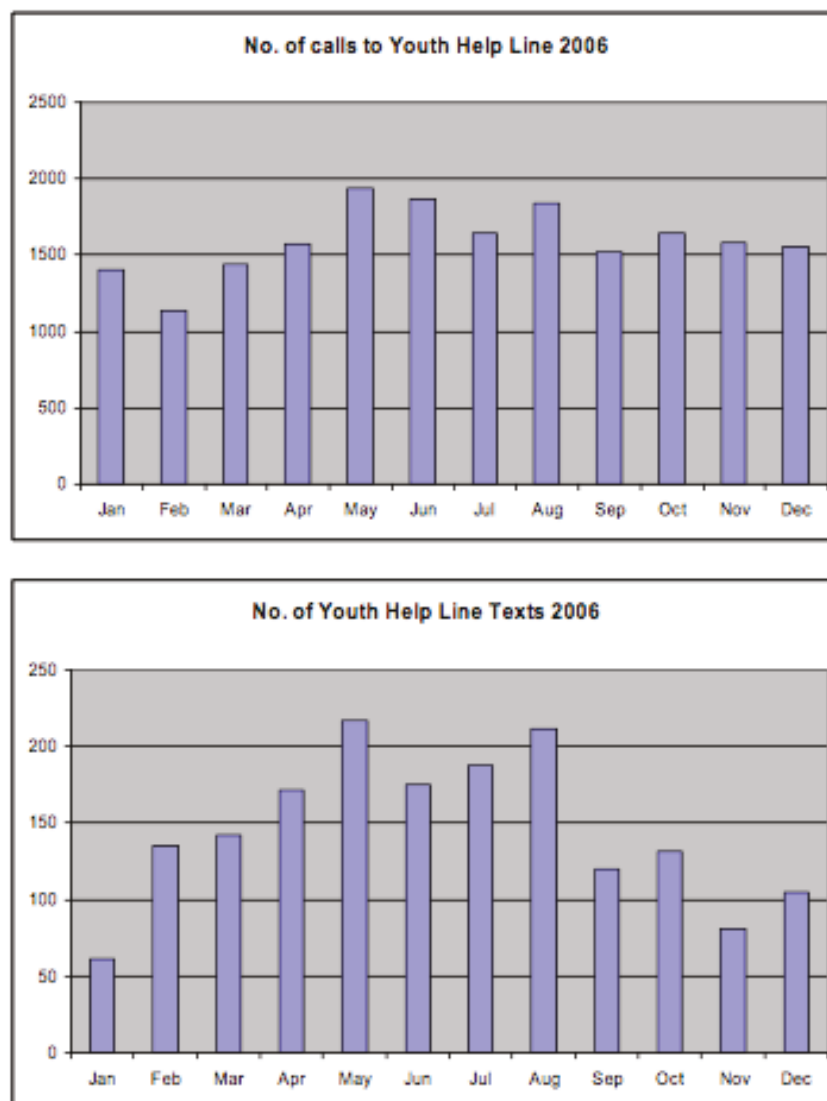
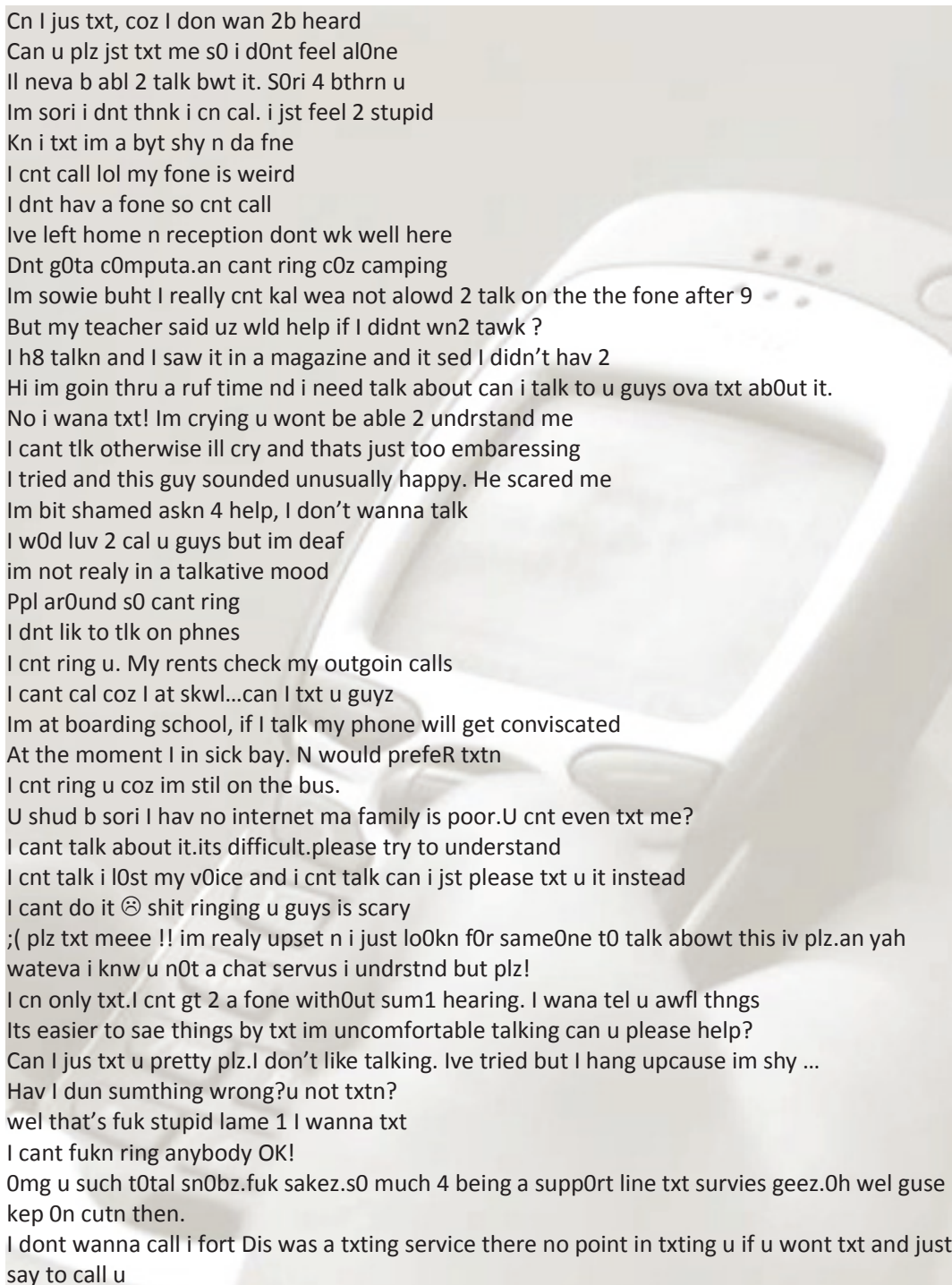


Figure 25. Calls and Texts Received by Youthline in 2006. Incoming calls to Youthline remain relatively stable across 2006 while text messaging follows an unrelated pattern. These graphs appear in the 2007 Youthline Annual Report and are described as demonstrating a new cohort of young people being able to access the helpline services (Bell, 2007). The graphed data can be read as persuasive, it is not meant to imply a similarity in the number of texts and phone calls being received. The change in scale on the Y axis was not intended as deliberately misleading; I am told the presentation is a function of journalistic licence in layout.

The data demonstrates the number of calls received remains reasonably stable across 2006. The impact of text messaging is therefore read by the organization as reaching a different cohort of young people. The data is presented in the annual report as evidence of an increased population of young people contacting Youthline. However, the graph associated with text messaging also prompts consideration for the steady rise and then decline in incoming texts. For the researcher this prompts the question “How come the rate of texting declines?” I am told that it is the novelty wearing off. There is an expectation that the service will stabilise providing a constant stream of text messages that are secondary to the work of telephone counselling.

In December 2007, when the 234 text number is established, a trace of all text messages received through YORA allows a further means of accounting. YORA places a continuous screen of messages in front of counsellors and “nests” the threads into conversations based on the individual identifier of a mobile phone number from which messages are sent and received. It becomes possible to analyse the content of text messages. Analysing texts received between December 2007 and May 2008, I note that 20 percent of text messages sent to Youthline indicate dissatisfaction with the service. There is frustration at not being able to engage a counsellor using the texting medium, and overwhelmingly there is rejection of alternate options that include email or calling.

[Digital traces. Texting as a preferred medium for interactions with Youthline. Sample selected from messages received by Youthline, between 1/11/07 and 28/5/08.]



Cn I jus txt, coz I don wan 2b heard
 Can u plz jst txt me s0 i d0nt feel al0ne
 Il neva b abl 2 talk bwt it. S0ri 4 bthrn u
 Im sori i dnt thnk i cn cal. i jst feel 2 stupid
 Kn i txt im a byt shy n da fne
 I cnt call lol my fone is weird
 I dnt hav a fone so cnt call
 Ive left home n reception dont wk well here
 Dnt g0ta c0mputa.an cant ring c0z camping
 Im sowie buht I really cnt kal wea not alowd 2 talk on the the fone after 9
 But my teacher said uz wld help if I didnt wn2 tawk ?
 I h8 talkn and I saw it in a magazine and it sed I didn't hav 2
 Hi im goin thru a ruf time nd i need talk about can i talk to u guys ova txt ab0ut it.
 No i wana txt! Im crying u wont be able 2 undrstand me
 I cant tlk otherwise ill cry and thats just too embaressing
 I tried and this guy sounded unusually happy. He scared me
 Im bit shamed askn 4 help, I don't wanna talk
 I w0d luv 2 cal u guys but im deaf
 im not realy in a talkative mood
 Ppl ar0und s0 cant ring
 I dnt lik to tlk on phnes
 I cnt ring u. My rents check my outgoin calls
 I cant cal coz I at skwl...can I txt u guyz
 Im at boarding school, if I talk my phone will get conviscated
 At the moment I in sick bay. N would prefer txtn
 I cnt ring u coz im stil on the bus.
 U shud b sori I hav no internet ma family is poor.U cnt even txt me?
 I cant talk about it.its difficult.please try to understand
 I cnt talk i l0st my v0ice and i cnt talk can i jst please txt u it instead
 I cant do it ☹ shit ringing u guys is scary
 ;(plz txt meee !! im realy upset n i just lo0kn f0r same0ne t0 talk abowt this iv plz.an yah
 wateva i knw u n0t a chat servus i undrstnd but plz!
 I cn only txt.I cnt gt 2 a fone with0ut sum1 hearing. I wana tel u awfl thngs
 Its easier to sae things by txt im uncomfortable talking can u please help?
 Can I jus txt u pretty plz.I don't like talking. Ive tried but I hang upcause im shy ...
 Hav I dun sumthing wrong?u not txtn?
 wel that's fuk stupid lame 1 I wanna txt
 I cant fukn ring anybody OK!
 Omg u such t0tal sn0bz.fuk sakez.s0 much 4 being a supp0rt line txt survies geez.Oh wel guse
 kep On cutn then.
 I dont wanna call i fort Dis was a txting service there no point in txting u if u wont txt and just
 say to call u

Whether the reasons given are true or not is irrelevant; people act on beliefs and preferences, and beliefs about appropriateness, access, and availability influence use of a service. A disconnect is evident between what those who are connecting with the service are wanting and what is being provided. This disconnect is also experienced by some who provide the service.

[Interview notes, Erin, Triage counsellor, November 2007]

"I hate apologising all the time. I have to do a lot of apologising. They get angry; about the 6 text policy that is."

[Interview notes, Justin, Triage counsellor, August 2008]

"The 5–6 text thing, is it three each way? I'm not sure. I have aimed for that. At first I'd say it at the outset. Then I tried building rapport and saying it later, sometimes they get angrier because they thought I would engage and what do you do when that 7th text comes through? And sometimes it's serious, how to decide?"

Anthea tells me "it's all about finding voice" but contradictions occur with how voice is and isn't attended to. In elaborating further, Anthea states, "The phone was always primary and text was always to link with more, not to maintain isolation... it's a stepping stone; text to email to phone." Yet Stephen tells me "access was always important, the phone was always important, being anonymous was important."

Contrasting Stephen's statement with Anthea's, raises the contradictions: there is a disputed history. However, these statements are not made to argue a past, they are made to argue a particular future. For Stephen the emphasis is on access and getting appropriate help. For Anthea it is also about getting appropriate help and access for this. I try not to privilege one argument over another. I point to the discrepancies here because they are discrepancies; they are used to illustrate how things are: that people experience different practice realities.

The following story is a story I have told earlier in this thesis. Here it is told again. In this telling the story serves a different purpose. Here the story is a transcript of what I am told by Stephen.

[Transcript of Interview, Stephen, Youthline CEO, October 2008]

"I have lots of texts with [REDACTED] and ummm and she's 12 years old going on 30 is living in the back of beyond, out in the wop-wops, and even a few kilometres from townships and she's having angsty stuff with [REDACTED] 'bout boys and relationships and stuff and she's texting me, and sometimes she gives me a call, and there's also me saying try out the Youthline texting thing."

Anyway it went that one evening she took off from home, on a back road.

It's dark, and she's just, you know, 12 or 13, just all of that.

It makes me so...y'know? It's the middle of nowhere.

And I wasn't available for some reason and anyway she texts Youthline and Youthline replied, which was great!

And she said that, she said she had got through it.

But she said she felt like she had done something wrong. She thought she was doing it wrong because they replied back with "give us a ring here's our number" and thought initially well they don't want to, they don't really want to text, they don't want to communicate with me, and that somehow you have to ring.

And that somehow she'd done it wrong to text.

That texting was wrong.

She'd got that kind of a message.

That texting was wrong.

That she was in the wrong.

That she was wrong.

So I talked to her about it.

And there's a couple of things this speaks to about stuff now.

The preferred way that she wanted to communicate with us was by text.

She was running away.

She didn't want to talk to anybody.

Probably it was far too vulnerable making to talk, to talk to some stranger.

And probably what made her keep texting was I was there sort of, saying if you want to text Youthline, anytime, to do it.

And yeah, she said it was good, and it was helpful, and she went back home eventually.

But also, she interpreted the message as saying they didn't really want her texting.

I talked about it in the open space on marae [July, 2007], where we have a space held where people talk of what's important to them and what brings them to their work in Youthline.

And it went a little bit further that. When I was at the Youthline National Conference [August 2007] in Wellington I must have talked in a similar way, and then there was a small working group around texting. There was this young woman, from Youthline Christchurch who took on the role of developing a new text policy that was aiming to use text to communicate rather than using it as a doorway. And she's writing something now that is of course going through a million people. Youthline has it going through everybody agreeing before it gets passed on.

It is so lovely and it's so damned bureaucratic.

In some ways I appreciate it more as I get older, agreements and consensus. But I appreciate and then there's processes [talks of another example where change requires committees and consensus] there's power and control. People getting their needs met rather than clients. Its not okay to hold an organization to ransom whether its fiscal things or legal, however that gets balanced. There are people's needs here.

I think growth from a year ago to now is people getting what they want from the service."

It is a powerful story. How could one resist the invitation that something needs to change? The story is told, and retold. I am told of it three times more by those in the organization. It is told to prompt consideration of differing realities. And it does.

Up to this point the practice of text counselling was being shaped as a portal, an entrance point; text messages were acknowledged, feelings affirmed, reaching out for help framed as a strength, and an invitation talk more is extended through a phone call, email, or face-to-face appointment. The story told, and retold, interrupts this. The scenario describes a potentially dangerous situation with a young person in a remote location after dark, being told they were not doing it right, and inferring they were doing something (else) wrong. Current practice is being problematised. The implication is that the policy is unsafe. The storytelling

invites alternate views. Assumptions and positions taken become unsettled, a renegotiation occurs.

The considerable bureaucratic process of change takes five months. Practice does not wait on this. With a fluidity that is difficult to trace, the digital traces of text messages sent and received at Youthline begin to change: text conversations lengthen. In the digital traces on YORA previous text conversations provide a record of how colleagues are navigating new ways of interacting. These are being used as templates, adapted by others as they trial ways of interacting to which they are unaccustomed. An informal change is occurring; there is a loosening of association with the current policy as counsellors interpret work on a new policy as evidence the current policy is defunct.

This is evidence that policy does not control practice, and does not police itself. Responses inside of a counselling relationship are, and always have always been, contingent. There is agreement being openly shared by counsellors that the policy needs to change and that is sufficient justification for moving outside of previously held parameters. Rather than guiding practice, the policy is a “follower of fashion”.

The network reconfigures. An alteration in one area pulls on other actors. Just as Youthline’s clients pulled in a direction creating tensions that result in a change in approach, so the approach now taken creates a cascade of further reconfigurations. Some reconfigurations are not openly discussed; the new policy leads to abandonment of the current one, and no-one is seen, or heard, fighting to keep it current. What is said and not said, actors seen and no longer seen, suggests another story. As a researching guest invited inside of the working space it feels an impertinent to question, to ask what seems to be avoided, to ask of people no longer visible. The reconfiguring of practice involves freedom to explore new ways of responding to text, to explore a new policy, but not the freedom to adhere to what was.

It's the same but different

Counselling is still occurring but it happens in near silence. The phones hardly ring anymore. This study raises more questions than might be answered: If a new client group was attracted to text counselling, what of those who preferred to talk?

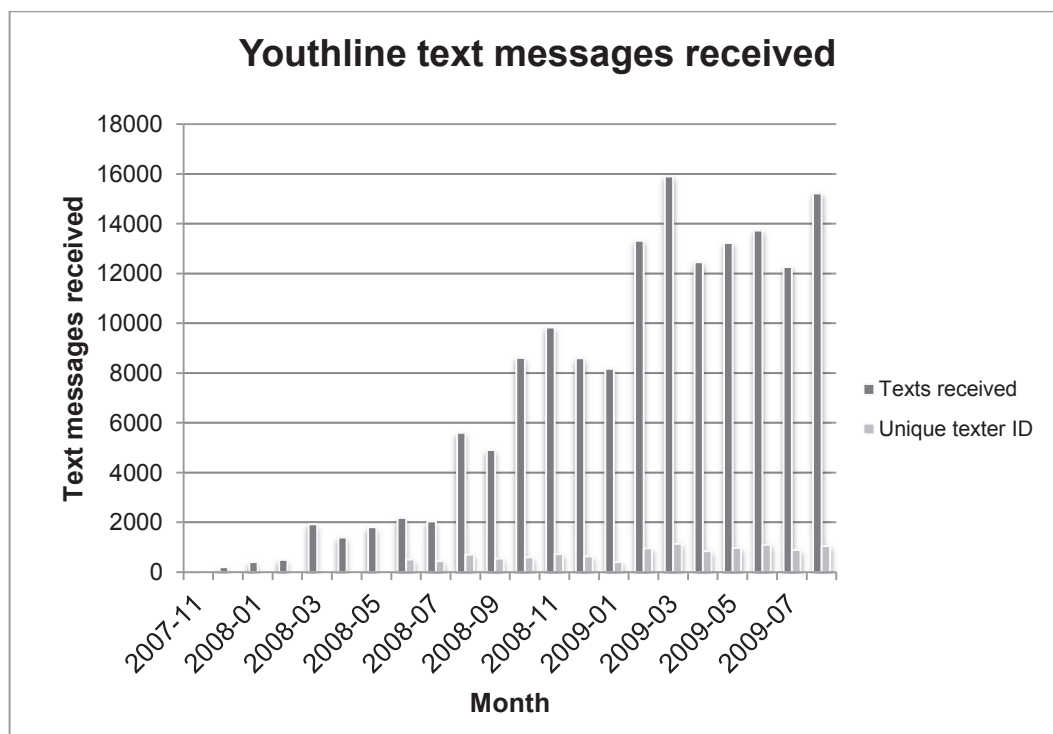


Figure 26. Text Messages Received by Youthline, November 2007–August 2009. The number of text messages being received rapidly increase following the change of engaging in text-based conversations for counselling. The graph appears in Youthline’s Annual Report 2010, and is referred to as evidence of the success of texting as a medium for young people accessing Youthline. The Annual Report is a persuasive document that talks of what is being achieved: of positive outcomes; of graphs that show increased interactions. Noticeably absent is any graph of decreasing interactions; a decrease in phone calls to Youthline is not presented visually.

There are two main issues made visible in graphing this data. The first is that a significant shift has occurred; the use of text messaging has greatly increased as a preferred means for initiating contact with Youthline. The second is that the number of people making contact, as indicated by the individual identifier of a phone number, increases. While this is to a lesser amount, this indicates texted interactions are being sustained and is suggestive of counselling conversations occurring.

While there is no formal advertising that might account for the increase, knowledge of the text counselling service continues to spread. How does a service get to be known in the absence of advertising? With the pixel pushing capabilities of a mobile phone, “going viral” becomes a possibility.

[Interview with Megalyn, August 2009]

“I texted my sister telling her “Did u know Youthline does txt counselling 4 free, # 234” and she sent it to 6 people and she had sure knowledge that one of these people forwarded it on to another 12.”

Knowledge of the service spreads. In Gladwell’s (2000) *The Tipping Point* he describes innovation spreading as if by contagion, an effect he attributes to three agents of change: the law of the few, the stickiness factor, and the power of context. With the law of the few, few people are needed to effect change, but what these people have is connections. Stickiness he described in terms of a memorable message, one that is more likely to be carried from one site to another. And the power of context broadly encompasses a supportive environment. However, in the example above, the result is less about Megalyn being connected to others than it is about her enhanced connectivity via her mobile phone with perfect recall of people and their phone numbers. The stickiness afforded by her mobile phone allows not so much for a memorable message but one that is easy to pass on; its “stickiness” relating to permanence and accuracy unless deliberately modified. An intact message can accurately pass on key elements: the service is free; the message is accompanied by the text number; and, there is the inherent assumption of endorsement in a message forwarded between friends. Gladwell has not considered the power of context as one of a network, as the combined effect of human and non-human actors in an actor-network, but this is an alternate explanation for what he glosses as a supportive environment. The supportive context fails to describe what is involved, failing to account for how some are influenced and not others, attributing a determinism that may not be warranted.

Returning to the rise in text messaging, the impact of increasing volumes creates a dilemma for Youthline. Alongside increasing volumes is the lack of preparation for telephone counsellors. There are more messages coming in than phone calls,

and the organization struggles with both extending the skill base of their current volunteer counsellors and developing strategies for training new counselling volunteers. Seminars introducing volunteer phone counsellors to YORA involve a media display unit to project “YORA” on to a wall-sized screen. Authentic, de-identified, live streaming of text-based counselling is shifted from the computer screen where client and counsellor engage, to a space where one counsellor types informed by a room full of volunteers undertaking training. The process is less than ideal. There is a need to demonstrate the equipment to all volunteers but undertaking this one-to-one in the hub is time consuming. Working within “a needs must” pragmatism, authenticity in training is counterpoised against privacy. The conversations are “private to the organization” but not as intimate as is probably imagined.

A second YORA based training session six months later does not go as planned. The “system is down”. The system failure prompts alternate training strategies.

[Field notes, as participant observer in a Youthline counselling training group, the 9th two-hour session on basic youth community counselling skills, preceded by 60 hours in a course on personal development. June 2009]

The eight voluntary trainee counsellors split into two groups. One group stays put while the other goes to a room on the other side of the community centre. It matters that they are apart for their learning involves practicing text-based counselling and the simulation requires no cues beyond what is read on the text message. One of the groups is designated as a client, and the other designated as counsellor. The client group is given a piece of paper on which messages can be written and passed between the groups. This way there are no costs accrued for mobile phone charges and the size of the written text is easy for all four people to look at simultaneously. They are reminded that they have 160 characters or less, that the YORA Youthline computer system is configured to one response per incoming text, and that if a message is longer than 160 characters the latter part will not go through.

The group designated as client construct a text message initiating counselling. They make it brief, it's less than 160 characters, and it's direct.

The person who is running this experience for these prospective counsellors acts as the mobile network, a go-between, transporting the message between “the client” and “the counsellor”.

“The counsellor” notes the directness of the message received. Talking aloud they consider a range of counselling oriented responses based on their prior knowledge of (auditory) telephone counselling. They recognise they have a skill-set that they might adapt, and talk about what they would say if they were taking a call on the helpline. Knowing they have 160 characters, they consider whether or not to reply in txt speak. They choose to match language with what was received, just as they match the familiarity or complexity of language used in a phone conversation. Having chosen to respond “in kind” prospective counsellors teach each other some of the nuances of txt speak as they use it in their responses. They want to say so much; constrained, they shorten the message. They let the person know they have reached Youthline and the content of what was in the message is acknowledged.

While their message is carried between rooms they continue teaching each other text speak in the waiting time: what is idk, w/e, common use with phonetics, and how you might typically shorten a message by dropping some of the vowels. In the other room the “client” deciphers the text speech and replies expanding on what had been going in a further two sentence message given to the go-between.

Receiving the message, “the counsellor” debates which part of the message to respond to; what’s most important? They settle on acknowledging a middle ground, responding with, “things sound tuff at the moment, how r u doing with it all?” The youngest person in this “counsellor” group assumes an expert role in translating counselling messages assisting those more confident in their skills but less confident in the medium to construct messages. They teach each other a bit more txt speak, a bit more also about counselling. The response formulated is encouraging of the client suggesting “u can call us 4 free, there r a lot of issues involved so it might be easier 2 talk” and they give Youthline’s free number. As a group they discuss their counselling concerns; they want to know the person’s safe and they notice how constrained they feel with the limited cues they have to work with. They express a concern that they don’t know how old the person is and weigh up asking this and wondering if this might use up too many words or if questioning early on in the relationship might interfere in building trust. They send

a message back. While waiting they joke that the go-between is a little slow, “it must be the new 3G system causing a bit of a delay”.

Meantime the group designated as client spontaneously sends a new message on a new page, there is a new scenario. A new “client” has entered the text counselling relationship. The group undertaking the counselling side of this relationship is now responding to the messages of two clients. They recognise in the texted words a new counselling scenario has been initiated. The message is very direct and seen as frightening. This one says, “I killed my friend”. There’s some quick discussion, comment on the directness, concerns for how and when, and then consideration for safety. They write back acknowledging the text having been received by Youthline, acknowledging what’s been said by reflecting back feelings. They struggle with responding to the abruptness of the message and want to know when this occurred and if the person texting is safe. They configure a message that acknowledges the person’s distress, checks if the texter is safe, and which invites the person to phone in using Youthline’s free phone number, Meantime they also receive a response to their earlier message involving their first texter. Rather than splitting attention between two scenarios, “the counsellor” group subdivides. A discussion of what’s happening on both conversations occurs while the messages are in transit and they await a return. They share thoughts on whether they might be coming across as too bossy or intrusive, too inquisitive, or too authoritative, and develop strategies for actively working at “softening” the message. They use emoticons, they use text speak, they use “maybe” and “hav u thought about”.

The first “client” texts they have run away from home. When the counselling group receives the message they discuss how to check on safety and how to raise options the person may, or not be, aware of. They construct a message reflecting back some of the emotional content and addressing concerns regarding safety by asking.

The two text conversations continue, simultaneously. They keep the focus on reflecting, affirming, and opening up options. And in the spaces between texts they teach each other, suggesting ways things might be phrased; critiquing how such messages might be interpreted. They also discuss the changes Youthline undergoes with funding, of how there is now a free text number regardless of the mobile network a client might be on and how to access the community service line that would makes phoning in for free regardless of the mobile network operator. The facilitator teaching counselling skills also uses this as a teaching moment for considering how Youthline’s crisis policy might

inform what is written and communicated. One of these options includes phoning the person.

About 20 minutes later and after about 16 interactions, the “client”, who had described a car accident resulting in the death of a friend a few weeks earlier, requests an appointment for face-to-face counselling. The other client scenario seems to have reached an end point following prompts on possible options for safe accommodation for the night finishing with “thanx and bye”.

In the debrief that follows the teaching session, the groups both comment on there being no nuances of voice, the message comes in silence. There is no body-language; there is no visible body. The auditory cues for gender and age are absent. The paralinguistic cues of pitch, rate, and volume are absent, even interpreting silence becomes problematic. Both groups also experienced what felt like a long wait between messages; the delays may have been as long as five minutes. Thinking of what to write, editing what is written, as well as waiting for it to be transported slows a conversation down. The client group said when they had sent two parts in one message they were sometimes surprised which part the text counsellor group responded to. Those designated “counsellors” were concerned about the absence of cues, contrasting this with their previous training in (auditory) telephone counselling. They talk of how this medium provoked a directness that conflicted with their training in taking calls. They describe having to reign in a tendency to ask questions and to provide short sharp advice, working consciously to open up possibilities rather than closing these down. The statement “it’s the same but different” is made.

There is surprise when we find ourselves oriented differently to objects that we thought were going to be doing things for us. The pervasiveness of a human-centric way of being is confronted, and what becomes apparent is new ways of being are negotiated within the relationship. The use of texting has disrupted service provision; the phones barely ring at Youthline now, young people still have problems, and Youthline still provides counselling, but for the most part this occurs with never a word being said or heard.

However, those involved do not name texting a disruptive technology. The genealogy of text counselling is not “disruptive technology meets thumb

generation and birth an enfant terrible”. There was no sudden change from this to that. Texting came to mobile phones slowly, it flowed on as a preference for some people and not for others because of particular contingent relationships, and has come into counselling at one particular organization because of further relationships. The nascent practice of text counselling continues to develop not because of any inherent attributes, nor because of any inherent properties in those who would make use of it.

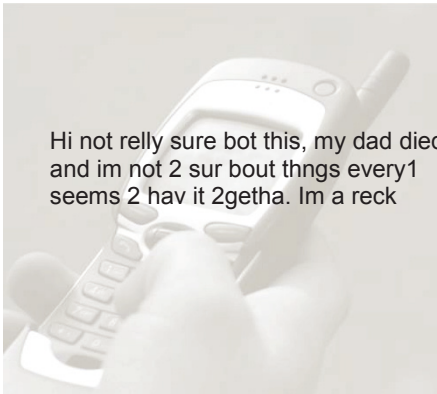
To refer to this technology as “disruptive” is a retrospective naming. What is “different” has a short life cycle in an organization with a high turnover. Only by folding time is a radical alteration able to be recognised; only those with institutional memory of “what was” notice the quiet oddity of “what is”. To refer to the technology as disruptive is therefore a positioned naming. This relational story tells of disruption differently. Just who is disruptive, manipulative, resistant, troublesome, or obliging, cooperative, or willing, very much depends on whose reality is being expressed.

What Bower and Christensen (1995) name disruptive technologies is evident here but only as a retrospective naming, and only for those whose experience is disrupted. For those who have always texted, there is no disruption. The counsellors who experienced a series of transitions also report no sudden change. What is reported is a series of successive approximations toward a way of working that progressively becomes more settled. As Stephen tells me, “the work always involves ambiguity, there are always approximations towards getting it “more right”.

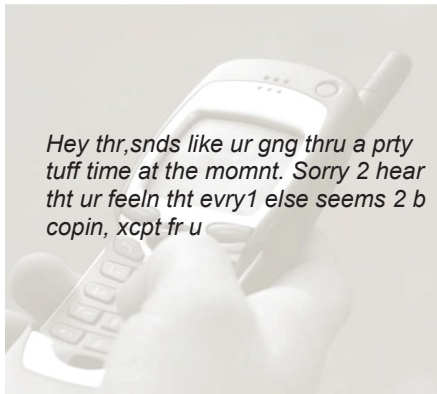
Re-assembling practice

Counselling practice is reconfigured, there are changes but there are also aspects that stay the same. People are still seeking help, and still getting the help they seek.

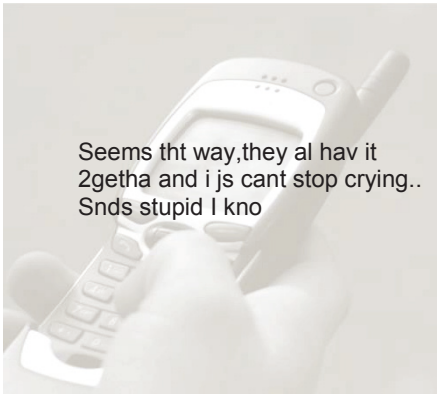
[Digital trace of a text counselling conversation; texts sent to Youthline are on the left, text responses from Youthline are on the right and in italics. August 2008]



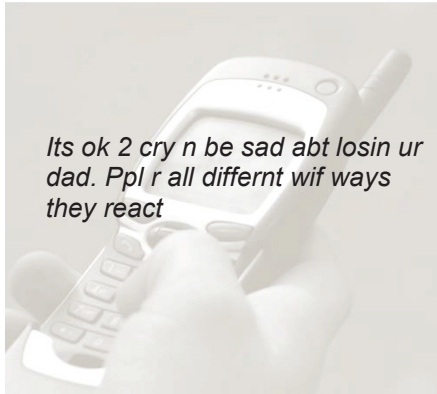
Hi not relly sure bot this, my dad died
and im not 2 sur bout thngs every1
seems 2 hav it 2getha. Im a reck



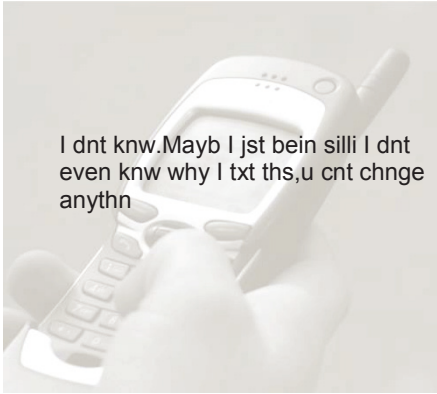
*Hey thr, snds like ur gng thru a prty
tuff time at the momnt. Sorry 2 hear
tht ur feeln tht evry1 else seems 2 b
copin, xcpt fr u*




Seems tht way, they al hav it
2getha and i js cant stop crying..
Snds stupid I kno



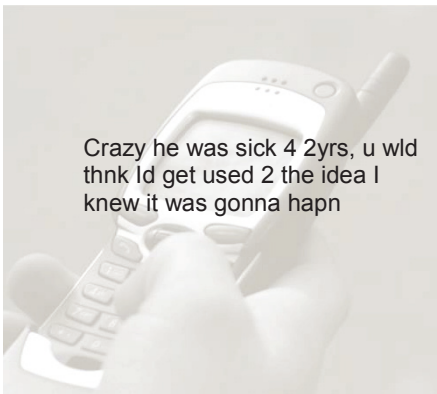
*Its ok 2 cry n be sad abt losin ur
dad. Ppl r all differnt wif ways
they react*



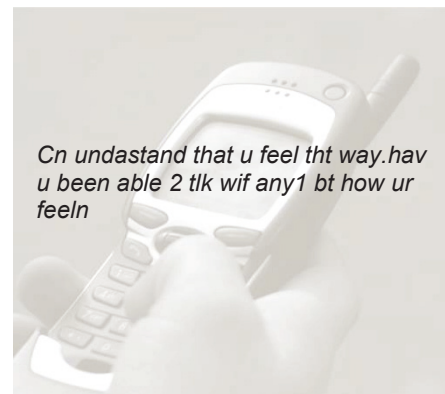
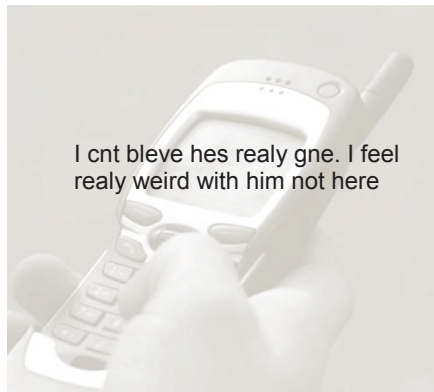
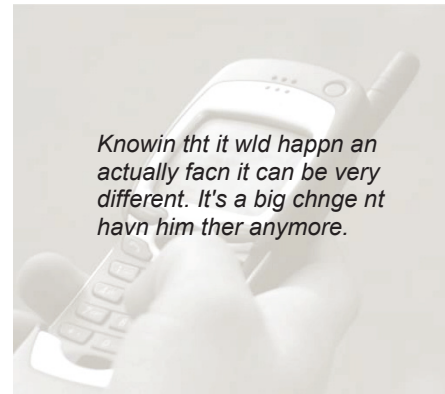
I dnt knw. Mayb I jst bein silli I dnt
even knw why I txt ths, u cnt chnge
anythn



*We cnt change it, but we can
offr supprt n b here to txt n tlk 2.*



Crazy he was sick 4 2yrs, u wld
thnk Id get used 2 the idea I
knew it was gonna hapn



While some feared that text would deny the expression of emotion, this is shown to be untrue. The digital trace above is of a texted counselling scenario regarding bereavement; there is no absence of feeling. The counselling conversation is about being supported through what is experienced as emotionally overwhelming. The “necessary and sufficient” conditions of counselling that were identified by Carl Rogers (1957) can be discerned in this texted counselling conversation. Empathy is discerned in the accurate appreciation and acknowledgment of feelings that this person has expressed. Unconditional positive regard is evident in showing acceptance of the person in their choice of medium and in their preferred option of taking this at their own pace. There is congruence apparent with care and

respect being shown. I have not portrayed the conversation in its entirety; I do not need to. What I have shown is sufficient to say counselling by text is possible and is being done. Counselling is being practiced into being.

As demonstrated, a range of stories can be told of the changes experienced at Youthline. My intent here is of for stories told that express realities as they have been experienced and encountered. Such realities are held in tension. They are not forced into a singular or homogenous rendering. I tell of reality as multiple.

The text counselling service developed as an heterogeneous assembly of things, of actors, human and otherwise. Inside of the particular hinterland of possibilities, of paths already worn, and with actors both human and otherwise, Youthline now provides a service called text counselling, and what this involves continues to be reconfigured; practice does not stand still.

There is no single timeline that delineates the most important events that unfold, as if this leads to that in any uncontested way. Punctuations in time can be made, but for the many different participants, many different timelines could be plotted. A socio-technical-political assemblage is described instead. What I have written here is not the only assemblage possible (indeed, there were many alternate renditions of this writing that you as a reader do not see). The research story accounted for here, as with any other, is a performance; a rendering of what was seen and heard and experienced. As such, it cannot help but be a partial; incomplete and biased. This cannot be otherwise.

In telling of slices of practice, I find myself uncomfortable with the implication that the stories might in some way be reconstituted as a snapshot or as an image of still life. A revision is needed. The portrayal of the object is better described as having an identity formed in relation to others. This shifts the focus to looking at the network, at the vibrancy of ongoing movements, of hopes and fears that may also find further expression.

I have discussed how for some counsellors text counselling was a portal, a step in the door. For others, texting provides a means of support, a way of reaching young people in the medium of their choosing. While for some young people,

texting for counselling was all that was wanted. An alternate rendering of text counselling practice has it contributing to emotional avoidance; a crutch for the intimacy challenged. To provide counselling by text might then be construed as indulging a deviance that risks contributing to a young person's developmental delay. Mobilising fear of this kind resulted in young people being labelled manipulative for their determination to have counselling provided in the medium of their choosing, and as was described of Jasmine's experience, positioned young people as wrong. Reals are being shaped here and identities made for better and worse.

This part of the storytelling ends here, but the making and shaping of technology as practice does not. In these tellings I have demonstrated the heterogenic assembly of beings, and the movements between them, that create text counselling. Those involved in its making have not always pulled together, sometimes they pull apart, at times they are aligned, sometimes they converge. I have pulled together these stories but it would be a mistake to assume that this is the only assemblage possible. It would also be a mistake to consider text counselling as comprising of a definitive practice. Text counselling is shown as being more than one thing but less than many. It is more than one thing because the performance is assembled differently on every occasion. Where the content of text counselling provided by Youthline can be mapped against the conditions deemed necessary and sufficient, or at least very important to counselling (see p. 17) and the effective conditions of health promotive work are being met (as discussed on p. 54) it is reasonable to name what occurs as text counselling though the entity remains fluid. At the same time not just anything can be called text counselling. Where empathy, positive regard, or congruence are lacking then it becomes increasingly difficult to defend what occurs as counselling whether by text or otherwise. And where young people are not making use of a service because of costs, or because they do not see it as being accessible and acceptable, then it fails on criteria identified as important to health promotive and youth development work. Text counselling remains more than one thing but is not just anything.

While I close this chapter, enactments of change do not stop. In describing these stories of change it is evident that what is performed might also be performed differently.

Chapter 7: Enacting the Ontological Space

How to interfere in and diffract realities in particular locations to generate more respectful and less dominatory alternatives. How to trope, to bend versions of the real, to strengthen desirable realities that would otherwise be weak. (Law, 2008, p. 637)

Introduction

This thesis started as a study of change and how practice is shaped. Frustrated in my attempts to effect change in an educational setting I sought a deeper understanding of the complexities of change. My interest in understanding change coincided with Youthline's use of emergent technologies in counselling and their interest in having this studied. This resulted in a more local question evolving: what happens to youth-oriented telephone counselling when the platform used for counselling shifts? This question quickly transitions to what is both shaped and shaping because the question originally posed neglected that we are not separate from the things we use and the things we do. Extending on how counselling practices are brought into being and sustained, I also ask what is going on for better or for worse? Again, the question morphs because there are aspects identified that would position texting, and text counselling in particular, as being both good and bad, simultaneously. Furthermore, in the enactments of text counselling multiple reals are being made. In appreciating that our realities are created or enacted through practices, a non-innocent undertaking evolves, dedicated to strengthening particular realities and weakening others. In the writing of this work, as well as in the reading, *we* are part of the complexities involved. In the socio-technical-political story that is this thesis, there is also a performance that extends beyond the descriptive account as realities uncovered are made stronger on being talked about.

In this chapter I draw attention to the ontological politics that bring things, more and less, into being. This is followed by a discussion of the dynamics involved in emergent practice. I draw attention to the things imagined, and how this has

influence in what is enacted. To address the concerns of multiple audiences, a series of conclusions end this thesis. These are not intended to provide closure. The concerns of young people will not go away, and the relationships that shape practice will not end here. These conclusions instead mark a moment in time that informs practice for uncertain futures.

Text counselling

Words are never found alone, nor surrounded only by other words; they would be inaudible.

An actant can make an ally out of anything, since nothing is by itself either reducible or irreducible... and since there is no equivalence without the work of making equivalent.... A word can thus enter into a partnership with a meaning, a sequence of words, a statement, a neuron, a gesture, a wall, a machine, a face... anything, so long as differences in resistance allow one force to become more durable than another. Where is it written that a word may associate only with other words? Each time the solidity of a string of words is tested, we are measuring the attachment of walls, neurons, sentiments, gestures, hearts, minds, and wallets – that is, a heterogeneous multitude of allies, mercenaries, friends and courtesans.
(Latour, 1998, p. 183)

Words of themselves, spoken, written, or translated to txt spk do not of themselves perform counselling. And a device such as a text capable mobile phone does not of itself translate what might be said. Instead there are relationships being negotiated and these relationships that shape practice continue to evolve. This thesis tells stories of the heterogeneous multitude required that nurtured the nascent practice of text counselling at Youthline, NZ.

Ontological politics

I began with a question of how the future is imagined, and what might be done to enact it. The question alters with regard to the site of study and leads to questions

of what is hoped for, what is feared, and how such imaginings contribute in shaping practice. The implication is that practice might be shaped for the better.

Informed by ANT sensibilities what is known is that:

- Whether things stay the same or change, involves work. This work is distributed and involves heterogeneous actors, human and otherwise.
- Emergent practice is negotiated in a hinterland of possibility and created within a network of contingent relationships.
- In such spaces what is known is only ever partial, both in the sense that what one knows is both biased and fractional.
- Activity is continuous, distributed, and expressions of agency will always result in unexpected sequalae.
- Action cannot be “taken for good” with confidence. Taking “action for good” is suspect whether considered as a normative ethic or in terms of action with permanence. The networked analysis demonstrates concurrent goods and bads being involved, and many different actors with different goods and bads in mind.
- Heterogenic actors experience reality differently, not as a matter of perspective, but as reals made for better or for worse.

And therefore:

- Rather than being immobilised by the absence of sure futures, and by the impossibility of there being any one clear representation in a network, strategising involves agility in negotiating relationships.

The relationships that might be negotiated involve some choice; however, choice as previously noted is a difficult concept on which to base service provision. If young people had choice, they would not be choosing to be distressed and wanting a better service; they would be looking for their distress to be gone, or to have never been present. Choice, as concluded by Mol (2008a), though relevant, is not decisive.

Choice is also problematic in that individualising choice denies that actions are also, to use Latour's word, "othertaken". Making things happen is a distributed activity that occurs alongside the agency of others. In this particular study, the rhetoric of individualised choice sits alongside a dominant discourse on texting that not only individualises choice but also pathologises the behaviour. Positioning young people who text as intimacy avoidant, and texting as contributing to developmental delay, denies the distributed agency involved. Furthermore, this serves to deny not only distributed agency but also responsibility.

While the technology itself is without a moral dimension - text capability being neither good nor bad - the performance of text counselling within contingent relationships has a moral dimension in that different reals might be performed. This is not about providing closure on how counselling whether by text or other means, could, or should, be done better. Just as I cannot say that talking **loudly** or *quietly* is better. I cannot say that utterances should be long or short, visual or audible. This is not to suggest the research question was wrong or too vague but puts to rest the nonsense of evaluative judgments held superficially. The answer to the question of text counselling being helpful or not remains: "it depends". Rather than being on one side or other of normative judgments, I redirect to the relationships that might be altered.

Enacting silence and voice

How to speak on behalf of others is difficult in any research project, and this one is no different. Lather (2001) describes it as a vanity of the university rescue mission to search for the voiceless and to romance such voice. In writing of what for most people is an unknown world, I have struggled against this. I have also struggled against contributing a story for voyeurs. I follow Lather's example in interrupting the stories told, telling "an ache of wings", for these stories do not sit still despite the illusion generated by text on a page. These stories are told to invoke as Loewy (1997) suggests "a critical imagination", whereby the realities of others might be glimpsed, and more, for such realities might also be made otherwise.

Unlike Lather who is cautious of invoking empathy, I side with Mol (2008a) who states of her own writing, “In this book you will not find sentences such as ‘we cannot imagine what it must be like to have a chronic disease.’ Such sentences are nasty!” (p. 11). With this I fully concur because “nasty” is the absence of empathy; of not being able to imagine the situation and experiences of others; of not being willing to entertain that things might also be otherwise. While we do not have the same experiences as others, and we never know exactly what it is like for someone else, we can imagine, and we can deliberately seek knowledge of realities different to our own. In engaging through critical imagination my hope is that hitherto unknown lives and situations have been made more real, and in becoming more real, such lives engage not only our compassion but also our actions.

A default position renders the sensitive as unknowable. Invoking empathy, my intention is to interrupt this. Articulating what has hitherto been silent is however undertaken with care. I follow a lead provided by Star and Bowker (2007), who citing Adrienne Rich’s poem, *Cartographies of Silence*, contend that silence should in no way be confused with absence. I repeat the third stanza here as it resonates deeply with this study:

The technology of silence
 The rituals, etiquette
 the blurring of terms
 silence not absence
 of words or music or even
 raw sounds
 Silence can be a plan
 rigorously executed
 the blueprint to a life
 It is a presence
 it has a history a form
 Do not confuse it
 with any kind of absence

I do not mistake silence for an absence of voice. The study shifted though from hearing voice via interviews to hearing voice in digital traces, and though two

young people who had used the service came forward for interviews I am aware that these two participants did so because they had other connections with the organization. In telling of stories from traces or from interview, as identified also by Star and Bowker, there is no inherent goodness or badness in making known what was previously silent, just as there is no inherent goodness or badness in having such content rendered silent. When services are shaped only for those who are visible and verbal; only for those who feel comfortable coming forward; only for those who already have an affinity with the service, then others are neglected.

Confounding the sensitivity concerns that are manifest in silence and invisibility are associations of text counselling being positioned alongside things bordering on exotic, unusual, alien or magical. That counselling might occur invisibly and inaudibly does not make it unreal, or otherworldly. This practice involves no virtual counsellors, nor virtual young people, nor pixel carrying pixies. In twenty years of SMS messaging no empirical evidence attests to unusual thumbs for those aged 15–35 years and neither “NoMo phobia” nor zombiism are prevalent despite media sensationalist reporting. And despite supposed milestones of adulthood occurring at a later age than for previous generations of New Zealanders, it seems far-fetched to attribute this to developmental delays caused by mobile phone use, with or without texting, when other reasons including a lack of employment opportunities and student debt also have considerable influence.

To not seek the quieter voice or the opinions of those less visible risks marginalising those already at the edges. In the absence of voice, unusual attributions and projections occur. Expecting young people to behave like grown-ups, or conversely only allowing voice when in the presence of guardians and parents, risks the maintenance of reals where voices, particularly those of young people, are constrained.

Investigating the less visible and quieter voice brings forward particular concerns of ethical and desirable research practice. Making the unknown known, making the invisible visible, and giving silence voice, occurs with consideration for the vulnerabilities involved. Moving into emergent digital spaces necessitated new methods not only of counselling but also of research. With little research

undertaken on SMS messaging, and none on counselling practices that make use of text messaging, this thesis contributes to a growing field of how ethical research in digital spaces can be undertaken.

Informed by an unsettled literature regarding online research, as well as the ethical code of the American Psychology Association (2002) and guidance provided by the New Zealand Health Research Council, this research followed accepted health research practice regarding patient records where it is highly problematic and even potentially damaging to gain consent. In undertaking this research, maintaining privacy and confidentiality involved deidentifying information and obfuscation of data. A necessary limitation is therefore placed on any further discourse analysis of the digital traces reported here.

ANT lends itself to considering ethics as a relational undertaking. What is “for the better” or aims to “do no harm” is often not known in advance. “Goods” and “bads” are not unequivocal, realities are more complex than such binaries suggest. And just as practice cannot be discerned in general, simply, or in advance, nor can “good” research. What is “good” instead involves relating and negotiating respectfully. Working with young people’s strengths rather than assuming weakness, and mitigating risks particularly of privacy and potentials for harm, is an enactment of respectful relating and contributed to the quieter voices of those who make use of a service being heard, and in turn having services better shaped to meet their needs.

Dynamics of emergent practice

Such changes as they occur at Youthline are not an outcome of pre-planned rational activities. No one set out to establish Youthline’s counselling service as one where those involved would not meet, speak, or listen, to each other. No one intended that a service predicated on talking therapies should occur visually. No one set out to establish text counselling by SMS messaging. There is no intentionality traced of a top down lead on this innovation, similarly there is no evidence of a reflective practitioner instigating such change. This change was neither planned nor led. Changing practice demonstrably involves more than

intentionality. As portrayed in this study, change to practice evolves; it occurs as a continuous state of emergence and is an outcome of heterogeneous actors involving distributed agency; it develops out of particular materialities and social relations.

In Latour's (1999b) study of the dynamics of science, he demonstrates the heterogeneity and movements involved in the work of a discipline. The heterogeneity demonstrates a range of actors, some obvious, some less so; and inclusive of actors both human and otherwise (see Figure 27).

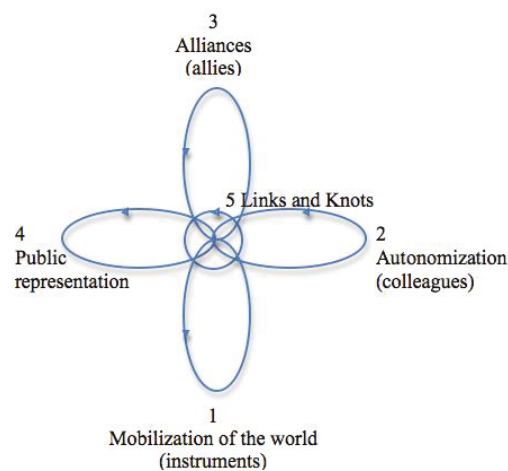


Figure 27. The Dynamics of Science. Latour's dynamics of science (Adapted from Latour, 1999, p. 100) traces five loops of simultaneous and constant motion.

The first loop involves the activities undertaken in mobilising the “world”: the expeditions and surveys, the instruments and equipments, and the sites where such activities are undertaken. Mobilising this world involves rendering data into a form useful for the arguments that scientists and their colleagues have. The second loop involves relationships being negotiated with colleagues. Specialism develops by processes of inclusion and exclusion; in arguments of relevance, and of evaluation criteria. The third loop is required if the activities of loops one and two are to be sustained. As Latour (1999b) explains:

No instruments can be developed, no discipline can become autonomous, no new institution founded without the third loop, which I call alliances. Groups that previously wouldn't give each other the time of day may be enrolled in the scientist's controversies. The military must be made interested in physics, industrialists in chemistry, kings in cartography, teachers in educational theory,

congressmen in political science. Without this labor of making people interested, the other loops would be no better than armchair travelling: without colleagues and without a world, the researcher won't cost much but won't be worth much either. Immense groups, rich and well endowed, must be mobilized for scientific work to develop on any scale. (p. 104).

This third loop is about the active work undertaken in making the context supportive rather than any assumption that work might only survive within a supportive environment. The fourth loop presents the work needed for public representation. This loop is not just a dissemination route for knowledge produced, but also feeds into the loop of politicians who might be voted in or out, and provides a huge source of revenue that might fund the equipment as well as people involved in the study of science. And more than this, for this is also a loop that contributes to the questions scientists ask, and as Latour notes, contributes to the presuppositions of the scientists themselves (p. 107). The central fifth loop requires the activities of the other four; it provides a container where the concepts of this discipline are held. This is not to suggest such concepts exist without the activities of the other four loops. The value of this model is in explicating science as the activities forming this container; one that shapes what is contained.

Drawing on Latour's (1999) model, van Eijck (2010) proposed scientific literacy might similarly, and usefully, be viewed as a feature of collective activity. While his interest was in strengthening relationships that might increase student participation in the science literacy of genomics, there is potential that attending to the heterogenous assembly of actors *and* the flows between them, could usefully inform how other practices might be made more or less.

This model is adapted here for thinking about the relationships negotiated when practice is held less tightly, when it might be described as nascent or emerging. I depict the activities as less tightly held because there is still considerable movement in determining what is/isn't accepted practice and the directions that could be taken.

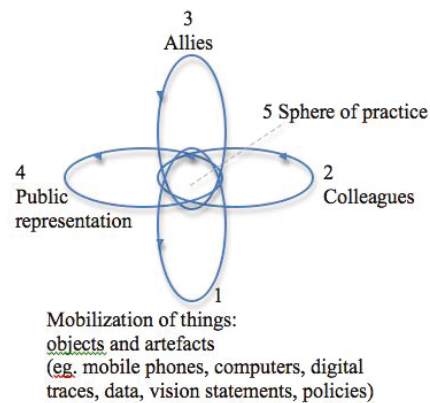


Figure 28. Sphere of Emergent Practice. A sphere of practice develops with relationships woven and unwoven. Inside of loose associations, emergent practice is being done: performed into being as an association of heterogeneous actors, human and otherwise. (Adapted from Latour, 1999, *Dynamics of Science*)

Latour's (1999b) network dynamic allows for a range of actors to be recognised and for the relationships between them to become known. The metaphor of spheres (Sloterdijk, 2009) can be used to illustrate such processes further. Speaking in terms of architectural design Sloterdijk has described spheres as "anthropogenic islands", spaces designed as an ecological niche of protection. My interest in the sphere analogy is to consider the makings of what is local, fragile and complex, that provides a nurturing environment, or not, for the nascent practice of text counselling at Youthline, and to consider that this too might be otherwise.

Providing a space that nurtures practice would have us ask about the nature of our relationships, for what shapes new practice is very much an unsettled space. In this space, were relationships held too tightly, movement would be difficult as tightly held relationships allow little scope for new practice. A sphere of new practice requires flexibility in relating, where space is as important as connecting.

An agility in negotiating relationships contributes to the longer-term sustainability of the service provided. It becomes possible to reframe the seeming threats of ambivalent relationships with well-practiced adaptability. The strength of weak ties, discussed with reference to Granovetter (1983) (see p. 219), provides insight for seeing not only that a breadth of relationships contributes a wider knowledge and skill base, but also informed by actor-network sensibilities consideration is extended to the human *and* non-human actors and the relationships involved.

Granovetter's contribution in conjunction with ANT prompts consideration for the breadth or distribution of relationships as well as considering the qualities involved in negotiating these relationships. The quality of a strong relationship has various meanings: there is strength in being small, in having capacity where other actors might not. There is a further strength in being agile; in being able to align with different actors at different times, so as to engage with difference differently.

Future gazing is an imprecise art: we never have the whole picture, but one that is always partial; always fractional and biased, meantime the world and all the dynamics therein keep spinning. How then to move forward in ways that are responsible working with others whose realities are different to one's own without imposing a one world myopia? In this my answer is the same as that argued by Mol (2006), doubt need not preclude action.

While there is no comfort to be had, no surety to stand upon claiming how changes imagined will unfold; alternate reals may be pointed to. In the absence of surety, we can but move forward carefully, assuming a logic of care for the relationships continuously being renegotiated. In knowing that reals are made for more and less, and that our relationships enact such reals for better or worse and for both better and worse simultaneously, there is need then to tread lightly⁴⁵.

Moving forward, with care, treading lightly, I turn to the relationships currently involved in this nascent practice of text counselling. While Latour's (1999) dynamics of science provides a means of mapping the relationships involved in this network, consideration in this thesis is also given to what is produced.

⁴⁵ Treading lightly is captured in the poetry of William Butler Yeats, in his poem *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*:

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Drawing on the work of artist Tomas Saraceno and responding to a critique of networks provided by architect Peter Sloterdijk, Latour describes networks as emphasising the connections involved, and as being “good at describing long-distance and unexpected connections”, while spheres emphasise “the local, fragile, and complex ‘atmospheric conditions’” (Latour, 2011, para. 1). Latour also tells us there is no need to choose between the metaphor of network and spheres (para. 5), both can be discussed in relational terms for spheres and networks are built concurrently; they are part of the same “worlding” movements where particular reals are being made, more and less.

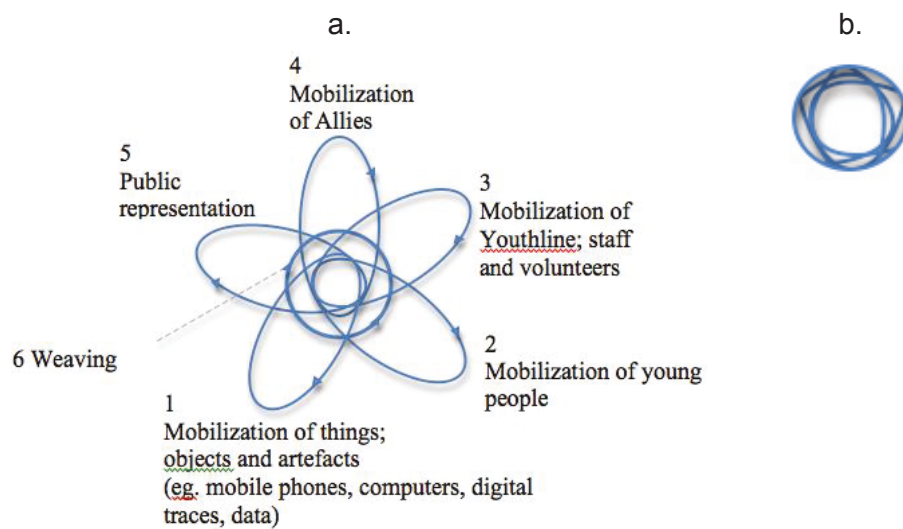


Figure 29. Networks and Spheres: Enactments of Change in the Development of Text Counselling Practice at Youthline. Multiple relationships are brought into the assemblage that performs text counselling. The loops are indicative of the relationships being negotiated. In the weaving of relationships, the practice of text counselling is being stabilised. The constant movements involving others do not actually disappear, but become less evident as suggested by Figure 29b. As the relationships involved become more routine, attention to what was new wanes, and patterns of interaction laid down are repeated less consciously; woven into a less malleable configuration. It is important to note however that this sphere is a product of relationships, of actors human and other. What is nurtured or not, included or excluded is formed in this network of relating, and as a networked entity, it can also be made differently.

In this adaptation, the dynamics of emergent practice for text counselling are traced through 6 interconnecting loops where relationships are being negotiated. These are told of as enactments of emergent practice.

Enacting text counselling as emergent practice

Loop 1

Mobilising the practice of text counselling involved negotiations with new equipment as well as reconfiguring what was already available to the helpline. Mobile phones replace landlines as the main mediator of communications, and significant to this shift is the text function of mobile phones. At Youthline, text messages are initially accessed via a PDA, before adaptations are made to YORA, the Youthline Online Rostering Application, making it possible to receive and answer text messages via a computer screen. This movement makes it possible for Youthline to receive and respond to many more text message than previously and many more counsellors become involved. Concurrently, a digital trace of the interactions can now be held. The trace provides an accurate recall of the conversations involved enabling the analysis and sharing of skills, as well as a record of what has occurred which has been described as useful by counsellors as well as by those who make use of the service. Concurrently this produces risks to privacy, both personal and organizational. And serendipitously, at least as far as the agency is concerned, the raw data of counselling conversations can also be mined for information pertinent to funding applications. Graphs and tables are made showing exactly how many young people use the service, their repeated use of the service, and the content of these conversations. While graphs had previously been made based on reported information, it becomes possible to verify such reports. The raw data of counselling conversations thereby contributes to further relationships.

The relationships that mobilise such entities as text capable mobile phones and YORA do not remain fixed but are also subject to ongoing negotiations. Affordances or attributions do not stay stable but are established in relation. There is scope then for speculating on how altered relationships might influence practice; with more mobile phones having keyboards rather than the keypad function for an alphabet, might txtspk reduce? With increasing broadband access might txt messaging be replaced by email?

Loop 2

Mobilising young people to make use of the text service is inline with primary health care and health promotion strategies. The World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 1978, 1986) identifies key elements of such services as being accessible, acceptable, affordable, and appropriate. The work to make such a service, Stephen describes as “building the brick mother”. Considerable work is entailed in making her presence known as a reliable and supportive entity. Considerable work is also entailed in sustaining a service that is free for young people to access. Nonetheless, those who would make use of such a service determine acceptability. And although this section is described as mobilising young people, this is not one-way; young people are shaping Youthline’s helpline into a form they deem acceptable also. Being accessible is potentiated with the use of mobile phones, and being affordable can be read as involving costs (both financial and social). These costs are ones that young people making use of the service perceive as being minimised when texting is used.

In this research performance, decentering practice through investigations of the multiple performances required allows stories to be told from across the network, thus increasing awareness that other actors relate to this new entity of text-counselling differently. While the change described here began with a focus on the use of emergent technologies, and on changing practices involving counselling at Youthline, it’s important to note that for young people who had been texting Youthline, the change was not about using something new. The stories they told were about being listened to.

Loop 3

Mobilising Youthline staff and counsellors to be involved in text counselling involves invoking hopes as well as fears through story telling. Imagined “what if” stories are persuasive in shaping the service first one way then another. Real, or imagined, such hopes and fears have influence as acts of persuasion.

There was the hope that it would provide a means for meeting with young people in the spaces where they were comfortable; that young people initiating contact

with Youthline in the medium of their choice would have fewer barriers to counselling. Concurrently there were fears that unless a texting access was available to young people, the relevance of Youthline to the current generation would be lost.

However, the hopes and fears used to sell a future are relegated, and new hopes and fears gain precedence. In the absence of paralinguistic cues, and the constraint of constructing a counselling response in 160 characters or less, counsellors compare what was with what has changed. Comparisons point to what texting cannot do: it lacks any nuances of tone, pitch, speed; it constrains with each utterance restricted to fit the tiny screen of a mobile phone. For some counsellors this feels unnatural. Fears were expressed concerning what might happen if the cues were insufficient and wrongful advice was given. The list of what talking can do, that texting cannot, compares the familiar with the unfamiliar. Perhaps as Lewin (1947a) Schein (1996), and Parsons (1951) contend, some of us seek psychological comfort in stability, hoping for a future similar in many ways to the present. But the tyranny is that a future similar to the present denies those at the margins whose present is not so comfortable.

Gibson (1999) expressed the idea “the future is already here, it’s just not very evenly distributed” and this matches the work as it is experienced at Youthline. In attempting to engage with young people, they provide a service folding what’s comfortable up against what’s new. In response to fears of having to work “under par” with fewer cues and a fear of liability, the texting service is reconfigured as a portal, a stepping-stone. The idea of a stepping-stone service sounded plausible, but in practice does not work. Under-represented in such policy formation were the views of those outside of the organization. These “others”, remained impervious to policies not shaped with them in mind. For those texting in to Youthline, texting was common practice. For those who had crafted the initial policy on texting, the more common experience of phones was in verbal connection. A mismatch occurs. For a young person, asking for help is difficult. Asking for help first on one platform, and then on another, makes it doubly so. The data made available through YORA demonstrates they do not ring back.

The story of change became one of resistance. Young people wanting to make contact with Youthline, and who persist with texting, are positioned as “needing to be contained” and labelled manipulative. Meantime an alerting device is placed onto YORA so that more of Youthline’s staff might be coopted into responding, but what evolves is continual alerting deemed disruptive. Controversies surface: Youthline’s vision statement and practice do not align unless different meanings are attributed to words such as being client-centred. However this is not something that the counsellors notice. What counsellors notice is a hope of doing good is met by a screen with many messages telling them they are not. In the spaces where aspirations and reality are juxtapositioned, the contradictions are unsettling. In the spaces where hopes and fears are expressed, such as on marae and at the national conference, contested reals are also expressed, and as depicted by Mulcahy (2010), these are then played off one against another. The ontological politics involves a retelling of stories, of how hopes thwarted, and of different fears substantiated in a reality where digital traces might be pointed to.

In this telling, stories from the margins are told and retold, and a story from a young person whose experience of the service was enacting a real of isolation and abandonment gains precedence over previously held fears of acting without enough knowledge. The story told, and retold, percolates through the organization.

There is the story, and a parallel process occurs where counsellors increasingly acknowledge current ways of working are dissatisfying for clients and counsellors alike. Enacting a change in policy highlights different reals. For the CEO this is an incredibly bureaucratic damned slow process, for others who had developed the previous policy, it all happens too fast to accommodate. For young people wanting to make use of the service, it cannot happen fast enough. And what becomes apparent, at least to this researcher, is that the new policy does not lead process. YORA provides an aggregation of “voice” that is not only difficult to deny but which also provides examples where counselling skills have been translated in to the visual medium. Working with less information is no longer seen as a reason for not working in the medium at all; not knowing enough from a text to respond with confidence is addressed by asking for more information.

Imagined fears are being mitigated, while the fear of what might happen if connections are not made remains.

Mobilising counsellors is a tangled process; they are no more homogenous than those who make use of the service. The complexity talked of here is suggestive of discrete loops operating, but in practice the loops are entwined, and inside of any actor is a similar dynamic of making. The interweaving of such relationships resulting in hybrids (Latour, 1993, 2005), cyborgs (Haraway, 1991, 2008), involves practice more aptly described as mangled (Pickering, 1993), and vibrant (Bennett, 2010). Some counsellors are very used to texting; some not. Some counsellors become clients; some clients become counsellors. Some counsellors also work in a professional world of psychotherapy, some don't. Some work in the business world and draw these relationships into the organization also. In addition, just as human actors have roles that are made in association rather than being predetermined, nonhuman actors are similarly reconfigured in relationship rather than having fixed attributions. Mobilising Youthline to engage in new practice demonstrates the messiness of practice as it evolves.

Loop 4

Placing Youthline into a wider world of therapy and counselling involves drawing in practitioners from these fields and aligning the change to text with what is known and previously supported. To sustain Youthline's credibility alliances with these practitioners, and their respective fields, requires ongoing work. The persuasive rhetoric of a continuum assists with this, as does the metaphor of first aid.

Having some counsellors who bridge the worlds of volunteer counselling as well as being members of professional registered bodies allows for seeding the more formal sector with knowledge of an adjuvant service. In not being a threat to existing services, but simply as an adjuvant service, texting becomes situated as an oddity worth watching.

Mobilising allies also includes care in maintaining positive relationships with both major MNOs. The costs would be prohibitive without their ongoing support.

Similarly allies are nurtured on both sides of the NZ political spectrum; the organization cannot afford to alienate whichever party may be in parliament, the funding is too precarious. Considerable work is also put into relationships within the layers of Government that includes the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth Development and also with government departments such as Child, Youth and Family.

There is considerable care taken in sustaining goodwill, in addition to working politically with both government and quasigovernmental institutions Youthline also invests considerable work in both prompting and nurturing acts of corporate social responsibility and gift giving. And just as there was risk to the organization and to clients in practice development that could go wrong, there is also risk to being associated with a service that might do wrong. Establishing an evidence-base for practice as with policy development cannot help but be subsequent to practice and yet current rhetoric positions it as an antecedent condition, at least for funding. Concurrently there is competing discourse that both invites interest by attending to what's new, whilst minimising the potential risk by pointing to what remains the same and persuasions of why there is no threat to services as currently configured.

Loop 5

Without representation in the media, the service could not exist; those who might use the service would not know of it, and the resources needed to keep the service viable would not be forthcoming.

Media releases are instrumental in establishing Youthline's position as providing a niche service for young people. Maintaining this niche position is evident in press releases as well as television interviews where responses are made on subjects such as teen suicide, and text-bullying as well as sustaining the organization by speaking out against decisions such as funding cuts and the risks of establishing competitive but underfunded services (see for example, S. Collins, 2005; Phare, 2009; Smith, 2009; *Surge in Youthline crisis calls*, 2009; "Youthline's 40th anniversary," 2010). A proactive approach is taken that understands that the service is sustained only through a community of interest.

The extent of this work is also evident on the Youthline website (<http://www.youthline.co.nz/about-youthline/press-releases.html>). Again this approach is not just of needing assistance, but is one that actively seeks to position Youthline as useful, and young people as having strengths.

Loop 6

The central loop involves a weaving together of the circulating relationships involving actors, human and otherwise. Holding the loops, albeit loosely, provides both the container and construction of those practices. It is a similar line of reasoning to the famous saying: “we shape our buildings, thereafter they shape us” (ascribed to Winston Churchill). Taking the dynamics identified by Latour (1999) as providing the network structure, and the sphere analogy provided by Sloterdijk (2009) of a space in which something might be nurtured, provides a way of appreciating both the connections required and the nurturing space that evolves as activities of co-construction.

In explaining how the inside and outside are produced in the same making moment Sloterdijk contends that in architectural design we are shaped as well as shaping those spaces; who we are, and what we do, being enmeshed. Where Sloterdijk takes this further is to consider a further non-trivial space, one neither physical nor geometric. This space he refers to as an inter-facial space drawing on the examples of intimate couples and of mothers and babes. In an atypical argument he contends that such spaces are no less architectural units of co-construction. He suggests we might then deliberate on how we actively construct spaces for making the conditions of being more rather than less. Expanding on this, in this thesis I consider the influence we might have, and the way we too are being shaped in association, and particularly how such work of co-construction might be shaped within the digital spaces that text messaging has made possible in counselling.

Bringing together these dynamics of coexisting relationships presents this new founded practice of text counselling as both situated and emergent. An assemblage is portrayed of heterogenous entities involved and the changing relationships incurred. Multiple accounts have been juxtaposed here that

accumulatively present practice as it is enacted. What is enacted is however held in the moment. While the dynamics of practices lay down paths that both create and limit future possibilities, there is nothing here that is fixed. If we are to hold hope for improving practice, then it becomes important to understand the enormous potential there is for change, and to echo Law's (2009) claim, “reality is not destiny”.

Implications for Youthline

The interim findings of this research were presented back to Youthline in November 2010 at their inaugural research symposium. The stories of myriad actors involved in shaping current practice were well received.

The allegorical representation that follows (see Figure 30) provided the entry point for dialogue on what shapes practice, and what is projected on to young people who seek counselling by text. The playfulness of allegory allowed for discussions to be held non-defensively; discussions being held with good intent. A provocation was made for entertaining different reals, to glimpse multiplicity and how practice patches together such differing experiences.



Figure 30. Lolcat: Cn i jus text. Allegory provokes layered meanings. In this playfully rendered lolcat, a juxtaposition of imagery occurs with txtspk. The disjunction between what is written and the image portrayed allows for multiple meanings to be entertained, and for alternate realities to be glimpsed. Reasons for texting are wide and varied; the meaning of “I don’t want to be heard” is not the same as “I don’t want to engage”. Silence is not absence.

An ANT informed analysis tells of how things come to be the shape they are; how practice is this shape and not otherwise. That the account resonated with the experiences of the audience attested to the validity of the findings, nonetheless, a question from the audience, respectfully asked “so what?”

The presentation had not included recommendations; it was a descriptive account. The ensuing discussion provided insights for Youthline in strategising for an uncertain future, but it offers no certainties. Sharing a kaleidoscopic portrayal of what shapes current practice in terms of the many entities involved prompts consideration for anticipating further movements.

A pricing war between the major mobile network operators was recognised as contributing to texting being popular with young people in New Zealand. With the Government regulating the telecommunication industry costs associated with calling, it is likely that this will have influence on texting and internet use. I share knowledge of how in Japan SMS messaging does not occur but smart phones with internet access contributes to what is known as a “keitai” texting culture instead. Keitai does not restrict messages to 160 characters. Similarly, in the USA texting has not been as prevalent and this might be attributed to pricing plans associated with internet access. In countries with different pricing plans, different behaviours around texting occur. The majority of mobile phones being sold in New Zealand today are “smart phones” with internet browser capabilities. With decreasing costs to accessing the internet as well as a growth of free wifi spots, SMS is likely to be superseded by other technologies such as email. The ANT scoping of practice provided a way to scope how changes in other relationships are likely to have influence on the counselling relationship.

Presenting the graphed data of increasing text messages being received by Youthline confirms what is already known. The rate of text messages being received is increasing. A change in the texting policy and a free texting phone number are significant contributors to this. Being able to adjust to the scale of these changes presents significant challenge, for more is different. Text messages are not just rapport building but are now being engaged with as a counselling interaction. The outcome is a faster stream of texts, and just as an increased

volume is different, faster is also different. The volume and pace of messages being received necessitates new ways of relating. And so the discussion turns to an immediate future focused on how ‘better’ counselling conversations occur. How to provide a text-based counselling service of more, faster, and longer, is unsettling for a service still addressing a catch up in counsellor preparation when counsellors who provide the current text counselling service are now stretched to responding to 20,000 texts a month. Ensuing discussions could then focus on interim and longer-term strategies for the teaching and learning of counselling skills, a multi-factor response of CCT development, the extension of the texting service to involve other Youthline centres nationally, and the teaching and learning of skills suited to text-counselling for new counsellors as well as solo counsellors.

The “so what” question is answered in providing a way that Youthline might use in continuing to think about, and work with, shifting relationships. The holistic mapping does not privilege a particular path, but traces inter-relationships and dependencies. There is no God-like position provided, but a way to think about whatever it is that will come after txt; a way for continuing to think about further change: of how different actors might be involved and how different relationships might be negotiated differently.

Implications for relating to young people as a matter of concern

The work of this study has not been in providing answers to questions or solutions to problems. The questioning and problems do not stop. It is not anticipated that what was developed here will travel easily to other settings as actors will differ and the relationships cannot be the same. In looking at changing practice, what is shown is local and situated. Nonetheless, there is a question of moral responsibility that is a matter of concern for all.

In this thesis the question of how people imagine change and what they do to enact it, holds an undercurrent of morality. Not in any duplicitous sense, but in the sense that what is “good” remains contested. How then are decisions of what should be done to be made? This is a question posed by Mol (2008a) in the *Logic*

of Care where choice is demonstrably problematic. Mol frames her question around those too brave to seek assistance in health care. My question is framed for those who might not have the means or confidence in seeking help, those who engage silently and invisibly.

When do we decide someone knows what might be best for themselves? When do we respect their autonomy to choose what suits? Has the person enough knowledge to make an informed decision that they might be free to choose between service options? Is it when they agree with the decision we think best? When young people choose to engage in counselling by text, is this a wise choice? People may choose badly, young people perhaps doubly so. If we accept problem solving as developmentally linked and that problem solving is compounded by distress, then a young person accessing this counselling service is positioned as both developmentally and emotionally challenged. If choice is so problematic should it then be removed?

These questions begin with the assumption that people have agency, and that their choices affect actions, but as previously discussed, agency is distributed rather than located individually, and what we choose is not always possible nor will it necessarily result in anticipated outcomes. However, if choice is accepted as a relational undertaking, then such questions can be reconsidered. I cannot learn to make choices when choices are removed. I cannot learn to make hard choices or choices when emotionally wrought, if denied decision making at these times. An alternative exists; a logic of care in learning how to make decisions. Inside of a logic of care, choice need not be positioned as a solo activity.

The ethical concern might instead be considered a relational undertaking. Seedhouse (2009) points to tensions involved in respecting freedom and in creating freedom. He talks of the “autonomy flip” that pivots on being able to make choice given knowledge and problem-solving skills before such autonomy should be respected. This begs the question of how such skills are fostered, and what is done in enabling such skill development. While it can be argued that prevention of harm creates freedom, this glosses concerns of power and control.

A history of choice being privileged is traced back to John Stuart Mills as a widely quoted source in discussions justifying when power and influence might be imposed:

To prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because of the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right... The only part of the conduct of anyone for which he is amenable to society is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself his independence, of right, is absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign. (Mill, Original work published 1859/2011, p. 18)

Mill's argument suggests that where choice does not harm others, then such preference should be respected. Pope (2000) similarly expands on respecting such individualism. He starts with accepting that people do not have a right to harm others. Society, therefore, rightly legislates against this, and interventions framed as preventing harm being done to others are commonly accepted as valid. He moves then to a discussion of soft paternalism. Citing Mills he provides the classical example of preventing a truck from being driven across a dilapidated bridge. It is not the broader intent of crossing the river that is prevented just the means of crossing it at this point because it is unsafe and demonstrably so. The presupposition is that a person with knowledge of the circumstances and having the cognitive skills necessary for decision-making would agree. Therefore, this type of paternalism is not, from a futures orientation, a restriction on freedom at all. A case is made that this is what a rational person would choose, given sufficient time to process the information and the options available. In addition, the restriction was to the minimal level required for safety: it is still all right to cross the river; the restriction is only valid for this bridge and for this moment in time.

In contrast, with hard paternalism a normative ethic is imposed. Hard paternalism presupposes authoritative knowledge of what is risky. This approach assumes others would not know what was good for them even if explained or given time to think through options. This is a difficult ethic to justify in an educative sense as it

presupposes education will not make a difference. Similarly in health-promotive endeavours it is difficult to justify hard paternalism as it presupposes informed decisions as irrelevant. Despite the ethical analysis that suggests it is a difficult ethical approach to justify, it remains common and is especially common in work with young people.

Mills had specifically excluded children in his argument against power and control over others, saying:

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that this doctrine is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties. We are not speaking of children, or of young persons below the age which the law may fix as that of manhood or womanhood. Those who are still in a state to require being taken care of by others, must be protected against their own actions as well as against external injury.

In regards to this study, paternalism would seemingly be justified, however, Mills wrote this for different people in different times; children, young persons, manhood, and womanhood, are categories that have not remained static.

Hard paternalism is difficult to justify in work with people that purports to assist in learning to manage one's own life and to make one's own decisions. Given the stated intentions of Youthline as working with strengths rather than a deficit model, hard paternalism creates contradictions and confusion. Working relationally provides an alternative way of framing the ethical concern and for moving beyond an apparent impasse.

The paternalistic rationalization that restricts choice only works when those "othered" are considered in isolation from a network. Accepting distributed agency suggests things might also be otherwise. We could relate differently. We might facilitate consideration for options rather than restraining these. We might work with trust rather than distrust. We might relate with empathy rather than blame. Rather than pathologising, blaming or trivialising the activities of young people, we might relate differently. We might establish conditions inside of relationships where being able to talk about failures, fears and distress, is less scary. We might appreciate the steps taken by young people in reaching out.

This ANT informed analysis provides a way to interrupt the dominant discourse that aligns texting with bad choice, and by association text for counselling as a poor option if not pathological. The analysis also lends itself to ethical decision-making that interrupts paternalism in working with young people. Taking distributed agency seriously provides alternate possibilities for how we might engage differently.

While I raise this as a matter of concern in regard to the research process and to text counselling practice in particular, this in no way suggests these are the only spaces in which to consider how we relate with young people. Were consideration given to how come a service such as Youthline exists then further networks of relationships appear, and as previously identified, these are not always supportive. Being young is unavoidable, being maligned and pathologised unnecessary.

Chapter 8: The Performative Aspect of Research

Our methods are, indeed, performative... they do not simply describe but in some measure help to do the realities that they discover. (Law, 2008, p. 640)

This is a tension I have grappled with in my writing. Knowing what to leave in, or out, becomes subject to some grand design of knowing what might occur in uncertain futures. I want to think that the realities contributed to through this writing are of value to the young people making use of Youthline's services, and to Youthline in how it provides its service. More broadly, having studied change and the use of emergent technologies, I hope this performance generates consideration for how we relate and particularly how relating within digital spaces might open up potentials for more, rather than less; that digital spaces might be negotiated to support intimate relationships that nurture; I want to expand the possibilities for online spaces that better meet human needs.

Research as a political performance

This is not some blissed-out techno-bunny joy in information. It is a statement that we had better get it – this is a worlding operation. Never the only worlding operation going on, but one that we had better inhabit as more than a victim. We had better get it that domination is not the only thing going on here. We had better get it that this is a zone where we had better be the movers and the shakers, or we will be just victims. (Haraway, in an interview with Gane, 2006, p. 139)

Informed by ANT, and accepting that future gazing remains an imprecise art, moral purposing would have us attend to what is going on when we act.

Researcher responsibility is called to account when positioned as a worlding operation, when it contributes to the making of what it writes of.

I set out to investigate the relationship between how we think of change and what we do to enact it, and draw a point of closure that does not end this investigation

but provokes further consideration. What evolves is an ongoing matter of concern; the thoughtful regard of how we might relate with hopeful monsters in every shape and form: novel practice, emergent technologies, our young, each other, and every combination therein. The slippage between how we think about change and the use of emergent technologies, to how we think about relationships, does not demonstrate a bad question. The slippage is because change and relationships are entangled.

In investigating the relationship between what people think about change and what they do to enact it, I have shown that practice is always emergent, always contingent. In addition, in studying practice as it changes, what becomes evident is that what is recognised as new or emergent is a situated enactment. For young people making use of Youthline's service by text is not remarkable. What they remark upon is their frustration at not being able to communicate with Youthline in the medium of their choosing. For counsellors at Youthline the expectation and alteration to practice is seriously challenging. Shifting a practice previously fully embedded in an oral medium to the small screen and written spaces of 160 characters of SMS involves considerable work renegotiating how to relate.

I do not list recommendations here for what needs to be done, or what might be implemented or transported elsewhere; the value of such solutions would be limited. This ANT informed analysis provides no sure knowledge for uncertain futures, but it does provide a way of seeing; of appreciating that things are made in association, and thereby provides sure knowledge that things might also be otherwise.

In presenting this research, my intent was never to provide a spectator's view on a private world, nor to entertain. This research runs interference on particular realities involving particular practices at a particular time. In performing the ontological space I have identified preferable practices. This includes attending to the relationships involved, and to the qualities involved in these relationships. This matters because relationships are deeply constitutive. Relationships not only shape practice, but the realities of our lives, and this matters because some people's realities are difficult enough without being made worse.

In framing conclusions informed by ANT understandings I have uncovered multiplicity (there are other realities), and introduced allegory to trouble assumptions of a singular world. In the course of this study I have moved from observing and reporting on what occurs to developing a research story that interrupts particular ways of positioning others, and of relating. When young people elect to text for counselling there are multiple factors involved, individualizing and pathologising this activity further marginalises those already on the borders.

Interrupting the discourse that would position texting for counselling as a poor choice involves leveraging multiplicity. This includes presenting knowledge in ways that make it accessible to a wider audience. Involved are activities of doing difference differently that positions both writer and reader within a political undertaking. Relating differently is to see ourselves as implicated rather than detached, purposing our involvement such that particular realities might be strengthened and others made less strong. Informed by ANT sensibilities, the edges of a network do not end at any organizational boundary, and a research undertaking does not end with the bindings of a book. How to move forward with unknown futures and only glimpses of the multiple reals being done is a challenge. Suchman (2008) frames with the question, “Given what we know now, what might we do next? She proposes the “mereing” of innovation and loosening the grip of unquestioned assumptions. I suggest such “mereing” is not addressed by belittling the innovation, or those associated with it, and such loosening is not achieved by abandonment. Accepting that we are made in association, this thesis argues instead for treating the relationships we have with others, human and otherwise, as matters of concern.

Being formed in relationship is a consideration that might also be turned on ANT, for research theorizing and research practice are similarly entwined, similarly co-constructed. This study, as with other actor-network studies, takes as a focal point the relationships of entities, human and otherwise, treating these with symmetry. The particular entity at the centre of the study is a hopeful monster whose development is mapped through its nascent form, into a coming of age that also involves several different renditions or identities being practiced along the way.

The fluidity of this entity is remarkable: despite having evolved out of talking therapies, what is traced works silently, prompting questions as to whether the entity is related to counselling at all. In tracing its movements, text counselling as with all SMS, moves through spaces people cannot travel and so tracing movements involves meeting with it before and after such flights of invisibility. In addition, on every occurrence that it engages with others, the trace of its presence differs. What has been demonstrated is that this actor is successful precisely because of its non-obdurate form, it is shaped in relationship and such relationships are subject to change. While studying such entities presents challenge, they are important to study for they are the substance of what is emergent, and of identities being made, our own included.

In this performance what is argued is an invocation to see both ourselves and others in relationship. It is an invocation to consider how in our relating with others, reals are being made for better and for worse, and to consider how we might trouble to do things differently.

Coda

Ode for a hopeful monster

[Translated with assistance of transl8it.com]

I/we
(4 we will nevR b jus 1 agAn)
hOp 2 hav dn justice
4 a hopeful monster.

N trublng disMpowRing
constructns of agenC wethR
loc8d indivduLE or N
xtrEms of collectiviT
I/we hOp 2 hav disruptd
a\$umshns of powerle\$ne\$.

I/we hOp 2 hav disruptd
notions of linear chAng,
wethR top dwn or (._.) ^
4 diffrent realiTz enact
diffrent practisz & vv.

Tellin dis resrch story
of change & txt counsellin
Ngagingly & cr8ivly,
prompts < certanT
& points 2 realiTz
as > 1 & < many.

I/we hav demonstr8ed
ontological poltics @ pIA.
I/we rAz such m@rs az reals
situ8d & local,
n sure knowldg
th@ things might also alwAs
b otherYz.

☺

I/we
(for we will never be singular again)
hope to have done justice
for a hopeful monster.

In troubling disempowering
constructions of agency, whether
located individually or in
extremes of collectivity,
I/we hope to have disrupted
assumptions of powerlessness.

I/we hope to have disrupted
notions of linear change,
whether thinking of people top down or
bottom up
for different realities enact
different practices and vice versa.

Telling this research story
of change and text counselling
engagingly and creatively,
prompts less certainty
and points to realities
as more than one and less than many.

I/we have demonstrated
ontological politics at play.
I/we raise such matters as reals,
situated and local,
in sure knowledge
that things might also always
be otherwise.

Afterword

During the time of this study a media broadcast positioned text counselling as having killed (NewstalkZB, 2010, August 8)⁴⁶ and a further news headline, again where a death is involved, reports “Midwife text assessment slammed” (Story, 2012). That text counselling can be done poorly is not disputed here. That this thesis gives credence to a novel practice that might be used to validate practice that is poor has generated much soul searching on my part. Like Weizenbaum’s relationship with ELIZA, or the fictional story of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and his relationship with Creature, what evolves may be different to what is anticipated. My moral response is to remain in relationship with a practice in its infancy, arguing that practice is not “made for good” but requires ongoing negotiations. As Mol (2008a) has argued, taking care is not about taking control, but of learning to live with what is erratic; that we might seek to make progress carefully. We both shape and are shaped by what we engage with, and we can both shape, and be shaped, differently. Realities are being made more and less, as *we* do them, and this matters because *we* might also do things otherwise.

⁴⁶ Neither the young person who died, nor the counsellor involved were associated with Youthline. In the 28 page report (opinion 09HDC01409) by the Health and Disability Commissioner (Health and Disability Commissioner - Te Tuihau Hauroa Hautanga, 2010), three sentences relate to a text conversation between the young person and the counsellor. The use of text was one of many factors identified in what was poorly managed health care.

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Appendix A. Consent for use of images Poupou and Tukutuku, Youthline, Auckland

8/26/12

Gmail - FW: Bi-Cultural Footsteps Images



ailsa haxell <ahaxell@gmail.com>

FW: Bi-Cultural Footsteps Images

1 message

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
To: "ahaxell@gmail.com" <ahaxell@gmail.com>

Fri, Aug 24, 2012 at 9:28 PM

From: Stephen Bell [stephen.bell@youthline.co.nz]
Sent: Friday, 24 August 2012 3:43 p.m.
To: Ailsa Haxell
Subject: Bi-Cultural Footsteps Images

Tena korua Ailsa

I am pleased to confirm that we give permission for you to use our images from Youthline's Booklet "Bi-Cultural Footsteps"

Naku noa, na

Stephen Bell
M +64 27 271 8151 | F +64 9 376 6650 | DDI +64 9 361 4166
[cid:b853f569-1ae8-4541-9d7b-087b279dc20f] <<http://www.facebook.com/Youthline.Changing.Lives>>
[cid:a67decae-a620-4a5b-920f-47b49103d0f9] <<http://twitter.com/youthline>>
Youthline - Changing Lives - [youthline.co.nz](http://www.youthline.co.nz) <<http://www.youthline.co.nz/>>
Celebrating over 42 years of service to the community.

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2 attachments



Find us on
Facebook

Picture (Device Independent Bitmap) 1.jpg
2K

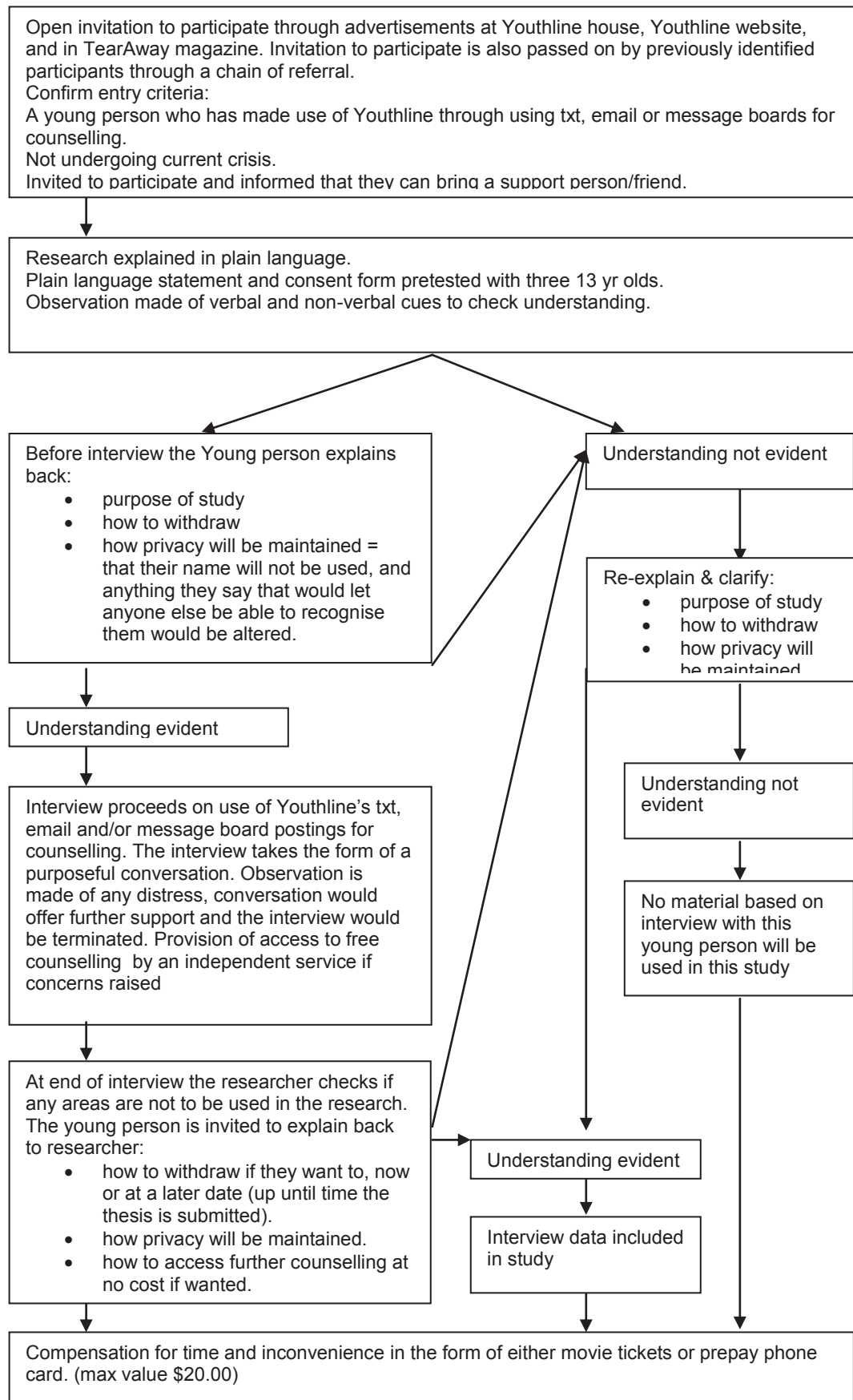


Picture (Device Independent Bitmap) 2.jpg
2K

<https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/?ui=2&ik=45452b8156&view=pt&search=inbox&th=13957f67b435154d>

1/1

Appendix B. Process of gaining informed consent in working with young person



Appendix C. Consent for use of artwork “No longer afraid of the dark”

Hi Ailsa,

██████████ contacted me recently and said you were interested in using my artwork : ‘No longer afraid of the dark” to illustrate your research. If you still wish to do so, I am happy for you to use it, but would appreciate it if you could acknowledge me somewhere and also if possible to include a contact email (this one is fine), I am always interested in getting my work out there and potential commissioned works. Also if there’s a possibility of getting a copy of the publication that would be appreciated.

However you will need to organize getting the work scanned/printed, I have digital copies of some of my works but unfortunately not that one and I am currently travelling overseas. Best of luck with your research and let me know if you still want to use my work.

Thanks,
Cam Michael
Cameron Michael <boyinsideout@hotmail.com> 9/21/2011 11:31 AM

Appendix Di. Consent for use of cartoon "On the Internet no-one knows you're a dog"



THE NEW YORKER STORE.COM

A New Yorker Magazine Company

1440 BROADWAY, F.R. II NEW YORK, NY 10018-2304
PHONE: 1800-897-TOON OR 1-212-630-2710 FAX: 1888-452-6789

Ailsa Haxell

Total Due:	\$0.00
-------------------	---------------

August 5, 2009

Invoice#: 903938

For: Permission to use the cartoon(s) in Ailsa Haxell's dissertation theory.

Conditions of Use:

1. A credit line and copyright notice must appear with each cartoon. Please refer to the appropriate credit line for each cartoonist as given below.
2. All cartoons are copyrighted and cannot be used for any purpose other than that specified above without prior written permission of The Cartoon Bank.
3. The drawings and captions of cartoons from The New Yorker Collection must always appear in full and unchanged. These images may not be colored or altered in any way. Drawings and captions of unpublished cartoons from The Cartoon Bank must appear in full and unchanged unless prior approval is granted by the artist and The Cartoon Bank.
4. Two copies of the publication or product containing cartoons must be forwarded to The Cartoon Bank upon publication.
5. **Payment is due upon receipt of this invoice.** We do not supply camera-ready art in advance of payment. Please note that our policy is payment upon receipt not upon publication. In the event that you cannot use a cartoon that you have purchased, we will refund you 50% of the cartoon's purchase price if notified before your reprint date or within 60 days of the date of purchase, whichever comes first. **No refunds on art-quality reprints for display or decorative purposes.**
6. **Permission is non-exclusive and limited to one-time use only, for the edition and medium specified, unless otherwise stated.** No electronic or any other reprint rights are included with the purchase of an original cartoon.

<u>cartoon code/description</u>	<u>artist</u>	<u>topic</u>	<u>price</u>
1993 07 05 061 PST .HG On the	Peter Steiner		\$19.95

The following copyright line must appear with this cartoon:

© The New Yorker Collection 1993 Peter Steiner from cartoonbank.com. All Rights Reserved.

pg. 1

Appendix Dii. Consent for use of cartoon “On the Internet no-one knows you’re a dog”

9/15/12

Gmail - FW: Thesis question...



ailsa haxell <ahaxell@gmail.com>

FW: Thesis question...

1 message

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
To: "ahaxell@gmail.com" <ahaxell@gmail.com>

Sat, Sep 15, 2012 at 9:25 AM

From: Manis, Kara [Kara_Manis@condenast.com]
Sent: Saturday, 15 September 2012 9:17 a.m.
To: Ailsa Haxell
Subject: Thesis question...

Alisa,

I have reviewed the attachment. We appreciate you being so honest; let them know that have the license to put the cartoon in your thesis, since you are reposting your thesis in the digital repository that is still part of the license for the thesis. If you are using the cartoon complexly outside of your thesis that would be a different story but since it's your thesis you are still covered. Thanks Alisa!!

Kara Manis
Sr. Manager Content Sales & Licensing
Consumer Business Development
Condé Nast | 4 Times Square, 18th fl. | NY, NY 10036
[212.286.2131](tel:212.286.2131) Phone [212.286.6184](tel:212.286.6184) Fax

Vogue | W | WWD | Style.com | Glamour | Allure | Self | Teen Vogue | GQ
Details | Architectural Digest | Brides | Lucky | FN | Golf Digest | Golf World
Vanity Fair | Bon Appétit | Epicurious | Gourmet Live | Condé Nast Traveler
Concierge | Wired | Ars Technica | Parade | The New Yorker

Condé Nast: Provocative, influential, award-winning content.
Across brands. Across platforms. Across continents.

Message : I am contacting you to seek permission to include a cartoon by Peter Steiner "On the Internet no-one knows you're a dog" within the electronic version of my PhD thesis/dissertation. This thesis would be made available in the Deakin University digital repository. This is non-commercial but accessible to all. I had previously received permission to use this cartoon in my thesis, but my University, Deakin, in Melbourne, Australia now advises that theses are to be submitted online, and the permission I received, please see attached, excludes any electronic use of the image. As this image is integral to the content of my thesis could this be reviewed? Thankyou, Ailsa Haxell

<https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/?ui=2&ik=45452b8156&view=pt&search=inbox&th=139c6abe235d4...>

1/1

Appendix E. Consent for use of advertisements, Vodafone

ahaxell – RE: Request to use images from advertisements in a PhD

9/5/2011 Page 1

From: "Newitt, Tom, VF-NZ" <Tom.Newitt@vodafone.com>
To: Ailsa Haxell
Date: 11/26/2009 3:47 PM
Subject: RE: Request to use images from advertisements in a PhD

Hi Alisa,

I've checked with our marketing team and we're happy for you to use these advertisements.

Let me know if you need any other assistance. Your research sounds very interesting, so if you need any more involvement from Vodafone please let me know.

Thanks, Tom

Tom Newitt
Head of Corporate Responsibility
Vodafone New Zealand

Ph: +64 (0) 21 703 340
Rec: +64 (0) 9 355 2000

-----Original Message-----

From: Ailsa Haxell [<mailto:ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>]
Sent: Friday, 20 November 2009 3:29 p.m.
To: Newitt, Tom, VF-NZ
Subject: Request to use images from advertisements in a PhD

Hi Tom,
thanks for getting back to me, i am wanting to use images from the fold campaign and images from the bestmate campaign in my doctoral thesis which explores the use of text messaging for counselling at Youthline (Auckland). They are pictures used in Vodafone advertisements. I have attached the images here.

Thanks for your consideration,
Ailsa Haxell
PhD student, Deakin University, Australia

Ailsa Haxell
Senior lecturer
Faculty of Health and Environmental Sciences ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz
921-9999 ext 7105

Appendix F. Consent for use of advertisements, Telecom

8/18/12 Gmail - FW: {Spam?} Dear Telecom representative I am a post graduate student within the School ...



ailsa haxell <ahaxell@gmail.com>

FW: {Spam?} Dear Telecom representative I am a post graduate student within the School of Ed... [Incident: 120225-001955]

1 message

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
To: "ahaxell@gmail.com" <ahaxell@gmail.com>

Sat, Aug 18, 2012 at 3:00 PM

From: Telecom Support [telecomsupport@custhelp.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 29 February 2012 12:41 p.m.
To: Ailsa Haxell
Subject: {Spam?} Dear Telecom representative I am a post graduate student within the School of Ed...
[Incident: 120225-001955]

Below is a summary of your request and our response.

Thank you for allowing us to be of service to you

Subject
Dear Telecom representative I am a post graduate student within the School of Ed...

Discussion Thread
Our Response (Sara W) 29/02/2012 12:41
Dear Ailsa

I have heard back from the Senior Brand Manager and she is happy to confirm that you are able to use the 2 images you requested.

If there is anything further I can assist with, please don't hesitate to get in contact.

Good luck with your thesis submission.

Kind regards,

Sara W
Customer Care Online

If you have any further questions regarding Telecom products and services please visit our web site at <http://www.telecom.co.nz>
Our Response (Sara W) 29/02/2012 12:10
Dear Ailsa

Thank you for contacting Telecom regarding using these images for your thesis.

My apologies for the delay in reply, I am just awaiting confirmation of this from our Brand team.

Once I have heard from them I will be back in contact.

Kind regards,

Sara W
Customer Care Online

If you have any further questions regarding Telecom products and services please visit our web site at <http://www.telecom.co.nz>
Auto-Response 25/02/2012 18:21
Suggested Answers Displayed

<https://mail.google.com/mail/ca/?ui=2&ik=45452b8156&view=pt&search=inbox&th=13937ad17e0d7dbf>

1/2

Appendix G. Consent for use of image generated by one user's cell phone while travelling in the Auckland region

8/18/12

Gmail - RE: [Lance Wiggs] Contact Lance



ailsa haxell <ahaxell@gmail.com>

RE: [Lance Wiggs] Contact Lance

1 message

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>

Sat, Aug 18, 2012 at 6:37 PM

To: "ahaxell@gmail.com" <ahaxell@gmail.com>

From: Ailsa Haxell
Sent: Wednesday, 25 January 2012 4:01 p.m.
To: Lance Wiggs
Subject: Re: [Lance Wiggs] Contact Lance

Thanks for the help, and your willingness to share,

ailsa haxell

>>> Lance Wiggs <lance@lancewiggs.com> 1/25/2012 3:27 PM >>>
that's fine - as long as you don't say it's the cell towers - it is the grid pattern generated ...

L

On Jan 25, 2012, at 15:10 , Ailsa Haxell wrote:

Thanks for getting back to me so promptly!
ailsa

>>> Lance Wiggs <lance@lancewiggs.com<mailto:lance@lancewiggs.com>> 1/25/2012 2:59 PM >>>
Hi Ailsa
Those aren't actually cell towers as the coordinates are automatically generated to a grid. That's why they are
in a grid pattern
Lance

On Jan 25, 2012, at 14:49 , Ailsa Haxell wrote:

> Name: Ailsa Haxell
> Email: ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz<mailto:ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
> Website: <http://amusingspace.blogspot.com><<http://amusingspace.blogspot.com/>>
> Message: Hi Lance, I'm a PhD student studying how mobile phones are changing counselling at Auckland
Youthline. I am wanting a picture of cellphone towers across Auckland and you have an image of how these
are dispersed across Auckland on your blog
> http://farm6.static.flickr.com/5267/5639142478_17f6624d68.jpg
> Would you allow me permission to use the image of Auckland citing you as the source of the image?
> Thanks for considering this request,
> Ailsa Haxell
>
> Time: Wednesday January 25, 2012 at 1:49 pm
> IP Address: 210.185.18.146
> Contact Form URL: <http://lancewiggs.com/contact-me/>
> Sent by an unverified visitor to your site.
>

<https://mail.google.com/mail/?ui=2&ik=45452b8156&view=pt&search=inbox&th=13938735338a3c81>

1/1

Appendix Hi. Consent for use of Telecom image of text and mobile network cover in New Zealand (2011)

Gmail - FW: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

<https://mail.google.com/mail/?ui=2&ik=45452b8156&vi...>



ailsa haxell <ahaxell@gmail.com>

FW: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

1 message

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>

Tue, Aug 28, 2012 at 5:42 PM

To: "ahaxell@gmail.com" <ahaxell@gmail.com>

From: Ksenija Chobanovich [Ksenija.Chobanovich@telecom.co.nz]

Sent: Tuesday, 28 August 2012 3:28 p.m.

To: Ailsa Haxell

Subject: RE: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

Hi Ailsa

Telecom is happy to grant you its permission to use the image of Telecom's mobile coverage map that can be found at <http://www.telecom.co.nz/mobile/mobile/ournetwork/newzealandxtmobilecoverage> for the purposes of your thesis and in relation to the theme of texting as a means of communication between young people and Youthline.

We require, however, the right to review the pages of your thesis that refer to and contain the above-mentioned image prior to your thesis being published.

Thank you for contacting us and all the best with your thesis!

Kind regards

[cid:image001.jpg@01CD8531.C4CFD920]

Regards

Ksenija Chobanovich

Corporate Counsel - Retail
Legal Services Group

T

09 358 6248 (extn 96248)

M

027 203 2555

Appendix Hii. Consent for use of Telecom image of text and mobile network cover in New Zealand (2011)

Gmail - FW: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

<https://mail.google.com/mail/?ui=2&ik=45452b8156&vi...>



ailsa haxell <ahaxell@gmail.com>

FW: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
To: "Ahaxell@gmail.com" <Ahaxell@gmail.com>

Tue, Sep 4, 2012 at 7:17 PM

From: Ksenija Chobanovich [Ksenija.Chobanovich@telecom.co.nz]
Sent: Tuesday, 4 September 2012 3:24 p.m.
To: Ailsa Haxell
Subject: RE: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

Hi Ailsa

Thanks you. We are comfortable with this.

Regards
Ksenija

-----Original Message-----

From: Ailsa Haxell [<mailto:ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>]
Sent: Tuesday, 28 August 2012 6:06 p.m.
To: Ksenija Chobanovich
Subject: RE: Image use of NZ text and mobile cover

Thankyou, attached is how it would be used,
Ailsa Haxell
(Quoted text hidden)

Appendix I. Consent for use of image Coca-cola Christmas in the Park

From:
To: Ailsa Haxell
Date: 2/11/2011 5:39 PM
Subject: Consumer query Ref# 03007231

Dear Ailsa,

Thank you for contacting Coca-Cola Amatil (NZ) Limited.

I have forwarded your request to the marketing team to look further into that for you.

If there is anything else we can help you with please feel free to contact our friendly staff on 0800 505 123 or via email on nzl.coke@anz.ccamatil.com. Please include your reference number 03007231 with all correspondence.

Our contact centre is open Monday – Friday from 7.30am – 6.30pm.

Kind regards

Winnie Ng
Customer Service Representative
National Contact Centre
Coca Cola Amatil NZ Limited
Phone: 0800 262 226
Fax: 0800 265 332
www.coke.co.nz

Ailsa Haxell <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
11/02/2011 04:39 PM

To: nzl.coke@anz.ccamatil.com
cc:
Subject: [coke.co.nz] online consumer query

I am writing a PhD on the experiences of Youthline New Zealand. I would very much like to use a 2007 image that promoted Coca-Cola Christmas in the park in my thesis. The picture is hugely relevant to my thesis as the work of youthline involves more than the obvious helpline service. It also involves being a known service available to young people when they are not in crisis, so that when they are, they know who might help them, and have established positive links with Youthline. Could you please let me know if i may use this image. If you need to know the exact image, I could send it in an email, thanks, Ailsa Haxell.

This email has been scanned by the MessageLabs Email Security System.

From: Annette Chillingworth <achillingworth@apac.ko.com>
To: <ailsa.haxell@aut.ac.nz>
CC: <winnie.ng@ccamatil.apac.microsoftonline.com>
Date: Monday - February 14, 2011 10:11 AM
Subject: CCCITP image for thesis

Greetings Ailsa - i'm fine with you to use an image from 2007 CCCTP in your thesis.

Kind Regards

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