

DUBLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

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**AN INVESTIGATIVE STUDY INTO THE ATTACHMENT STYLES OF
TRAINEE THERAPISTS AND THE EFFECTS OF COUNSELLING &
PSYCHOTHERAPY TRAINING ON THE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS OF
STUDENT THERAPISTS**

**THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE BA COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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ABSTRACT

There is an abundance of literature on attachment from infancy to adulthood, encompassing all forms of relationships. However, there is little research into how attachment relationships are affected by the process of training counsellors and psychotherapists. The objective of this study is to ascertain the attachment styles of trainee therapists and to investigate if their training has affected their romantic relationships and how that has been experienced by the trainees. Both quantitative and qualitative design approaches were used in this study. The Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire – Revised (ECRQ-R) was used to establish the attachment style of each participant. The results show there was no attachment style common to all participants, however two attachment styles were in evidence, these were; secure and anxious ambivalent attachment styles. Semi-structured interviews were used, to investigate the participants’ experiences of how they felt the training influenced their romantic relationships. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data, four major themes emerged, these were: (1) Change: Self Development and Coping with the Reality of Change, (2) The Influence of Training on Relationships, (3) Relationship Advice to New Trainees and (4) College Help: The Need for Preparation. From these findings, it would appear that attachment behavioural systems are influenced and may change while in training. Through investigating their own processes the participants’ views of self and others and the world in general were challenged. Ultimately, their perceptions changed which resulted in the participants behaving differently within their relationships with their partners. This research hopes to provide trainees and colleges with a renewed appreciation of how training may affect their relationships and includes possible suggestions for colleges regarding further preparation of trainees in this area.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Attachment Theory

Origins of Attachment Theory

“Attachment Theory is in essence a *spatial* theory: when I am close to my loved one I feel good, when I am far away I am anxious, sad or lonely” (Holmes, 2005, p. 67).

Originally a psychoanalytical concept, Freud believed that the infant was driven by overwhelming libidinal instincts and drives to have that libido satisfied. Klein took this a stage further with her object relations theory, where in the first three months of life the baby is in what Klein (1946) terms the Paranoid-Schizoid Position. The baby can only relate in terms of the good breast and the bad breast. From about six months on the baby adopts the Depressive Position, as he begins to merge the part objects and relates to the world in a more correct way, becoming aware that he can feel love and hate for the same object. Here Klein maintains that he experiences separation from the object as a loss rather than an attacking deprivation, thus his anger turns to grief (Gomez, 1997). Bowlby felt however, that this did not fully encapsulate the phenomenon of attachment and drawing from ethological, psychoanalytical and biological perspectives, began to believe that it was not only the drives or relationship per se that were important but the quality of the relationship between the child and the primary figure that was paramount. From this he developed his own ideas on attachment and the behaviours that surround it.

Definitions

Holmes (2005) differentiates between attachment, attachment behaviour and an attachment behavioural system. Attachment is defined as, “the condition in which an

individual is linked emotionally with another person, usually, but not always, someone perceived to be older, stronger and wiser than themselves” (2005, p. 218). “Attachment behaviour is any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world” (Bowlby, 2003, p. 27). This behaviour is activated by losing or the threat of losing contact or proximity with the attachment figure and it is calmed by proximity being restored sometimes with soothing words or sounds or touch. An attachment behavioural system is “a blueprint or model of the world in which the self and significant others and their interrelationship are represented and which encodes the particular pattern of attachment shown by an individual” (Holmes, 2005, p. 68).

Phases of Attachment

Bowlby (1997) proposed that there were four phases of attachment;

1. Orientation and signals with limited discrimination of figure
2. Orientation and signals directed towards one (or more) discriminated figure(s)
3. Maintenance of proximity to a discriminated figure by means of locomotion as well as signals
4. Formation of a goal-corrected partnership

Within a few days of birth, the baby is able to tell the difference between the smell and voices of individuals and studies show that he prefers his mother’s voice and smell. The baby is sensitive to light and can follow it for a short time and within a few weeks he can see patterns. The baby can fix on and track an object eight or nine inches away from his eyes, this is the distance between mother and baby during breast

feeding. The infant learns to distinguish the familiar from strange and favours the familiar and withdraws from the strange. This is results driven, if the behaviour is reinforced such as mother soothing and reassuring the baby it begins to form patterns, however if the baby is not responded to or rejected an adverse pattern of behaviour will begin to form. Winnicott calls this the mirror role of the mother; “What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother’s face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself” (1971, p. 112). The baby mediates this attachment by at first orientating himself towards his mother, he uses his mouth, head, hands and feet to cling and latch onto his mother. As he gets older the baby can signal his mother by crying, babbling, smiling or with gestures. The function of attachment is primarily about survival in the form of food and protection from threats but it is also about something more, it is about love, warmth, learning how to relate, reciprocity and of identity formation. It is too simplistic to call it solely a biological function of protection as we still seek and exhibit attachment behaviour into adulthood when the physical requirement for protection from our mother has long since ceased.

The Attachment System

Holmes (2005), talks of three key features as the defining elements of an attachment relationship, these are;

1. Proximity seeking to a preferred figure

By the time an infant can crawl, he tends to follow the attachment figure, usually his mother everywhere. As part of the baby’s progress he is able to tolerate greater periods of separation from her, needing less and less soothing and reassurance upon returning to her or being reunited with her. Bowlby

describes attachment as 'monotropic' (Bowlby, 1988), meaning attachment happens with one primary figure, however it is also hierarchical and includes the father, siblings, wider family members and 'transitional objects' such as a special soft toy (Winnicott, 1982). Children prefer the company of the primary attachment figure when distressed, which most times is the mother. However, if she is not available a secondary or tertiary attachment figure will do. Bowlby notes though, when in need, attachment behaviour may be directed at a stranger however, a true and lasting attachment will include very few people. If the child does not seem to differentiate between figures in this way Bowlby suggests he is probably severely disturbed. As children progress to adolescence and then adulthood this need for proximity lessens but doesn't end until the death or permanent separation from the primary attachment figure.

2. The secure base

Ainsworth coined the phrase 'secure base'; this describes the atmosphere that is created for the child by the mother to enable the child to feel safe enough to explore their environment. It is a psychological connection between the pair, where the mother represents a safe haven. The child will venture away but has an invisible boundary over which he will not cross. Paradoxically, the further away from the secure base the child is, the stronger the attachment behaviour becomes as the anxiety levels of the child increase.

3. Separation Protest

When Ainsworth was developing her 'strange situation' experiment she used the reactions of children when left and their protests to their mothers once reunited with them as a measure of the quality of attachment in the children. These protests could be seen in the form of crying, screaming, clinging, biting or hitting, a general punishment of mother for leaving them and an effort to resume their attachment. As the child gets older these responses that for the first few years of life are plastic, begin to solidify through repeated experiencing of a set of responses of the mother, leading to set patterns of relating to people throughout life.

Concepts of Attachment

Bowlby (2003) describes the concept of the secure base provided by the parents as primarily of one of waiting. The child is comfortable in the knowledge that the parent is there and is ready and willing to provide protection, comfort, help and reassurance and food. This allows him to venture further afield, initially in the very young child it may only be to the next room but as the child grows, he will feel that security from further afield, such as playschool. As he grows to adolescence that base is taken for granted, a solid backbone on which to rely, a protective, comforting presence for the adolescent. As the individual moves towards and enters adulthood the need lessens but is carried throughout life and transferred from the parents to other figures such as romantic partners, friends or institutions such as clubs or teams. If a child has experienced this enough it also enables him to seek out and ask for support throughout his life.

In the Baltimore Project participating families were observed in situ over a fifty four week period. Visits were four hours in duration and an over all seventy two hours of data per family was recorded, (Bretherton, 1992). Rather uniquely for the time Ainsworth's methodology centred on recording how meaningful the interactions and patterns of behaviour were, rather than the number of interactions between the mother and infant. She observed how diverse these interactions were with regard to timing, sensitivity and appropriateness of the interventions of the mother. She concluded that "an infant whose mother's responsiveness helps him to achieve his ends develops confidence in his own ability to control what happens to him" (Bell and Ainsworth, 1972, p. 1188, as cited in Bretherton, 1992, p. 765). Later Ainsworth developed the strange situation experiment. Here a child, its mother and an experimenter spend twenty minutes in a room together. After which the mother leaves for three minutes and then returns. Then both the mother and experimenter leave and again return after a further three minutes. Ainsworth videotaped and rated the reactions of the children to the absence and more revealingly the subsequent reuniting with their mothers. From this she devised three different attachment styles, adding a fourth at a later date. Bowlby (2003) describes the attachment styles as follows;

Secure Attachment

The child is happy to explore the world, safe in the knowledge that his mother will protect, reassure and comfort him if something distressing happens. This is developed through parenting that is responsive to the child's needs in a consistent and appropriate manner.

Anxious Ambivalent Attachment

The child is fearful of exploration and experiences anxiety upon separation. Uncertain as to whether his parent will help or reject him, the child becomes clingy and fearful. These parents do not respond consistently to the child, sometimes reassuring and sometimes rejecting him. Prolonged separation from the parent or threats of abandonment may also create this attachment style.

Anxious Avoidant Attachment

The child expects to be rejected if he seeks help or comfort. As a result he attempts to become self-sufficient and try to live without the love and support of others. Sometimes developing a narcissistic personality or as Winnicott (1960) describes as a 'false self'. This attachment style is not obvious as the person, on the surface at least, seems unaffected. Parents of children with this attachment style consistently reject their children and offer scant comfort and protection.

Disorganised Attachment

These children show various patterns of behaviour, such as beginning to move and then stopping for no apparent reason, freezing or appearing disoriented. Children with these patterns of attachment may have experienced physical and or sexual abuse or may have been neglected by their parents. Alternatively the mother may be suffering from a bi-polar illness and her interactions and care giving may be erratic and unpredictable. The mother may be in mourning for a parent figure or are themselves adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

“The pattern of attachment that an individual develops during the years of immaturity – infancy, childhood, and adolescence – is profoundly influenced by the way his parents (or other parent figures) treat him” (Bowlby, 2003, p.124). Bowlby (2003) maintains these patterns of behaviour, once adopted, will probably over time become the child’s way of relating. Although at two or three years of age, a young child’s attachment pattern is flexible and is dependent on the quality of the relationship with his mother, if the relationship improves, so too will the security of the attachment and the child is likely to repeat this pattern of attachment with subsequent caregivers such as teachers. “For to have a deep attachment for a person (or a place or thing) is to have taken them as the terminating object of our instinctual responses” (Bowlby, 1959, p. 13, as cited in Bretherton, 1992, p. 763).

As a child develops, repeated interactions with his mother figure, build up a cognitive map which leads to a set way of responding, depending on the circumstance. These schemata are called working models because on one hand, the child develops a set of expectations of how relationships work both in daily life and during stress but on the other hand, these schemata are open to change and influence from new significant attachment relationships. They are semi-solid and are not changed easily, as for the most part these are patterns of behaviour, expectation and responses that are beneath the awareness of the individual.

1.2. Adult Attachment

Adult-to-adult attachment differs from child-to-adult attachment in that, in the former the attachment relationships are mutual, neither partner has a set role and caregiver/care receiver may move back and forth between partners depending on

circumstance. In addition, adult-to-adult attachment relationships may also fulfil other functions such as sex, friendship, shared goals or levels of performance (Ainsworth, 1985). The role of adult attachment behaviour is the same as that of infancy, namely to provide a secure base from which to explore the world. When stressed, there is a need to be close to the attachment figure for comfort and if that figure is unavailable, feelings of anxiety arise (Ainsworth, 1985, as cited in Crowell & Treboux, 1995, p. 298).

Bowlby (2003) recounts how mothers with different attachment patterns may remember their own childhood. A securely attached woman will be able to remember both happy and unhappy events in context and proportion, recounting her childhood with ease. An anxious ambivalent mother may describe her childhood as problematic, experiencing an ongoing difficult and unhappy relationship with her own mother, regardless of her mother being dead or alive. Women who are anxious avoidant may describe their childhood as happy but will not be able to remember happy events. These women may seem unemotional when narrating their memories and may even talk about unhappy memories, all the while maintaining a happy childhood was experienced. Sometimes no memories of childhood can be recalled at all. Encouragingly, Bowlby (2003) found that some women who had an unhappy childhood but had securely attached children were able to talk about their experiences with ease. They were able to integrate their happy memories with the unhappy ones. They seemed to have come to terms with or recognised the various reasons why their parents treated them in such a way, which helped them to balance the experience and enabled them to facilitate secure attachment in their own child.

1.3. Attachment in Romantic Relationships

Research on adult-to-adult attachment relies to a great extent on self-reporting methods of data collection, using memories of early parent/child relationships or perception of self and partner in the current relationship or past adult relationships. It is worthwhile to note however, that in a study of students adjusting to college in their first year away from home, Kobak (1985) found that detached and secure students self-reports were the same; however their peers reported differently for the detached students. These students were reported by their peers as being less competent socially, although the students themselves were unaware of this. Therefore, it is useful to keep in mind the subjective nature of the self-report when assessing adult attachment.

Using Bowlby's concept of working models, research by Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) developed this further by utilising both, the levels of self-image, either positive or negative and the levels of image of others, either positive or negative, developing a four category model of adult attachment. These categories are;

1. Secure; people in this category have a sense of worthiness regarding giving and receiving love and also feel that others in general accept love and respond accordingly.
2. Preoccupied (anxious ambivalent); here people have a low valuation of themselves as being unworthy of love but have a high positive evaluation of others. Therefore they can only accept themselves if others value them.
3. Dismissing; these people have a high valuation of themselves as being unworthy of love and they also have a high negative evaluation of others as

being rejecting and untrustworthy. These people avoid intimacy for fear of rejection.

4. Fearful (anxious avoidant); people in this category have a sense of their own self-worth but distrust others. Avoiding intimate relationships they foster a façade of imperviousness and autonomy.

By means of interview techniques, self-reports and friends' ratings their studies found that "each attachment style was associated with a distinct profile of interpersonal problems" (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, p. 240). Fearful participants reported problems with being too passive in their relationships. Dismissing participants reported a lack of warmth in their relationships. Preoccupied people tended to be overly warm and dominating in their relationships. They concluded that people who were fearful of and avoided intimate relationships diminished the possibility of forming the very relationship they need – one that may provide a corrective experience, thus updating their internal working models of self and others.

Romantic relationships are strongly influenced by attachment formed in childhood. Feeney & Noller (1990) set out to see if attachment style could be used as a forecaster for adult romantic relationships. Their results suggested that "attachment style is likely to exert a very pervasive influence on the individual's relationships with others, because it reflects general views about the rewards and dangers of interpersonal relationships" (Feeney & Noller, 1990). They found that of the three attachment styles, securely attached people were self-confident and reasonably trusting of others and their relationships tended to last the longest and were the most satisfied with the quality of their relationships. Relationships for people who were of the anxious-

avoidant attachment style, were either nonexistent or did not have any depth of affect. Whereas participants' with anxious-ambivalent attachment style relationships, were of the shortest duration, although they sought commitment and were overly dependent. In three studies by Frazier, Byer, Fischer, Wright & DeBord (1996), found that in general people are attracted to and most satisfied in relationships with people of the same attachment style. This suggests that people with similar attachment styles corroborate their self beliefs, which is borne out in the care giving received as a child. People who view their parents as cold or ambivalent are less attracted to secure partners as they do not correlate or match with their learned beliefs from childhood. Swann says, "both pragmatic and epistemic considerations may cause people with negative self-views to regard unfavourable appraisals as unsettling". (as cited in Frazier et al, p. 134). Hazan and Shaver (1987), say that this could be cyclical, where a learned belief about self and others can influence behaviour, thus resulting in an expected outcome, reinforcing that belief.

Lehnart and Neyer found that the quality of attachment in relationships does not generalise across attachment styles but depends on the individuals involved, "partner attachment is relationship specific rather than a stable personality trait" (2006, p. 492). They propose that viewing a partner as a secure base provides the individual with the building blocks to set and achieve personal development and goals. To facilitate this, the partner must be viewed as dependable, reliable and conscientious, becoming more so as the relationship develops, thus adding to the satisfaction gained from the relationship. They found that over time the stability of a relationship was the enabler for personality development in the individual. People with high neuroticism felt disagreements more acutely leading to more regular arguments, a lowering of

dependency on their partner and thus lower satisfaction in their relationship. They found that personality development and the development of adult attachment are linked and occur in relationships that are stable and enduring, providing the secure base for each individual to grow and develop. "...stable romantic relationships create an environment that provides individuals with the opportunity to shape the relationship in line with their personality, which at the same time becomes molded [sic] and changed in a relationship specific manner" (Lehnart & Neyer, 2006, p. 492).

Fraizer et al agree that relationship styles can change depending on the relationship quality. So what on the surface looks like two partners, one anxious one avoidant, in reality the very nature of maintaining a relationship with an avoidant partner may make the other partner more anxious "individuals with avoidant partners come to see themselves as anxious, and individuals with anxious partners come to see themselves as avoidant" (1996, p. 119). Hazan & Shaver (1987), maintain that it is unrealistic to assume that attachment style remains unchanged from childhood into adulthood, however if negative beliefs regarding self and others are reinforced through differing life experiences and relationships, then these beliefs may become quite sedimented and difficult to change. The converse is also worth mentioning, "The average person participates in several important friendships and love relationships, each of which provides an opportunity to revise mental models of self and others" (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 522).

1.4. Attachment in Therapists and the Therapeutic Alliance

A study by Black, Hardy, Turpin & Parry (2005) of 491 psychotherapists across therapeutic orientations, found that the attachment style of the therapist greatly

influenced the therapeutic alliance. Using a self report method of data collection, they found that securely attached therapists reported in general a good therapeutic alliance with their clients. Similarly therapists with anxious attachment styles experienced more difficulty with regard to the therapeutic alliance. Their results found that “therapists representations of their early relationships affect their interactions with clients” (Black et al, p. 372). Meyer & Pilkonis (2001) found that the interventions of insecure therapists were more likely to over stimulate anxious clients, while failing to challenge the clients working models of themselves. Whereas, secure therapists were more likely to defuse an avoidant client in a way that challenged their internal working models.

1.5. Summary and Rationale

It is clear from the research shown that how people attach as children and how subsequently these attachment relationships develop and challenge our views of ourselves and others is a primary influencer of human relationships. Attachment dictates how we behave in our relationships, how we view ourselves, how we perceive our loved ones. The research has shown that these working models of self and others are difficult to change; however are not set in stone but significantly and most crucially for therapists they are malleable and are relationship dependant. In therapy issues of attachment present on a frequent basis. It is necessary for the therapist to be able to recognise the different attachment styles clients may present, to garner a clearer understanding of the client’s process.

However, what of the therapists’ process? Can that same understanding be applied to the trainee therapists and their romantic relationships? If so, does their experience

and knowledge gained while training influence the trainee to change their behaviours in these relationships and how is that change experienced? An investigative study by Murray (2007) into the impact of counsellor training on counselling students' romantic relationships, found that four primary experiences emerged, these were; awareness, change, support and gratitude. Awareness informed change, which for some participants, led to support from partners and hence gratitude for that support. Further research in this area may prove beneficial to trainee therapists when met with the challenge of their own attachment style and behaviours, for both their romantic relationships and in their client work.

1.6. Aims and Objectives of the Study

This was an exploratory study, the aim of which was to ascertain the attachment styles of trainee therapists and to investigate their experiences in romantic relationships, while in training. Another aim was to consider if the training influenced their romantic relationships and how, if at all that influence was experienced. It was hoped that researching these issues might help trainees to have a clearer understanding of how they experience change in their romantic relationships thus enabling them to help their clients in this area through empathy and education. It was also hoped that this study might help training institutions and colleges when preparing new trainees for work as therapists.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used to ascertain the attachment style (in close relationships) of the participants and to investigate if and in what way their experiences in training influenced their romantic relationships. More specifically, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire were used to investigate the latter.

2.2. Participants

A small convenience sample of participants was chosen from among the student population of a third level college, in their final years of a BA in Counselling and Psychotherapy. The criteria for participation included male or female students of Counselling and Psychotherapy, nearing the end of their studies, currently in a romantic relationship with a duration of a minimum of two years. Six participants, three female and three male, ranging in age from 27 to 39 with a mean age of 34 were selected. All of the couples were either co-habiting or married with relationships ranging from 2 years to a maximum of 10 years, with a mean relationship duration of 5.88 years. A decision was taken not to include a table with participants' demographic details as the researcher felt it would compromise their anonymity.

2.3. Materials

As this study required knowledge of the participant's attachment style in close relationships and their experiences in close relationships, a two-pronged approach was employed. The Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) questionnaire

was used, this is a quantitative questionnaire consisting of thirty six statements, requiring the participant to rate their answers on a seven point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree (see appendix 1. for full questionnaire). The questionnaire measures the disparities in individuals in relation to attachment related anxiety and attachment related avoidance in close relationships (Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000). The second part of the study involved an investigation into the experiences of participants within their own relationships. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed consisting of four demographic questions and six open-ended question designed to explore the participants view of self and others in romantic relationships and their experiences of how these relationships developed over the duration of their training and if and in what ways their relationships were influenced by their training (see appendix 2. for interview schedule).

2.4. Procedure

The participants were supplied with the questionnaires to fill in at their convenience prior to the interviews. They were met at a pre-arranged location, at a time convenient to them. Each interviewee was given an information sheet introducing the interviewer, explaining the purpose of the study, the criteria for participation and details of the requirements of the study (see appendix 3. for participant information sheet). Each interviewee was then required to sign a consent form (see appendix 4. for consent form). Each interview was then recorded using a dictaphone and later transcribed in full pending analysis (see appendix 5. for interview transcriptions; these are included as part of a process of transparency, so that each reader may test the credibility and dependability of the study's findings against the actual data for themselves, if they so wish).

2.5. Analysis

An interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was used to interpret the semi-structured interviews. The aim of this approach is to explore the participant's world, their individual perceptions of events and the understanding and significance they give to these experiences. It does not expect to find definitive answers to specific questions but to elucidate a flavour of the participant's world. Smith & Osborn explain it thus, "the participants trying to make sense of their world; the researcher trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (2003, p. 51). The main endeavour of analysis using the IPA approach is to stay as close to the original words and experiences of the participants as possible. Initially, each transcript was read to familiarise the interviewer with each participant's phraseology and use of language. One transcript was then concentrated on, noting significant or richly descriptive passages. Over time themes emerged and were noted in the margins of the transcript. This process was repeated for each transcript. The aim with this approach was to ascertain the spirit of each person's account without trying to enforce any specific configuration of meaning. Once each transcript was treated in this way, emerging themes were grouped together, under the headings of major themes and sub-themes. As well as noting similarities among themes, richly descriptive contradictory themes were also noted to give a flavour of alternate expressions. A table was developed and compiled containing master themes and sub-themes (see Table 2, Ch. 3).

2.6. Ethics

As each participant was sharing very personal experiences and sensitive information about themselves and their partners, they were assured of confidentiality surrounding

these issues and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Written consent was sought and received from each participant to have the interviews recorded, transcribed and verbatim excerpts included in the study.

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

3.1. Quantitative Results

The findings of the Experiences in Close Relationships Questionnaire – Revised are shown on a scale of 1 to 7; where 1 is the lowest level of anxiety and 7 is the highest level of anxiety and similarly, where 1 is the lowest level of avoidance and 7 is the highest level of avoidance. Table 1 clearly shows that four of the six participants were securely attached whereas, the remaining two participants had a preoccupied or anxious ambivalent attachment style (see Figure 1).

Table 1: Results of ECR-R Questionnaire

	Mary	John	Danny	Jane	Fiona	Peter
Anxiety	3.22	3.33	4.16	3.33	4.5	3.72
Avoidance	3.38	3.77	3.83	3.6	3.5	3.55

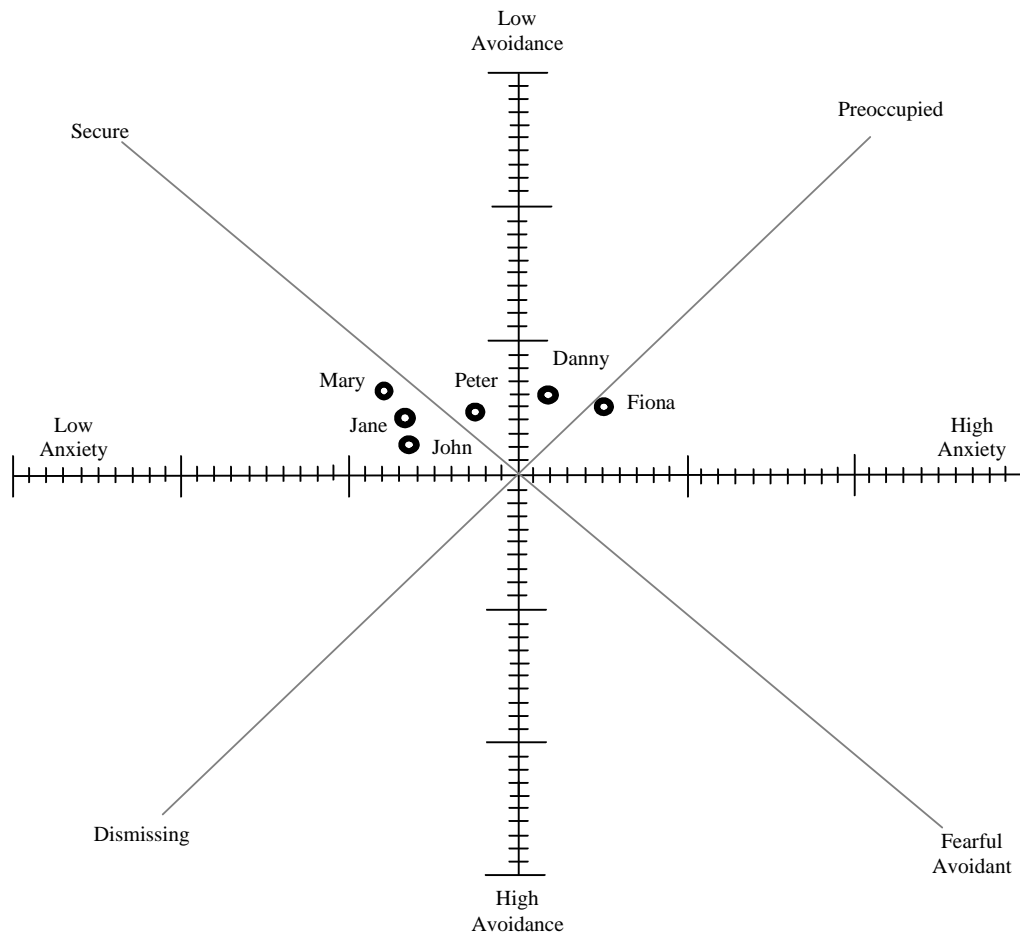


Figure 1: Attachment Styles of Participants

3.2. Qualitative Findings

The participants were asked questions exploring their views of self in relation to their own romantic relationships and their training. Four master themes emerged through the analysis of these interviews, these were:

- (1) Change: Self Development and Coping with the Reality of Change
- (2) The Influence of Training on Relationships
- (3) Relationship Advice to New Trainees
- (4) College Help: The Need for Preparation (see Table 2)

Table 2: Master Themes and Sub-Themes

	<u>Master Theme 1:</u>	<u>Master Theme 2:</u>	<u>Master Theme 3:</u>	<u>Master Theme 4:</u>
	Change: Self Development and Coping With the Reality of Change	The Influence of Training on Relationships	Relationship Advice to New Trainees	College Help: The Need for Preparation
<u>Sub-Themes</u>	Personal Development: “Learning about myself”	Negotiating Relationships: “Listen”, “Communicate”, “Reflect”	Recognising Difference: “You may be changing and they may not...”	Some Witten Material: “It doesn’t have to be very in depth”
	When Change Happens: “Fools rush in”/“I analyse an awful lot more... obviously”		Information Sharing with Partner: “...keep them in the loop”	A Module: “Some sort of an introductory module”
				Alternative Views: “Some kind of personality checks”

3.3. Change: Self Development and Coping with the Reality of Change

All the participants spoke about experiencing change in some way while in training. Much of this was experienced as personal growth and affected the participants in different ways. Interestingly, once a shift in perception began to be felt, the male and female participants had very different ways of responding to this change.

Personal Development

Some expressed a new found self awareness such as Jane when she talked of her relationship with her partner and how that's been influenced by her personal learning.

Jane: "Well absolutely for myself, for me as a person, learning more about myself and then bringing it into the relationship because I'm more aware of the way I am, like, I can kind of go that's, that's me, you know? It's kind of understanding myself more has helped our relationship".

Mary articulated it very simply when she spoke of her growth and how it influenced her relationship.

Mary: "I've learned to accept myself a lot more and in that way I've learned to let him accept me... *me* for who I am".

John, talked about his partner and how his experiences changed the way he interacts with her and how he can now make his own wishes known:

John: "... it's made me a better listener for her and emotionally, sometimes I can, because of the course and especially now with clients, there's a little bit of needing time and I think the course makes me ask for that

time, more often than maybe I would have if I wasn't doing the course..."

Peter spoke of his personal learning around control and boundaries.

Peter: "...it's only since the tail end of this course where I've actually somehow and again, it's only just my view of it, where I see myself as maybe having a little bit more control, so acknowledging the emotional reaction but not letting it kind of rule the roost..."

Here Danny expressed how his personal experience has encompassed not just the theoretical side of learning but a deep personal learning about himself and those he is closest to.

Danny: "I grew as a person and I developed greatly through this course, that it's not just about the theory, it's not just about the essays and assignments, it's about exploring yourself, the relationship you have with yourself and with other people and how you... how you are portrayed, how you put yourself out there, how you are with other people..."

All the participants spoke of how their personal development and growth had mainly a positive influence on their relationships with their partners. This was felt in many cases as increased self awareness and self acceptance, which somehow enabled the participants to become better listeners and more boundaried people.

When Change Happens

A clear male/female divide emerged when the participants explained how they reacted to feelings of an emotional shift or changing perspectives within their relationships.

The male participants universally advocated not acting on their emotions but of holding the emotion and talking with their partner about what they were feeling.

Conversely, the female participants reported overanalysing their relationships, which lead sometimes to friction within their relationships.

Danny: “You know I’ve kind of got a sense that fools rush in I’ve kind of started to understand what that means eh... and you know I’ve, I’ve lived that for a long time in terms of acting on an emotion that hits me straight away and that resulting in shouting and roaring, you know kind of behaving like a child on occasions and that kind of thing. Eh... so through understanding what those emotions do to me and understanding what happens in my body I’ve been learning how to control that a little bit more”.

Peter explained how his reactions were experienced when he felt emotions surface and the subsequent friction that caused between himself and his partner.

Peter: “... especially initially when I was doing this training I was reacting a lot quicker, eh... I was becoming aware of my emotional response...”

He went on to say;

“...almost an amygdala hijack, it wouldn’t be a thought led reaction so I’d actually be throwing stuff back and... so it made things actually quite a bit worse...”.

John encouraged a more measured response when shift happens.

John: “So not to react too quickly when eh... you might feel a bit different than you have before but to talk as you should always with your partner”.

When asked about the influence her training has had on her relationship, Jane spoke of overanalysing and the mixed effect that had on her.

Jane: “... so I suppose it’s a bit of a positive and a negative, it can get maybe too much sometimes, if I, if I overanalyse things in my head about what could be going on or not going on and things like that eh... I suppose it could be... get too much sometimes for me kind of over thinking things... thinking things that aren’t even there...”

Fiona too spoke of the effects overanalysing has had on her and others and how her love and excitement for her learning may not be shared by those around her.

Fiona: “...you get so excited, so avid about it (the course) that you apply it to your life and you apply it to every part of your life and I think you run the risk of of becoming so analytical that it gets in the way of, of relationships, all relationships not just romantic ones and at times it can push people away from you because they don’t understand where you’re coming from, they don’t think and process things the way you do...”

Mary, when asked about how she felt her partner would describe her, candidly replied.

Mary: “...I overanalyse, well he says I overanalyse things....”

In short, the male participants felt they tended to react too quickly when change was experienced, whereas, the female participants had a tendency to overanalyse.

3.4. The Influence of Training on Relationships

All the participants felt the training they experienced had influenced their romantic relationships. In the main the participants felt it as a positive influence but also as a challenge.

Negotiating Relationships

Key commonalities with these respondents seemed to be, that as couples their listening skills improved, they developed better reflective skills and experienced more communication within their relationships.

Mary: “... I think our relationship has gotten maybe more understanding because I would now, I suppose be able to listen a lot better than I used to.”

She went on to say;

“I think it’s gotten stronger, I think with all them things we’ve learnt we’re a lot more resilient as a couple and eh... yeah, I, I think we’ve gotten stronger over the last few years.

Fiona talked of how open communication has enabled her relationship to develop.

Fiona: “... I suppose we’re only kind of finding out things about each other all of the time. I’d say it’s because of the course that we can communicate so openly. Eh... I think that’s helped its development”.

Danny expressed how his relationship developed through his learning as a trainee therapist.

Danny: “... both of us have started to become a little bit more reflective and also maybe, a little bit more tolerant of the other person, so eh... yea, the biggest change for me is that it seems to be a little bit more, perhaps not as exciting but more cemented in some... eh, truth and honesty...”.

3.5. Relationship Advice to New Trainees

The participants were asked to lend any advice or learning they had to new trainee therapists that may help them on their journey. All the participants mentioned changing relationships, additionally some mentioned the need for support and some expressed the need to keep constant contact with their partner throughout their experience.

Recognising Difference

The new trainees were invited to notice that change is a major element of this type of training and will be felt by the individual, however, it may also impact on those around them.

Mary: “... *you* may be changing and they may not and to maybe not hold it against them or not resent them because they’re the same person they were at the start of the course because you’ve... you may have changed considerably”.

John added his advice around change in the relationship.

John: “Be aware that you are going to change a little bit, you will be... let’s say more in touch with who you are and hopefully you’re in a relationship where that works out fine but if it doesn’t work out fine you need to remember that you’re the one who’s changing not the other person”.

Peter shared how he was blind-sided by the impact his personal development had on his relationship and suggested new trainees should give this some consideration.

Peter: “... how you perceive things... how you possibly see others... it’s all going to... it’s not necessarily going to change but it’s going to develop, it’s going to grow and these kind of things could possibly have an impact on, on your relationship. So, I would be, be wary of that, look out for that, try not to kind of let it sneak up on you like what happened to me really, I was kind of caught out, like I didn’t see it coming until it was too late.”

Jane spoke of the level of commitment needed to complete training of this nature and how new trainees might be made aware of this.

Jane: “The course will certainly take over a lot of their life, in the latter years of the course absolutely and their partners will have to be aware of that... I don’t know... it’s just to forewarn them that they know how difficult this can be and that they will need all the support they can get, especially if they’ve got kids”.

This advice related to change and how through training and personal development the individual might feel themselves change in relation to their perceptions of themselves and others and the world in general.

Information Sharing with Partner

The second area of advice to new trainees was regarding information sharing with partners and the importance of getting the balance right. Mary spoke of the importance of restraint when sharing your learning with your partner.

Mary: “... don’t try and enforce things onto your partner that you’re learning about yourself or about relationships, if they want to come along on the ride you know, give them as much information as they want but... I suppose not to force feed them stuff we’re learning because they’re not on the course, they’re not as interested as you about it so... but again, the other end of it is to keep them in the loop about what you’re learning...”

Danny also talked of the balance between restraint and of not leaving your partner behind when learning and change begin to happen.

Danny: “... continually keep in contact with your partner... not about everything, not about your inner most deepest darkest of ramblings as you go through the course if you don’t want to but just keep them informed about what, you know, what it means to you to be on the course, what you’ve found, what you’ve felt on occasion, you know, because I think the partner can be left in the dark a lot of the time...”

It is clear from this feedback that too much information may leave the partner overwhelmed and too little information may leave them in the dark.

3.6. College Help: The Need for Preparation

The participants were all in agreement, that colleges could help to prepare new trainee therapists more thoroughly for the changes and challenges they will experience when undertaking a course of this nature. Their opinions differed however, as to the form the college preparation might take. Danny articulated the views of many of the participants when he expressed his feelings on this subject.

Danny: “I think that there’s a duty of care from the college to inform people as much as possible that there’s a real effort...it’s a real journey and a personal journey that you’re going to go on...”

Some Written Material

John and Danny expressed a wish to have some written information that mentioned a possibility of change.

John: “They should mention that as you grow within yourself you might change and this might effect how you are with your current relationship, it might improve it, it might make it worse... so they could mention that”.

Danny echoed this sentiment.

Danny: “It doesn’t have to be very in depth but it certainly has to be a little bit more than they offer at the moment”.

A Module

Peter and Mary spoke of having a module based on relationships and how change may be experienced within relationships, encompassing common pitfalls and possible coping strategies.

Peter: “... some sort of an introductory module that will maybe be two hours experiential, to introduce people to the things to maybe keep an eye out for, it could have been... it would have been certainly useful for me anyway”.

Mary adds;

Mary: “A module covering marriage relationships and how change affects it would definitely be a help, in our client work as well as for ourselves”.

Alternative Views

Both Jane and Fiona had more radical suggestions for colleges with regard to student preparation in this area. Jane expressed her wish for an ongoing space for informal communication on how relationships may be affected by change; she suggested this could be done in a group setting.

Jane: “Maybe a space where we could bring that... kind of analyse that a bit more, what is going on for us or what could be happening for us in our relationships, what could be having a negative impact that we wouldn’t have been eh... aware of”.

When asked for her ideas, Fiona suggested an interview process to assess the suitability of the trainee; she also suggested psychometric tests to help trainees with their own process.

Fiona: “I think some kind of personality checks and tests and that kind of stuff could be done before the course starts so people at least know what they know what they need to work on”.

All of the participants recognised this was an experiential piece and as such, a catch all approach would not be possible. They also acknowledged that a more formal preparation in this area would be helpful.

3.7. Summary

The participants shared very candidly their experiences of training and the affect this has had on their romantic relationships. Quite clearly a common theme running throughout this section was that of change in various guises. The participants all felt

this change both as a positive and a challenging experience and coped with it in their own ways. It seems that successful negotiation of this experience depends largely on listening, reflection, communication, restraint and balance. The next section will develop these themes to a greater extent.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to ascertain the attachment styles of trainee therapists and to investigate their experiences in romantic relationships, while in training. This research hoped to provide trainees and colleges with a renewed appreciation of how training may affect students' relationships and included possible suggestions for colleges, regarding further preparation of trainees in this area. The methodology incorporated questionnaires and interviews, using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to enable common themes to emerge.

4.2. Attachment Styles of Trainee Therapists

Of the six participants, four were found to have a secure attachment style in close relationships and two had a preoccupied attachment style in close relationships. The study found no correlation between attachment style of these participants and their levels of satisfaction within their relationships. The research in this area would suggest that individuals who have a secure attachment style in their close relationships, more than likely had secure attachments in childhood; happy to explore the world around them, assured of their mothers comfort when needed. Similarly, the participants who had preoccupied attachment styles could be classified according to Bowlby (2003) as having an anxious ambivalent attachment style as children, fearful of exploration, clingy and unsure of parental response. In adulthood, these people become preoccupied by their relationships and have a tendency to value themselves in relation to how others value them. As therapists with these attachment styles, how might this affect their therapeutic relationships? Research demonstrates that the

characteristics of the therapist are an important factor when determining therapeutic alliance. People with secure attachment styles tend to experience a good therapeutic alliance, “Secure models of attachment result in an open, flexible, and non-defensive approach to attachment related issues” (Black et al, 2005, p. 372). Whereas, people with preoccupied attachment styles have more trouble in this area reporting difficulty in their therapeutic alliance, failing to challenge the working models of their clients and a tendency to exacerbate their clients anxiety levels (Black et al., 2005).

4.3. Change: Self Development and Coping with the Reality of Change

All the participants reported experiencing personal change in some form during their training, which would seem to support Murray’s (2007) findings on the occurrence of change in couple’s relationships during counselling training. Most of the participants experienced this change as personal development and they variously described it as exploration of the self, self acceptance, change in perceptions of self and others, the discovering of personal boundaries and of becoming aware of emotional triggers and responses. As adults we are constantly struggling with accepting reality and relating our inner and outer realities. When examined in relation to attachment, these experiences could be linked to and challenge, what Holmes calls, the attachment behavioural system, of both partners, “a blueprint or model of the world in which the self and significant others and their interrelationship are represented and which encodes the particular pattern of attachment shown by an individual” (2005, p. 68). While these changes were positively experienced by the individuals they were often experienced initially, as anxiety provoking when taken in relation to their partners, as they challenged the concept of the secure base or the safe haven of the relationship. As one partner changes, this triggers attachment behaviour in the other partner, the

second partner casting about, displaying proximity seeking behaviour, in an effort to re-establish connection and balance with the object of their attachment.

The findings also establish a clear divide between the sexes when this change was being experienced. The male participants experienced this as a desire to act on an emotion, whereas female participants experienced this as overanalysing. These differences between the desire to act and overanalysing may be characteristics of the individuals involved or they may be a product of the differing schemata and internal working models of males and females. Additional research in this area would be required to investigate if this is indicative of a wider difference in male/female coping mechanisms.

4.4. Influence of Training on Relationships

All of the participants reported some form of improved relating with their partners due to their experience in training, this included but was not limited to becoming better listeners, improved communication with their partners and increased reflection skills, thus reinforcing the secure base of their relationship; a safe environment from which to explore the world (Bowlby, 2003). Lehnart & Neyer (2006) found attachment styles are not set-in-stone and are relationship specific, so a secure individual in a relationship with an avoidant partner may become more preoccupied whereas an anxious person in a relationship with a secure partner may experience increased security within this relationship. From the reflections of the participants, it seems their learning influenced their partners' views of themselves and their relationship as well, thus describing their relationships as more understanding and of both partners as becoming more reflective. "Attachment theory includes the idea that

social development involves the continual construction, revision, integration, and abstraction of mental models” (Hazan & Shaver, 1987, p. 523). In other words, each relationship is an opportunity to revise core beliefs of self and others and that these models, though difficult, are not impossible to change, maintaining the view that the development of adult attachment and personality development are related and occur in stable, long term relationships.

4.5. Relationship Advice to New Trainees

Two themes emerged when the participants were asked about relationship advice to new trainees. The first was the importance of recognising difference of experience and self development between partners. More specifically, the trainees were experiencing a deep level of personal learning and awareness, whereas their partners were not. This disparity between personal development can lead to tension within the relationship and participants would encourage awareness of this. The second area regarding relationship advice was around the impact of the trainees’ personal change on their partner. This was mainly felt as a positive by the participants but it may also have a negative effect on the relationship. As research suggests, people are more satisfied in relationships with people who have the same attachment style, that corroborates their core self-beliefs, either positively or negatively (Frazier, Byer, Fischer, Wright & DeBord, 1996) therefore, if one of the partners attachment style is changing due to their personal development achieved during training, this could potentially have a negative effect on the relationship. The participants advocated a gentle approach when communicating these feelings of change to their partner and the importance of getting the balance right between not enforcing their views on their partners yet keeping the lines of communication open.

4.6. College Help: The Need for Preparation

A final theme that emerged from the study was the need for colleges to more adequately prepare students for the challenges their relationships may face during counselling and psychotherapy training. Suggestions ranged from providing literature on the subject to the students, through to a relationships module, to an ongoing forum to relate these experiences. Personal change and relationship change are often felt as anxiety provoking situations and by their very nature are unfamiliar and new. In this case, the colleges may be seen as attachment figures of sorts, Holmes refers to “...someone perceived to be older, stronger and wiser than themselves” (2005, p. 218), whereas, Bowlby talks of attachment to a person, place or thing (as cited in Bretherton, 1992). It could be argued that the trainees are looking for the security offered by the attachment figure, in this instance, the colleges and the uncertainty of their relationship change is triggering attachment behaviour, which is seen in children as separation protest and in the trainees as a demand for a “...duty of care” (Danny), that the colleges prepare the students more adequately for these challenges.

4.7. Methodological Strengths of the Study

Various approaches were employed by the researcher to facilitate gathering of data. Once the participants were selected, the researcher established trust with the participants through clear representation of the requirements of the study and assurances of participant confidentiality. During the interviews the researcher used counselling skills to create an environment where the participants felt confident to share their experiences. Transcribing each interview in full assisted the researcher to explore in depth the material provided by the participants, which, with repeated

referencing to these experiences and extensive note taking enabled the various themes to emerge.

4.8. Methodological Limitations of the Study

Participants with either secure or preoccupied attachment styles partook in the study, therefore eliminating the possibility of a differing view point from subjects of both dismissing and preoccupied attachment styles. In addition, the study only included participants who were at the time of investigation in long term relationships, again excluding fearful people who may not have experienced many (if any) long term relationships. However, due to time and resource limitations, the researcher concluded it was necessary to narrow the study in this way. Another limitation, was the self-report nature of this study, research by Kobak (1985) exposed the biased nature of research that used self-reporting methods of data collection. Participants may have been reluctant to address the more difficult relationship issues they experienced with the researcher or may have shown themselves in a more positive light than their partners would. However, due to time and resource constrains this method of data collection was deemed to be sufficient for this study. Ideally, when conducting a study of this nature, the attachment styles in close relationships, of all the participants and their partners would be determined at the beginning of the training. Similarly, attitudes to self and partner would also be investigated at the beginning of the training, using an observational method of data collection. This process would then be followed again, for both trainees and partners at the end of training and any changes noted. This would yield a more complete picture of the attachment styles of trainees and their partners and the effect training has on the individual and their close relationships during training. Finally, as the findings are the

interpretation of the researcher as such, the issue of interviewer bias needs to be raised as another possible limitation of this study.

4.9. Recommendations to Colleges and Training Institutions

Participants in this research unanimously agreed that colleges could do more to prepare trainees with regard to the possible impact their training may have on their relationships. Suggestions from the participants varied from written material, to a module, to an ongoing forum to raise relationship issues. The researcher would recommend that a more formal approach to this is necessary and would suggest a class or seminar, including written material covering how to manage change in relationships. Obviously, all configurations of the possible impact change may have on a relationship cannot be covered; however an overview of common problems and pitfalls in relationships may prove useful to new trainees.

4.10. Recommendations for Future Research

From this study interesting themes emerged that may warrant future exploration.

1. The male/female divide regarding how the male and female participants responded when change was being experienced in the relationship. Is this phenomenon something that would be replicated by a wider study using a larger number of participants? What are the implications for therapy, when change of shift is being experienced by the client? Does the countertransference in male therapists cause a tendency to react too quickly and does the same in female therapists prompt over analysis of the client?
2. Another area of possible research could be the influence training has on relationships, not just romantic relationships but relationships in general. Are

friendships and other familial relationships affected and how is this experienced?

3. A wider study into changing attachment patterns over the course of the training, encompassing quantitative research of a large section of Counselling and Psychotherapy trainees.

4.11. Personal Reflections on the Research Process

I chose this area for my research project because of my own experiences while in training. I found that during my personal journey, a shift in my perceptions did occur; prompting emotional upheaval, which in turn affected my relationships both romantic and otherwise. I wondered if this experience was common to others and if it was felt as a positive in their lives. What stood out for me during my research was the overwhelming positivity from most of the respondents and the feeling that despite some challenging times, they found the training has had a positive effect on their relationships. This is a sentiment mirrored in my own experience and is something that may offer reassurance and hope to new trainees who may have concerns around their own relationships. This process allowed me to track the progress of my own attachment from childhood to adulthood. It underscored for me that as humans, we deeply need the positive influence of nurturing, loving relationships that is so often denied to us and I was inspired to learn that we can positively influence our attachment, given the right relationships. I learned that change takes many forms, which the respondents absorbed and dealt with in various ways. There was always a wish or a hope from the participants that their change resulted in them becoming better people, both for themselves and their partners. This research highlighted for me the huge commitment a course of this nature is for the individual and their partner,

who did not choose this but is on the roller coaster none the less. We in training need to appreciate that our partners are changing too through our influence, so we need to be mindful of that.

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APPENCICES

APPENDIX 1: Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised Questionnaire

1. I'm afraid that I will lose my partner's love.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

2. I do not often worry about being abandoned.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

3. I often worry that my partner will not want to stay with me.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

4. Sometimes romantic partners change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

5. I rarely worry about my partner leaving me.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

6. I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

7. I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

8. I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

9. I often wish that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

10. My romantic partner makes me doubt myself.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

11. I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down.

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

12. I don't feel comfortable opening up to romantic partners.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

13. It's easy for me to be affectionate with my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

14. I tell my partner just about everything.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

15. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

16. I worry a lot about my relationships.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

17. I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

18. When my partner is out of sight, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

19. I find it relatively easy to get close to my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

20. When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I'm afraid they will not feel the same about me.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

21. I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

22. My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

23. I feel comfortable sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

24. It's not difficult for me to get close to my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

25. I'm afraid that once a romantic partner gets to know me, he or she won't like who I really am.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

26. It makes me mad that I don't get the affection and support I need from my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

27. I worry that I won't measure up to other people.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

28. I find it easy to depend on romantic partners.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

29. My partner only seems to notice me when I'm angry.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

30. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on romantic partners.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

31. I prefer not to be too close to romantic partners.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

32. I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

33. It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

34. I talk things over with my partner.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

35. I am nervous when partners get too close to me.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

36. My partner really understands me and my needs.

Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 2: Interview Schedule

DATE: _____

Demographic Questions

1. Age at last birthday
2. Marital Status
 - Married
 - Living with partner
 - Not living with partner but in long term relationship
3. Duration of relationship

Interview Questions

1. How would you describe yourself as a person?
2. How do you think your partner would describe you?
3. Can you describe your relationship with your partner?
4. How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?
5. How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?
6. How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?
7. How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?
8. What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

APPENDIX 3: Participant Information Sheet

Title of the Study

An investigative study into the attachment styles of trainee therapists and the effects of counselling & psychotherapy training on the romantic relationships of student therapists

Researcher: Alison Garvey

Research Supervisor: Andre Bolster

My name is Alison Garvey and I am conducting a research study as part of a Degree Programme in Counselling and Psychotherapy in Dublin Business School.

Purpose of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate attachment styles in trainee therapists and how their romantic relationships may be influenced by the training. If you decide to participate, I will ask you questions about your relationship with your partner. The study is also to inform Counselling and Psychotherapy training institutions of the potential impact such training has on the individual and their partners.

Criteria for participation in the study

To contribute to this study, the participants will be current trainees in Counselling and Psychotherapy in a third level institution. In addition they will be required to be in a current relationship of a minimum of two years duration.

Details of what involvement in the study will require

Participation in this study will involve conducting a face to face interview which will be audio-taped and later transcribed by the researcher. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. You will be given breaks as needed. You may experience some distress from talking about personal issues during this interview, however, you do not have to answer any question that particularly upsets you, and you may stop the interview at any time. Time will be allowed for reflection and you can decide if you want to proceed. There will be an opportunity given by the researcher to ask questions or to clarify any aspects of the study. You will also be given opportunity to talk about your experience of being involved in this research.

The venue of the interview will be at a location convenient to the participant. The time of the interview will be organised according to your preference.

Confidentiality

Your decision to participate is completely voluntary and all the information you provide will remain confidential to the researcher. All forms will be identified by a code number. Any names or other identifying information that you provide during the course of the interview will be removed during transcription.

Limitations to confidentiality

The only cases where confidentiality cannot be kept is if you tell me that you or your child(ren) are in danger of harm, or if information indicates that a minor may be at risk. Any information given that indicates that a minor (under 18 years) may be at risk, or that you are at risk of harm to yourself or others will have to be reported in

accordance with HSE guidelines. It is important for you to know that this limit to confidentiality applies even if you withdraw from the study after disclosing such information.

Freedom of Information and the right to withdraw from the study

If you initially decide to take part you can subsequently change your mind and withdraw from the study without prejudice, and request to have your data removed from the study. Additionally, under the Freedom of Information Act (1997) you have the right of access to information concerning you, which you may request from the researcher in writing.

APPENDIX 4: Consent Form

My name is Alison Garvey and I am an undergraduate student in Dublin Business School. I am conducting a research study as part of a Degree Programme in Counselling and Psychotherapy. The aim of the study is to investigate attachment styles in trainee therapists and how their romantic relationships may be influenced by the training. I will ask you questions about your relationship with your partner, you are free to refuse to answer any question throughout the interview without prejudice. **The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.** You will be given breaks as needed.

Your decision to participate is completely voluntary and all the information you provide will remain confidential to the researcher. However, if you tell me that you or your child(ren) are in danger of harm, or if information indicates that a minor (under 18 years) may be at risk, I will need to report this information to the National Counselling Service in accordance with HSE guidelines in order to assure you and your child's safety. This limit to confidentiality applies even if you withdraw from the study after disclosing such information. Additionally, excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included in the report. If you initially decide to take part you can subsequently change your mind and withdraw from the study without prejudice and request to have your data removed from the study.

Under the Freedom of Information Act (1997), you have the right to access records containing personal information. If the need arises you may contact me regarding this.

I agree for the researcher to contact me at either of the numbers below

tick box

Home: _____ Mobile: _____

Please sign this form to show that I have read the contents to you.

_____ **(printed)**

_____ **(signed)**

_____ **(date)**

If you have any further questions about the research please contact me at **085 7225825**

or alternatively by e-mail at **alison.garv@hotmail.com**.

Thank you very much for your time,

Alison Garvey

APPENDIX 5: Transcripts

PARTICIPANT 1: MARY

Q.1 I How would you describe yourself as a person?

P I would say that I'm an open and honest person eh... sometimes though when it comes to private matters, I would be quite private and would I suppose, I'd keep things very closely in my family, keep things very closely to myself and my husband and sometimes would keep them to myself if I didn't, maybe if I didn't feel I was going to be understood, I'd keep it to myself or maybe bring it to personal therapy.

Q.2 I How do you think your partner would describe you?

P He does describe me as a very caring person, eh and a very honest person eh... we're quite different, he'd be very mechanical in his thinking, very black and white and he would, he'd probably find me quite complex where I over analyse, well where he says I over analyse things, whereas I would work through things more than, more than probably he would.

Q.3 I Can you describe your relationship with your partner?

P In my opinion I would say it's a very honest relationship and a loving relationship eh... it's quite passionate at times and at times very... what's word maybe antagonistic because we're quite different, we would have very, very passionate arguments but again it's part of who we are and it's part of our relationship. We knew we were very different and we knew there'd be a bit of fire in the relationship because we're so different and we

disagree on a lot of things, so eh... but then we do agree on a lot of things, but it's... the base of it is a loving and understanding relationship, I think.

Q.4 I How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?

P Eh... I think it's, I suppose I can only answer from my point of view, eh... from my point of view I think our relationship has gotten maybe more understanding because I would now I suppose be able to listen a lot better than I use to be able to and because we, we think very differently on some topics we probably would have just come to loggerheads on things very quickly and not know how to get out of a cycle of an argument but I think now I've learnt how to listen a lot better and I think in a way he has as well because I'd be able to, if we're having an argument, I'd be able to explain to him what I'm doing. I'd be able to use a lot of the stuff we learn in school and you know I'm hearing you say this and saying to that to him we've come out of a lot of arguments saying hang on a second, that's not what I mean eh and do I think he's picked up on an awful lot of that as well and he kind of not so much paraphrases but he just, he tries to clarify a little bit what he's hearing, so, so as to kind of be able to come out of the argument and we've been able to calm down an awful lot more as well eh... relationship wise on the, the positive side, on the, like on the loving side, I think, I've learned to accept myself a lot more and in that way I've learned to let him accept me, me for who I am you know? Say at the start of the relationship I would worry, I would have worried quite a lot whether maybe if I was enough or if, if we were well matched or if he was going to

look for someone with the same opinions as him for a relationship but because I've learned to accept, this is who I am, this is who he's fallen in love with, I haven't deep down changed, I've always been like this and that's who he fell in love with eh.. I suppose it's gotten more kind of it's gotten closer because we both accept one another as who we are and I've learned to understand that I can't change him, the parts that you know antagonise me, you know the, the bits where he doesn't listen to people and he doesn't empathise with people, whereas I would do it on a natural basis. It used to bother me but now I, I suppose I've leaned again to love him for who he is because that's who he is and that's who I've fallen in love with I suppose it's, it's difficult to explain.

Q.5 I How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?

P I think it's gotten stronger, I think with all them things we've learnt we're a lot more resilient as a couple and eh...yeah, I, I think we've gotten stronger over the last few years.

Q.6 I How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?

P Eh... to be honest I haven't had that many client hours so... you know I can't give examples of, of where I've felt it impacted, maybe I can't even pinpoint where it impacted but as a trainee counsellor being able to accept myself and him, allowing him to accept me has given me more confidence in who I am, plus he's very proud of me for doing what I do and for being

a caring person and for wanting to take this road, and I suppose that boost of confidence that you get from, from your partner is bound to affect how you are as a counsellor.

Q.7 I How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?

P Eh... I suppose we never, ever had a module since we started, or is it programmed to come up before we finish on how... I know we're not studying couples therapy and we're not going to be qualified in couples therapy but at the same time we're not qualified to be CBT therapists at the end of it either so even a, maybe a module on... I suppose how change... well the clients that we see are going to be changing and their relationships are going to be changing through their therapy, the same way we have through our personal therapy, so I think a module about relationships and about change and about... not counselling a couple but eh... I suppose a module just about how change affects our relationships with other people and like we very basically touch on things but not to the extent that we see it happen first hand with ourselves and with our clients so definitely a module covering, covering marriage relationships and how change affects it would definitely be a help, in our client work as well as for ourselves.

Q.8 I What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

P I suppose the biggest thing is when you're learning so much about yourself all the time, to understand that your partner isn't doing the same course and

your partner isn't moving along at the same speed or at the same pace as you and to recognise that you may be changing and they may not and to maybe not hold it against them or not, not resent them because there the same person they were at the start of the course because you've, you may have changed considerably. Eh... I suppose as well to... because there's so much analysis around group work maybe in first and second year and personal therapy and, and again all that we're learning in the course like since I've started the course I've had a child and I think so much stuff we've come across with psychopathology and with Kleinian stuff, there's so much stuff we're learning about children. You're supposed to be doing this to make sure your child is healthy emotionally and you know, to make sure that you don't try and enforce things onto your partner that you're learning about yourself or about relationships. If they want to come along on the ride you know give them as much information as they want but... I suppose not to force feed them stuff we're learning because they're not on the course, they're not as interested as you about it so... but again, the other end of it is to keep them in the loop about what your learning and not to have, not to hold onto yourself for a year or two years and then all of a sudden this blow up, I'm a new person and you know, do you know this new person.

PARTICIPANT 2: JOHN

Q.1 I How would you describe yourself as a person?

P Eh... how would I describe myself as a person, eh... let me see, goal oriented to a point but the goals are not money, it's more about my own time. Family to an extent eh... and friends are important. I have to enjoy what I'm doing for work so, I do and the course is something I really want to do as a long term goal and I think of myself as a good friend, a good listener. I've been through a few things, so I'm relatively rounded and I think I've a good sense of humour and I enjoy time alone and also with others. I don't have that many sporty hobbies but I have plenty of music and film hobbies. A city boy in such a way, I'm not really a country boy, I don't drive and I enjoy... I don't... my own life is kind of based on living close to work, close to college, I don't like wasting time, travelling, commuting is a nightmare. I enjoy holidays. Due to counselling I have a relatively, I've increased my awareness but I think I'd have more to go and I'm considerate, caring a good enough brother, a good enough son eh... and good in my relationship with my girlfriend, it's been, a bit of give and take but we're getting there so...

Q.2 I How do you think your partner would describe you?

P Depends on the day...eh, generally speaking eh... I think at the beginning she had me as being very, very good and as we've been living together I'm sometimes good. I annoy her as she does me and eh...but there's a lot of love between us, a lot of understanding, she's very understanding in regards to, she knows how much the course means to me so she's very

good about that. I'd say I'm pretty loving but just can annoy her.

Q.3 I Can you describe your relationship with your partner?

P Well we live together and so we've been going out three and a half years so we're past the honeymoon period, it really is two people who love each other and live together, um, so we eh... her job is quite demanding, so I would listen about her job and what's going on with her. My stuff is... we would talk to each other an awful lot when we come home from work, catch up and see how everybody is doing, one of us will do dinner eh... we'll watch some telly together, we enjoy going out occasionally but finding time is difficult, so we find time to do things we want to do. Family isn't very...my own family, I don't see them that often but I see her family quite a lot and we go on holidays when we can, I think it's an every day sort of good relationship. The fairytale if there ever was one is gone, it's more of, like a real... she has things to do, I have things to do and we're happy to be there for each other in between and supportive of each other in what we're doing. We would have an ok sex life, it wouldn't be huge but that's the way we are, we're good friends, we have some things in common and then there's an awful lot... she's 26 she's a bit younger than me and she has, she likes TV programmes, girly TV programmes I can't stand, things like that. It's all about she watches something she wants to watch, I'll watch something I want to watch emm... but we do have a lot of interests that overlap. When we are going out and things like that eh...we can, we're good to talk and bounce things off so.

Q.4 I How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?

P Eh... at the beginning... she would have been at the brunt of when I was thinking about things, I would kind of use her as an example. Nothing really came of it because I made a decision early on that she was my girlfriend and not my client. Now it does let me understand her better when she's upset eh... maybe I'd listen better than I may have done before the course was on. Like anybody I think... when I look at something and I look at the different mental illness and things like that, I think of myself, I also think of her eh... I would have definitely, in my head, thought of her history and my own history in life and kind of went, oh right maybe there's something there but never actually brought it up between the two of us. Just use her in my head, as an example of, of somebody who had... if she has eh... she has separated parents and things like that, so if that came up I'd think about it, I wouldn't actually talk to her about it. Eh... it's made me a better listener for her and emotionally sometimes, I can, because of the course and especially now with clients, there's a little bit of needing time and I think the course makes me ask for that time, more often than maybe I would have if I wasn't doing the course and it does cause problems, like around exams or when we are doing papers, I need time when she's... I need time by myself to do my studies, eh... she's been very good about that but I know if it goes on for a month or two months, it can be straining eh... but we've gotten used to it now so.

Q.5 I How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?

P We actually started going out just before I started doing the course so we've gone from just going out eh... then we were going out a good while, she would be over a lot and we would be seeing each other a lot, we did kind of from the outset and then September before last, she moved in, so our relationship has progressed as naturally as possible in regards to what we wanted. The course has impacted me at different stages along the way and that would have an impact on our relationship. So when things were going well for me in the course, I think I'd be well enough in the relationship and if I'd be finding things difficult, sometimes we'd talk about it, or sometimes I need more time apart to study, if I was finding things difficult, eh... yea, so we've basically been going out as long as... almost as long as I've been doing the course, so it's em.... but the relationship itself has progressed in between the two of us, in a way that we want, the course has mostly effected just time I've needed to myself.

Q.6 I How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?

P Kind of like I said, when I used my girlfriend as an example in my head, when I thought of different illness that we had or anything like that... when I see a client who has maybe, some anxiety issues or something like that, I might... think of... my girlfriends anxiety issues and how that is, so it gives me a better understanding, sort of, cos it's not something I have, so like right, this person is different like their anxiety is different but I have an

idea of how difficult it can be to talk or to talk about it... so in some ways it influences my, the way I interact so I wouldn't be... I wouldn't be too pushy about someone who is suffering from anxiety, about talking about it, I think, let them come at it in their own time. Eh... there is the element of... I suppose, of anything the relationship... because the relationship in counselling is similar to any relationship, it takes time and I think my relationship with my girlfriend might have helped with regards to... I know it takes time for someone to tell you the bigger things in their life and they'll tell you a lot of things first of all and it's kind of...they'll tell you a big spout and then you'll get deeper and deeper as you go along and that's, that's the way relationships are, as we've been going out for longer, the more stuff we know about each other, the deeper it is and the same with the relationship. So, in counselling when you start off, if it's a good feeling to begin with, well then you work with the person and it get's deeper and deeper as you go over time.

Q.7 I How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?

P Regarding when they're seeing clients?

I *Interviewer Prompt:* Well more about how could they help regarding your personal relationships, how the course will affect your personal relationships, your romantic relationships.

P Eh... the only thing I suppose that you could say, if you were unaware it was going to effect it, they should mention it but beyond saying that it might have an impact on your relationship, I think everybody might be

quite different. I found it relatively... the course itself, if it does anything, it just makes you take time out of your relationship but I think any course would do that, eh... and it does mean, that you might find yourself changing quite a lot as a person, eh... you know we all hope that during the course we become more aware of ourselves and we tap into things and this can change your relationship with the person and I suppose if the course wanted to do anything, if it didn't occur to you that that was going to happen, they should mention, that as you grow within yourself, you might change and this might effect how you are with your current relationship, it might improve it, it might make it worse eh... so they could mention that but ... beyond that it's just a matter of saying, you know, you're going to change during the course, you hope that, you know, you hope it's just one of the things you hope for as a counsellor, so, eh... if you didn't think it was going to effect your relationship, maybe you should be told but you probably should be aware it was going to affect your relationship so... eh... yea, just maybe a little bit on that.

Q.8 I What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

P On this course eh... if you're going to use your partner as an example when your thinking of things, do not tell them that you're using them as an example when you're doing these things and be aware that you are going to change a little bit, you will be let's say more in touch with who you are and hopefully, you're in a relationship where that works out fine but if it doesn't work out fine, you need to remember that you're the one who's

changing, not the other person and that if you're the one who's changing, like we tell clients, it's not about immediacy, just as soon as you feel something change does not mean you have to then go and let's say, break up with your partner because all of a sudden you change. Things take their time, they sit in, they fit and then you end up, of sort of bubbling to the front and then going back down and it might change you all the time or it might be just something that you weren't aware of and then you are and then you move on along again. So, not to react too quickly, when, eh...you might feel a bit different than you have before but to talk, as you should always with your partner.

PARTICIPANT 3: JANE

Q.1 I How would you describe yourself as a person?

P Eh... it's a quite difficult question. Eh.... how can I describe myself, eh... I can be a little bit shy? Eh.... eh.... eh....oh. god I'm struggling, sorry.
Here the interview is paused for a break.

How would I describe myself as a person... ok I'm a little bit shy, I can be sometimes and it's something I don't like about myself. I would like to be more confident and eh... I'm not and eh.... it's something I work on and eh... I can get quite stressed sometimes and let things get on top of me and eh... but I would have a very positive outlook and very... eh... on things... I would always take the good out of a difficult situation and I would be very adaptable, that's something that has been told to me before but I am, you know, different situations, no matter what happens, I kind of just get on with it you know, whatever, and eh... I would be very strong inside, I mean, like, I deal with things quite well, most of the time, I think I would have very strong inner resilience and eh, inner strength, I'd have, that many people wouldn't... wouldn't quite see but in a crisis, I would manage things quite well and eh...

Q.2 I How do you think your partner would describe you?

P Yea a stress head.... very much so, and eh... he'd be calmer, so I would be the stressed person there, so and eh... I would be honest, very honest, probably honest too much sometimes (laughs), I find it difficult to lie... if I want to, you know... if you know what I'm saying and eh... yea, but then I can be jealous sometimes as well and he would know that about me, that I

can be and eh... a little eh.... trust would be something for me that he'd know I'd have a difficulty with and eh.... but I would be very loyal and eh... yea, ok that's it.

Q.3 I Can you describe your relationship with your partner?

P It's a very supporting one and I suppose this course has really brought that out, emphasised that a lot. It would be very equal one eh... it would eh... it's a very loving relationship, it's a very funny relationship, well when I say funny, we would have a lot of fun, we've a very... well yea, I suppose, a very similar sense of humour, I suppose, the way we go on. We would definitely be, we would have the very same outlook and want similar things for ourselves and our family you know, there wouldn't really be, there wouldn't be too many conflicts as regards that kind of thing. But eh... at the same time... I don't know describing him, he can be stubborn sometimes and I can get, I'd be the fiery one in the relationship not him, he'd be very calm, you know, about everything, where I'd be the one to get mad and get angry and get annoyed eh... sometimes easily, you know and eh.... where he'd be the one, the more rational one, where eh... I'm not and eh...and that would be, eh... yea. Well for me, he will always give me a new perspective on things, if I'm not kind of seeing clearly on things and stuff like that.

Q.4 I How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?

P It's influenced it in a sense that I analyse an awful lot more obviously, as

what's going on in the relationships and the dynamics between us and that would have... be a positive influence on us really and even for him too, he'd be learning stuff from me about the relationship and even in that book the John Cleese one, surviving families and things, like you know, I would discuss stuff with him about the course that's coming up and even like that, the whole screen thing, where we'd be having a conversation about that and learning more about each other and even our families of origin, you know, there's things that's coming up for us that kind of, we'd be able to work out, kind of, more why we're like the way we are, you know, about certain things, so from that respect, it's good... so I suppose, it's a bit of a positive and a negative it can get maybe too much sometimes, if I, if I overanalyse things in my head, about what could be going on or not going on and things like that and eh... I suppose, it could be... get too much sometimes for me, kind of over thinking things, thinking things that aren't even there because of what we're doing, with our work and everything like that and eh... but I just think, it's probably overall, it's been.... given us more insight into ourselves. Well absolutely for myself, for me as a person, learning more about myself and then bringing it into the relationship because I'm more aware of the way I am, like, I can kind of go that's, that's me you know, it's kind of, understanding myself more has helped our relationship, I would think and I probably have a husband that would know me more and getting to know me better too, and eh... yea that's kind of it.

Q.5 I How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?

P Developed... let me see developed eh... kind of really what we've just been saying there really, developed in eh... probably more open relationship because it's bringing up more things for me. Well we would have a very open relationship, I don't mean sexually (laughs) but we would have an open relationship like, eh... I, I, we would talk about everything you know and anything, everything that comes up, like I'm dealing with in the course, like even in my own therapy that's coming up, I can talk to him about, like, it's kind of developed in that way, eh... and making eh... be more open about feelings and things like that because he probably wouldn't be, he could be... he wouldn't be expressive, sometimes maybe as much as, maybe I would be and maybe that's something that we would have talked about, that's come up for me but eh... that's kind of helped that a bit more and eh... yea... that's really it.

Q.6 I How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?

P How's it influenced my client work... oh well, because I feel so supported by him, I have that extra support when dealing with clients, like even when I come in from a difficult client, like I don't obviously talk about it but I just know he knows, not that he knows but he's aware of how difficult it can be sometimes and just to have that place where I feel held... I feel held but not like physically you know, sort of, I have eh... I feel the fact that he

supports the work that I've been doing, that he believes in what I'm doing, he thinks it's, it's eh... very valuable work and eh... it helps me and my clients to have that kind of, I suppose, containment for me in a way...

I *Interviewer: Ok so, eh... if I understand, it's knowing that you have the support, supports you when you're with your client almost...*

P Yea, yea...

I *Interviewer: Helps with your containment of your client.*

P Yea and even when I come home, because I know I have a place to, kind of, hold it, without having to say anything, if you know kind of what I'm saying. I suppose, the support even I have around, being there for me to do it you know, always accommodating me to be able to do that and not, I don't have anything like that hanging over me with clients, that I'm like... you know just feeling that support with the client, helps me in my work with them, that I have that place... not, not that worry that I'm taking time out from my family life to be with my clients, that it's all very much supported and eh... I don't know, what else influenced... eh... I don't know... that I have a solid relationship there, helps that with me having clients, that eh... yea.

Q.7 I **How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?**

P Mmmm... Like eh... do you mean like... sorry just to get some clarification there... like to help couples in the relationship?

I *Interviewer: I suppose you know eh... starting off a course eh... you might be unaware of how... in what ways, if at all that your relationship might be*

effected by doing the training. How do you think that they could prepare you or help you around that or could they prepare you or help you around that?

P Well maybe on the outset, to let you know that this is the... this is what could happen, like I know they say from the very beginning that you'll be a different person at the end of the course and all that kind of stuff, because you're doing so much work on yourself but I suppose that maybe, to make that more... than, you obviously, you're going to change but the impact it might have on you, in your relationships as well, that maybe.... maybe more work could be done around that, as well and maybe... maybe bring that more into group work actually, because it never, it never does come into group work. How are we as people, how is it affecting life, not with your partner or your family or anything like that, it doesn't really come into it at all does it? It doesn't come into our course, eh... so maybe... I don't mean a module on it but I mean even in supervision or eh... yea... cos it is all about client work... about, this is all we do in here on a Friday like it's... maybe a space where we could bring that, kind of analyse that a bit more, what is going on for us or what could be happening for us, in our relationships, what could be having a negative impact that we wouldn't have been eh... aware of, you know, we learn all about transference and counter transference and what's going on, that's all a good thing, it's a good thing learning that in your relationship, as well but you kind of... kind off... cop on more what could be going on between ye, but eh... I think it could be something that could be looked at more within, as part of the course, like not everyone... like the impact it has on people, on their

attachment, their families.... I suppose you're talking about romantic relationships, yea but... yea that's really it because we don't really... it doesn't come into the course actually, really at all... it doesn't get a mention.

Q.8 I What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

P Eh... know what you're getting into... but no... I really think you really need to have a lot of support around you doing this course, especially if your married and have kids or whatever. That it's going to take up an awful lot of your time and I suppose, to know how much work that's involved in the course from the outset, and its, its, they call it a part time course but it's not really and eh... there's no way I could have don't this course if I didn't get the support from my partner all the way through, if he.. if he was starting to find it difficult, taking the time that he has to do because I'm busy doing my course eh... eh... I wouldn't have been able to, obviously, to do it and eh... I suppose for that reason it's eh... let people know how difficult it can be, it can really, really be a difficult course to get through, to see it to the very end and to maybe let people know that, they need to... I can't remember the question.

I *Interviewer:* What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

P Oh right yea...to be told... let them know how difficult it can be, basically and how time consuming it can be and eh... the course will certainly take over a lot of their life, in the latter years of the course absolutely and their

partners will have to be aware of that. I don't know, it's just to forewarn them, that they know how difficult this can be and that they will need all the support they can get, especially if they've got kids.

PARTICIPANT 4: PETER

Q.1 I How would you describe yourself as a person?

P Eh... I would describe myself... as I guess ambitious, sensitive eh... probably eh... fairly independent type individual, any kind of descriptions you were looking for?

I *Interviewer:* *No just what ever you think.*

P Eh... I'd like to think that I'm kind of semi-smart I guess eh... I can be a little protective of myself as well. So they're just the kind of things coming to mind.

Q.2 I How do you think your partner would describe you?

P My partner would describe me as... well... well attractive, eh... I guess there's, there's two sides to this, so I guess when all is well my partner would describe me as attractive and sociable, someone who, eh, will engage with others or be the lynch pin of a party but then on the other side when let's say things aren't kind of going that well, she would probably describe me as a victim, as a non communicative type person, go into my hole... as a non committal type individual, so someone who keeps to themselves, not a planner, eh... and up to recently there, actually one of the descriptions I got thrown at me, was a... a nutty professor type individual so...

Q.3 I Can you describe your relationship with your partner?

P God there very all open ended questions (uncomfortable laugh).

I *Interviewer:* *Yea (laughs)... that's the point (laughs).*

P All right, eh... I mean where do you start, seven years, I mean I guess the relationship has been going through, I think if you look at it in phases, when we started out probably the first three years, there was definitely a lot of chemistry, we got on great most of the time, so that early stage of the relationship was definitely very positive. Then there was probably I think somewhere around year four, probably coinciding with this course that we're doing, where she says, I've changed since I've done the course but eh... we certainly started to be having a lot more, eh... frictional encounters eh... there was a period specifically, the last two years which I don't think either of us were very happy within the relationship and I mean we would have, we've bought a house together as well and at times, I would have, I would say without question, that the house has kept us together, on... on one level. It got to such a point about a few months back... about half a year, where she moved out of the house, where the relationship with breaking down, eh, so it wasn't in a good place... eh but recently she's just moved back in, so we're trying to kind of rebuild again um.. on.. I guess, on the basis of having to try and work out the relationship and the difficulties we were experiencing. So today, I guess which is what I felt the question was initially, was yea, eh... we're kind of working through a difficult patch, and I wouldn't say it's all sunshine and roses and certainly eh... it has had it's difficulties since she's moved in but I think we're making progress in the right direction today but a lot of work to do.

Q.4 I How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?

P I have to say it's influenced it, well eh... both negatively and positively, negatively in the fact that I don't typically... especially initially, when I was doing this training, I was reacting a lot quicker, eh... I was becoming aware of my emotional response, whereas before I might have just pushed it down and ignored her, I would have some regrets but certainly in the early stages, I would be noticing it and wouldn't be letting it go, so the reaction would come out very quickly and sometimes that reaction wouldn't be... like... almost a amygdala hijack, it wouldn't be a thought led reaction, so I'd actually be throwing stuff back and.. so it made things actually quite a bit worse and so it's only since the tail end of this course where I've actually, somehow and again it's only just my view of it, where I see myself as maybe having a little bit more control, so acknowledging the emotional reaction but not letting it kind of rule the roost, so to speak, where I'd kind of be able to step back a little bit from that, I just kind of put it to one side, I still find it very difficult... but at least that's now given space eh... where in a way, I'm kind of able to hold that place and we're not... our, our arguments aren't breaking down, eh... into you know, boom, boom, boom, boom and then crash, the arguments are holding now, whereas to maybe before they would have been disintegrating ultimately.

Q.5 I How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?

P I've probably answered it already there... but it's certainly, it was really going well, when I started the course, about two years into the course the relationship started going very badly, up until there... we're in year four now... at the start of year four it was really at it's worst, she moved out again, it was a joint decision but she moved out at that time so... and now I guess coming to the end of fourth year, she's moved back in and we're working through things, so there's definitely, lots of kind of parallels with how I started the course, how our relationship got worse, up to a point there last year where I was totally dis... went crazy and now some sort of attempt at a... getting back together.

Q.6 I How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?

P Has *influenced* my client work? Well I mean hopefully it hasn't influenced my client work, eh... one of the things that I've certainly... well I haven't had that many clients but certainly, I've had two... two clients, eh one short term piece of work, one actually I'm still seeing over a year and they would have eh... absolutely brought up counter-transference in me, so the client I'm seeing currently, although he's a lot older than I am, well twenty years older but he's going through a separation himself, eh... he's having his own relationship difficulties himself, as well so I kind of, I would have seen a lot of what he was going through with what I was going

through, eh... but again it was working through that in supervision as well as my own personal therapy, so... I would, I'd kind of hate to think that... so that's the impact it had on me in session but I was hopefully aware of it and be able to put it to one side, eh... and again another, I had another client, she would have been much younger, well she was younger than me she was twenty fiveish but again she was having a relationship breakup with her boyfriend at the time and again, it's almost like any relationship difficulty almost, that presented in front of me, you know, had my own alarm bells going off... this is... this is kind of my stuff, so I just have to be careful here about that and to put it to one side and not let it interfere, as much as I could with actually just being with the person who had their own relationship difficulties.

Q.7 I How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?

P Eh... I think that they could be very proactive, I mean at the moment they don't do anything and I think eh... certainly, I didn't realise what I was, in many ways, signing up to, doing this course so... I guess it's very experiential at the end of the day and there's... there is I guess... only a certain amount you could do but I think that could be very helpful. Even if it was only just an educational piece, on the type of things to expect, that you kind of go through and I'm sure they'd be fairly predictable, eh... in terms of emotional stuff eh... I mean everyone is different eh... but the kind of things that you could look out for in terms of maybe your emotional awareness or self being stirred up of, of having a lot of extra

stress on your plate and how that could potentially be impacting on any relationship, obviously the primarily... that one that is either a marriage or partner is going to be the one that will ultimately, be probably effected the most I'd imagine. So I mean, straight off some sort of an introductory module that will maybe, be two hours experiential, to introduce people to the things to maybe, keep an eye out for... it could have been, it would have been certainly useful for me anyway.

Q.8 I What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

P My advice to, to...

I *Interviewer: Your relationship advice to new trainee therapists on this course.*

Mmmm eh.... I, I... my advice would be that... you know be aware... that the person you are before you start this course, is not going to be the person you will be when you finish this course. Obviously, still going to be... you're not going to change and grow another arm or leg but certainly eh... how you perceive things... how you possibly see others... it's all going to, it's not necessarily going to change but it's going to develop, it's going to grow and these kind of things could possibly have an impact on, on your relationship, so I would be, be wary of that, look out for that, try not to kind of let it sneak up on you, like what happened to me really, I was kind of caught out, like I didn't see it coming until it was too late.

PARTICIPANT 5: FIONA

Q.1 I How would you describe yourself as a person?

P Eh... I'd say that I'm a bit of a softie, I'm fairly open, I can talk to most people... eh, so I'm, I'm fairly easy going... I think I'm an all rounder. Eh... I'd be quite sensitive, eh... I can get very agitated from time to time, if I'm under a lot of pressure but you know mostly I'm adaptable.

Q.2 I How do you think your partner would describe you?

P My partner would eh... describe me as somebody who's very motivated. Who they admire because of what they perceive me to be, which is a strong character. Someone who can take it on and get the job done, so they would say about me you know Fiona's your woman, she gets stuff done and she's dependable and she's always there for you if you need her, you can rely on her, she's the strong one.

Q.3 I Can you describe your relationship with your partner?

P Eh... my relationship with my partner is, it's good, in respect that intellectually we communicate very well together, emotionally we communicate very, very well together. Eh... he has a number of his own personal issues as the moment, which get in the way of the relationship as far as I'm concerned and they would be features like depression or just him feeling like he's not in a very good place at the moment, eh... but I enjoy the relationship with him despite the issues that we're having. We do seem to understand each other mentally and emotionally if you know what I mean, we, we work well together but eh... it's a lot of the economic factors

and personal issues that cause the problems.

Q.4 I How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?

P I think, in this particular relationship, eh... I've been in three main relationships eh... that were long term, this is the first time I've been involved with somebody after my marriage broke up. I suppose as a trainee therapist in this particular relationship, I'm inclined to play the counsellor, so there's some things that would happen in the relationship but because I can see the reasons why the person behaves that way, I let them away with it, whereas if it was somebody else I might not. I suppose as a trainee therapist, as well looking at my own issues of how I am in relationships, I'm kind of playing that out and watching myself, this time, in this relationship. Eh... so... I suppose being a trainee therapist, it's made me very aware of how I can be co-dependent in relationships and trying to, to eh... to change that a little bit by doing things a bit differently.

Q.5 I How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?

P Ok...eh... how has it developed, I'm not sure how to answer that one eh... I suppose... how has it developed... I suppose, we're only going out with one another two years, so I suppose we're only kind of finding out thing out about each other all of the time. I'd say it's because of the course that we can communicate so openly. Eh... I think that's helped its development...eh... I'm not sure about that one...

I *Interviewer: That's ok...*

P I'm not sure about that one Alison.

I *Interviewer: That's ok...*

Q.6 I How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?

P There have been at times, working with clients who have been in, what I would consider, dysfunctional relationships, eh... talking about maybe some behaviours that maybe, would have been in my relationship, you know, like maybe secrecy or lack of trust issues or eh... somebody just being outwardly mean in a relationship to their spouse and in listening to those stories, I sometimes could relate them, to some of the... some of the games that get played out in relationships... some of, you know, the games that my partner would have played out in the relationship with me and at times they were almost parallel, eh... they were almost parallel with what the client was working through, eh... so in that, I mean I would always have to come away and examine what it was that was happening for me and whether or not the relationship was good enough, despite there being some similarities between what my client said was not ok for her, and what I might have been experiencing in my relationship, trying to work through the issues I was working through. Eh... so it hasn't affected my client work as such, but my client work has definitely influenced my relationship, if, if that makes sense, I've, I would... if I feel something very similar to what a client is describing or that it's something that's in my life, I would have to go away and think about it then or maybe work through it in some

personal therapy and ask myself the questions, you know, is it normal for human beings to be so insecure in relationships and almost, cause these problems for themselves or are these real issues in, in relationships that aren't good enough... does that make sense?

I *Interviewer: Uh huh?*

P Mmmm...

Q.7 I **How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?**

P To be honest with you, I think anybody embarking on this particular kind of course should have to, probably do some kind of, you know personality test, some kind of you know, attachment test, some kind of impulsivity test, I think in order for people to really, truly, know, eh... all of the aspects and all of the things that this course is going to clip up or bring to the fore eh... Could be done with a more strict interviewing policy before people start the course.... because huge stuff comes up and it's, you know, four years is a short time to change what, you know, might have been thirty four years of learning... so I think some kind of personality checks and tests and that kind of stuff could be done before the course starts, so people at least know what they need to work on.

Q.8 I **What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?**

P Not to analyse their relationship. I think when we start this of course, you get so avid about what your learning about the analytical piece and about

the psychodynamic piece, you get so excited and so avid about it that you apply it to your life and you apply it to every part of your life and I think you run the risk of, of becoming so analytical that it gets in the way of, of relationships. All relationships, not just romantic ones and at times it can push people away from you because they don't understand where you're coming from, they don't think and process things the way you do when you start an academic course like this. So... for me, my warning to new therapists would be not to get too analytical about their own relationships.

PARTICIPANT 6: DANNY

Q.1 I How would you describe yourself as a person?

P Eh... that's a difficult one can we ask somebody else for that. I don't know eh... warm, eh... genuine, I'd like to think, honest eh... kind of happy go lucky sometimes but stressed and the antithesis of that other times. I would like to think of myself, as a guy who's just trying to get on and be happy with my family and my child and grow as a person as well, all the time. That's important to me as well I suppose.

Q.2 I How do you think your partner would describe you?

P Eh...I would like to think she would say a lot of those things but I'm sure she would have a couple of add ons to that as well. Eh... that I can be quite eh... pedantic and eh... difficult eh... and I think that she would probably say, eh... that I have a severe issue with listening to her problems. That it's, it's just critical that I'm heard but it doesn't really matter that I hear back, so I would be, eh... very open to discussing my feelings and my issues and my problems but not that open to hearing it from her, in relation to her issues that she may have with me, I don't think I listen very well by all accounts.

Q.3 I Can you describe your relationship with your partner?

P Eh.... I think in the main, eh... good and I think the potential for it is, is very positive as well. I think both of us are learning, learning about one another but learning about ourselves, within the relationship as well. Eh... and I'm hopeful for our relationship, eh...it's... I mean it has its

difficulties, as all relationships do, I suppose but eh... I believe that it is, it is a bud that will hopefully grow into a flower... well it's, it's a flower at the moment in many respects but I hope that it will continue to grow.

Q.4 I How has your experience as a trainee therapist influenced your relationship?

P Eh... yea, I suppose for me to answer that I would give you my spin on it and that's what you're asking for, so I would contend that it's probably been very positive to our relationship. I mean purely because I've become more self aware I believe, she might argue with that, eh... I believe that she's become more self aware as well, through Eh.... you know me maybe bringing things to the table that I wouldn't have brought to the table before I started on this course, about my own stuff and all of that kind of thing and also learning, maybe not to peruse every little minute detail about what irks me. To be able to say ok, whereas before, I wouldn't have been able to say, ok. Eh... I dunno, we're kind of talking a lot about me, I suppose, I think both of us are certainly benefitting from it and ultimately... whereas it's challenging and you know, because obviously, you change on this course and you change how you see things, how you see yourself and that obviously impacts on your partner. But I think it's for the better because I'm, I know that I'm with a person that I care about deeply and I know that she loves me deeply as well, so... I think once you have that foundation there, you can grow and adapt and roll with the punches and this course has afforded me the opportunity to eh... try and understand the bits of myself that I need to work on and I think that can only be beneficial for me and for

my relationship, as a whole I think.

Q.5 I How has your relationship with your partner developed over the duration of the course?

P Eh... it's not as fiery, eh... in all ways actually... eh but it's more, it's more relaxed, even though it doesn't seem that way sometimes because I would say both of us would accuse the other of not being a very relaxed sort of person. It has become more relaxed, I mean the arguments that we have are not shouting matches, like they used to be. They're not me banging doors you know and storming out of the house, they're not as much as they used to be, arguments involving her calling me names or you know, all of this kind of thing, it's more... we're starting to understand that if one of us is annoyed with the other that maybe, leave them be annoyed for a little bit to calm down and then we try and talk about it and I think that's the biggest thing that I've noticed about our relationship, through me being on the course, both of us have started to become a little bit more reflective and also maybe a little bit more tolerant of the other person. So eh... yea the biggest change for me is that it seems to be a little bit more, perhaps not as exciting but more cemented in some... eh, truth and honesty, which may have not been as prevalent before, it was just all about, you know, kind of two young people in love, arguing being happy, arguing being happy, whereas now it's a bit more middle ground and there's a bit more maturity about it all and I think, the course has played a part in that because I feel more mature myself.

Q.6 I How have your experiences within your relationship influenced your client work?

P Mmmm... well I mean I'm new to the client work, I've only just started with my client work but I would like to think that eh... you know, I've kind of got a sense that fools rush in, I've kind of started to understand what that means, eh... and you know I've, I've lived that for a long time, in terms of acting on an emotion that hits me straight away and that resulting in shouting and roaring, you know, kind of behaving like a child on occasions and that kind of thing. Eh... so through understanding what those emotions do to me and understanding what happens in my body I've been learning how to control that a little bit more, so I think, that when it comes to being in the therapy room, that when a client evokes something in you, an emotion in me eh... and the countertransference starts to come out, that it'll be little bit more in a contained way, as opposed to you know a bit manic and close to the bone and all of that kind of think. Effectively, I suppose, this course has thought me to be a lot more self aware, which in turn has helped my relationship I believe and I think, that obviously is a key factor in being in front of a client as well, as you know you're buttons, you know your blind spots a little bit more, it's an ongoing process of course, eh... I'm finding myself a lot calmer in myself so... I've recently started seeing clients and I wasn't filled with trepidation about failing, worried about kind of, you know, messing up or whatever, I actually just felt, ok, this is what I've been training to do, this is what I'm working towards just go and do it, see what happens because you're going in with

honesty of heart and at the very least you can offer unconditional regard, which you hope to offer to your partner and your partner offers to you, so you know, life is a little bit more on an even keel, in terms of understanding where you are, so that, I feel is showing in my couple of sessions with clients and stuff.

Q.7 I How do you think training institutions could help trainee therapists regarding this area of their development?

P Eh... I suppose that's difficult, I mean I have a chequered history with authority, particularly this college I think, I have had my own issues with dealing with all of that, so of course I would err on the side of, they haven't done enough, in terms of preparing us for what this course would bring out for us. I definitely think there should be something akin to eh... maybe eh... when they give you the course spec... maybe something in relation to eh... you know, eh... what to expect and of course it's different for everybody and it's very hard and a complete generalisation but I mean ultimately, when they give you the course spec, they just tell you that this is a BA in Counselling and Psychotherapy, where you train to be a psychotherapist for four years and you have to do this, and this, and this, and this eh... so, it's very kind of orientated toward the practical side, of what you have to do to get to the end but they should maybe, have a little bit more in terms of, maybe you going on a personal journey you know, kind of, the therapy will involve you going on a weekly basis and exploring issues for yourself. The GAP group, I thought that was very difficult for me. It's two years, it's a big commitment and it's almost like, yea, it's two

years and that's it you know, so, I definitely think that, that even, you know, whatever happens in your therapy, in your personal therapy, is unique to you but when you're in a GAP group, with you know however many other people and we're all kind of endeavouring to get to wherever you need to get to, there's a lot that goes on there, I think that that should be... whereas they can't describe what it is, that you're supposed to be doing, they can at least, maybe kind of let you know what the group setting is about and what not they're looking for but you know, I suppose, more than just you have to meet every Thursday for two and a half hours with these people. You know, I know they can't give away the game but they can certainly, tell you that, you know, it can be a rich learning curve for yourself and others in a group setting, you know just little things, it doesn't have to be very in depth but it certainly has to be a little bit more than they offer at the moment, it's just... that's GAP, you have to do that for two years... and what's GAP? What the hell is that, you know and then personal therapy, you know, I presume I have an idea of what that is because of this course. But then, also you know... I don't know, maybe it would be a good idea to have, maybe testimonials of past pupils or something like that, in terms of what they got from the course, what it gave them, eh... stuff like that on the, on the page relating to a BA in Counselling and Psychotherapy eh.... you know, I'm aware this is a business for these people, that they don't want to give away too much in terms of... but I, I, I from my own personal experience, I would be very happy to write a testimonial that would show that I grew as a person and that I developed greatly through this course, that it's not just about the

theory, it's not just about essays and assignments, it's about exploring yourself, the relationship you have with yourself and with other people and how you, how you are portrayed, how you put yourself out there, how you are with other people eh... prejudices you know, eh... it doesn't talk a lot about that, it doesn't talk about you know, what you're beliefs are, you just find out as you go along and sometimes it's quite a shock to people and sometimes they end up falling off the course after the first year and second year, we've had people who had started the course with us, it wasn't that they didn't get through due to the college, they just realised, Jesus, I can't do this, so I think that there's a duty of care from the college, to inform people as much as possible that there's a real effort, it's a real journey, and a personal journey that you're going to go on, it's not just, you know, give us your money and sign up for the course and you'll find out for yourself and if you can cut it, you can cut it and if you can't you can't.

Q.8 I What would your relationship advice be to new trainee therapists embarking on this course?

P Eh... ditch her before you start (laughs) eh... no, eh... relationship advice, I don't know, I just think that if a person is hoping to do this work, that they understand that, eh... it's not just the course that they're doing, that it's actually a way of life that they're entering into and that will impact on how they view themselves and view other people and hence, how they eh... it will effect they're partner, they're relationship completely and hugely eh... now it might be for better but it could be for worse and I have to say I'm, I'm glad that numerous tutors have said down the years that this

is, you know, going to... really affect your relationships but that was when we were well into the year or second year or whatever, eh... and I think that might, that could have been said at the start, so I just, I would say to prospective students, you know eh... really ask yourself, is this something that you want to do or are you just, you know, are you looking to do something just because you, you know you don't know what you want out of your life or whatever, you know this, this is something that you have to really think long and hard about and it does impact on your relationships. So... you know of course, you know, if a person starting this course knows that they might go on a journey, where they will perhaps, might change some things, views on themselves views on the world, of course this is going to impact on the person they're with for how many years, so they need to think about that and really... wonder, is that what they want to do or indeed, would they're partner be able for that and talk to they're partner about that and continually... continually keep in contact with your partner... not about everything, not about your inner most deepest darkest of ramblings as you go through the course, if you don't want to but just keep them informed about what, you know, what it means to you to be on the course, what you've found, what you've felt on occasion you know, because I think the partner can be left in the dark a lot of the time and like you know, if are in a romantic relationship with someone over a period of time, I suppose part of that relationship entails that you share, so don't be afraid to share, you know and listen to their fears around that as well, you know, you will have supports in the course because you will have your tutors, your supervisors, your therapists, your peers but they won't really

have anyone and you know to bear that in mind because it's a leap of faith for them and the journey that they're on as well, as well as you, so bear that in mind.