

"I was just in this bubble of the course": An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of
Young Final Year Female Trainees' Experiences of Stress in Counselling Psychology
Doctoral Training

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Abstract

Aims. There is a lack of sufficient knowledge about the stress experience in counselling psychology training. Previous research suffered methodological issues and there was a specific lack of qualitative studies. This research aims to contribute towards the topic as it explores the experience of stress in counselling psychology training from the perspective of young final year female trainees. **Design.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight final year female trainees (aged between 25 and 30) in order to explore their experiences of stress and major stressors in counselling psychology doctoral training. **Method.** Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyse the verbatim transcripts of interviews. **Findings.** The process of analysis identified three superordinate themes: ‘identifying ambivalence in training’ (refers to the trainees’ mixed views about stress in training); ‘the impact of training on self and self-and-other’ (refers to the perceived lack of life outside of the training and high risk of failure); and ‘managing the lack of boundaries in training’ (refers to the process of merging with training and being forced to age). The themes are considered in relation to relevant existing literature. **Conclusions.** Findings imply that young female trainees perceive stress as an integral element of training, which is both destructive and promoting their growth. It is suggested that training programmes should consider developing targeted interventions to support these trainees. Evaluation of the current study is followed by recommendations for future research.

Reflexive Statement Part One

The reflexive statement is divided into two sections to present my pre-results’ and post-results’ reflections on the process of research. The first section addresses factors that are relevant to the introduction and methodology of this research. It presents the reader with my way of thinking about the subject matter, illustrates my self-awareness (McLeod, 2011) and specifies the position from which I write. The next section will be presented after the discussion chapter and will include reflections on the findings of this study.

My epistemological position is within contextual constructionism, which according to Madill, Jordan and Shirley (2000), stipulates that there is no one reality: all knowledge is context specific and the focus is on the situation in which an account is constructed. My positioning was not always in agreement with this though. As a child I grew up with a father who believed in one ‘truth’ of the world, which was his own. My father was a dominant parental figure and he was in charge of all the important decisions made within the family system. He believed that as the head of the family he had the right to dictate to the rest of the family what experiences are right or wrong. Consequently, I had to listen to and follow his lead. I accepted this positivist position for some time, possibly because I was unaware of an alternative. Only once I started to explore my interest in counselling psychology and its philosophical underpinnings, such as its focus on the individual’s subjective experiences or the recognition of multiple realities (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2010), I started to change my views on the epistemological positioning. I started to express my own sense of reality and personal meanings, which led to tension in the family, but encouraged by the new sense of empowerment, I continued to move away from the positivist position. As a counselling psychologist I value the subjectivity of individuals and my interest to witness accounts of lived experiences drew me to phenomenological methods. Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA) is compatible with my epistemological position, as it is concerned with the subjectivity of lived experiences of individuals and also with sociocultural and historical processes that may impact on meaning making (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Social constructionism informs the current analysis, as the researcher attempts to present different ways of understanding the phenomenon under investigation to understand how reality is constructed by a very specific group of individuals. The result is a co-construction of reality between researcher and participants.

In initial training interviews we were warned that training will be stressful and that support will be needed. However, no one seemed to focus on this stress later on in training. I wondered whether the higher levels of stress I experienced were usual or whether it suggested that I was not coping. Among trainees there was a consensus that we felt stressed, but what did it actually mean? For me, the experience of stress in training included a sense of failure, feeling not good enough, a non-stop analysis of people, the need to keep a professional image and being alone. Failing assignments in my first year of training was an upsetting experience for me because this was the first time I failed in academia. As a result I started to question my academic abilities and my wish to pursue this career. I started to doubt myself and I wondered whether the training has uncovered my vulnerability - the inability to be good enough in academia. I wondered whether my previous academic success was fabricated, whereby I managed to hide my weakness and fool others by pretending that I am a good and successful student. This questioning of my academic abilities meant to me that I was perhaps not as good as I (and others, particularly my family) thought I was. Moreover, it meant that I have failed myself and others and therefore it meant that I had no value as a person, which led to a sense of disappointment in me. My academic failures in counselling psychology training impacted not only on how I viewed myself but also on how I thought others perceived me as an

individual. Throughout my life I have perceived myself as an individual with academic achievements and others seemed to value and respect me as a result of these accomplishments. However, due to my academic failures, this validation from others seemed to be threatened, as I was unable to continue to present myself as a successful trainee. Rather, the failures indicated that I was not good enough as a student and as a person in general.

The thought ‘I failed because I am not good enough for this profession’ was constantly on my mind and it accompanied me throughout the training – when writing assignments, seeing clients, attending supervision or attending personal therapy. The thought made me feel upset because it brought about new feelings of not being good enough and of being a failure. Moreover, in training I was surrounded by people with qualifications and this seemed to further increase my feelings of insecurity and heightened my sense of failure. These feelings were unpleasant because they had a negative impact on my self-esteem, whereby I started to doubt all my actions and achievements (not only academic) thus far and this seemed to further undermine my self-belief about my capabilities in general. I attempted to shift the feeling of not being good enough by using coping strategies that I learnt from my parents – dismissing and suppressing the feeling with the hope that it will be replaced with positive feelings (or at least with an absence of the feeling of being a failure). However, these coping strategies seemed to be ineffective at the time and I failed to shift the feeling of not being good enough. This failure to change my affective state made me feel even more stressed and exacerbated my feelings of being inadequate as a person. Moreover, the ineffectiveness of my coping strategies made me feel frustrated and helpless. On reflection, these feelings were present perhaps because of my personal need to feel in control of my circumstances. Having a sense of being in control decreases my sense of uncertainty in life, which I associate with intense feelings of anxiety. I have often found, when I think about a sense of uncertainty, I can feel

overwhelmed with this particularly intense anxiety I experience. Lack of control and uncertainty represent to me my fear that anything could happen, my inability to do something to change my circumstances and ultimately my fear of death (which is the pinnacle of uncertainty to me). Furthermore, perhaps this lack of sense of being in control and associated negative feelings (sense of failure, uncertainty and anxiety) created mistrust in the university and thus stress became an integral element of my training.

Moreover, considering the infinite range of potential topics for my research was overwhelming and stressful. I had to make a choice and the decision making was difficult because I did not know what the ‘right’ topic for my research was. On reflection, I was looking for the ‘right’ topic for two reasons. Firstly, as described above, I was used to my father telling me and everyone in the family what the ‘right’ choices in life were. For instance, when I had the opportunity to choose subjects in high school, my father was the one telling me what the ‘right’ choices were for me and for my future. Perhaps as a result of this I felt somewhat lost as I was not given the same level of guidance from the university. Secondly, it seemed to me that a lot of my future depended on this choice, since choosing the ‘wrong’ topic could be detrimental to my academic success. I was also perhaps not as confident in making choices as a result of my decreased confidence (resulting from failing assignments). In spite of that, while considering the topic of the stress experience of future counselling psychologists, I became enthusiastic in learning about this in more depth in order to develop my understanding further. I also became enthusiastic about this topic because I wanted to find out whether my experience was exclusive or ordinary. On reflection, perhaps I was subconsciously looking to find other trainees who have found the training process stressful, like I did, and thus would validate my experience of feeling inadequate as a trainee. Perhaps I was wishing to find other trainees with similar experiences with the hope that it would

normalise my experience or perhaps that it would prove false my feelings of being a failure (if other trainees were to share the same feeling of being a failure, then surely it was not my flaw but the course’s defect?).

My personal experiences may have impacted on my views of stress. My parents taught me that experiencing stress was a weakness and that negative emotions (such as sadness, anger or stress) are undesirable and must be eliminated. When I shared my feelings of stress with my parents, they told me ‘you’re not feeling stressed’ or ‘get over it’, thus dismissing my feelings. As a result of these dismissive comments I felt like my feelings were unimportant and wrong in some way. I also felt like talking about my feelings was inappropriate. The different aspects of my identity, including negative feelings, were not accepted by my parents and therefore I felt defective. Since my feelings seemed unimportant, it also made me feel unimportant. The counselling psychology training suggested the opposite; it encouraged me to face my feelings. These contradictory messages challenged me to further reflect on my values and my sense of self in personal therapy, which helped me to uncover my own beliefs about experiencing emotions, including stress. I have become aware that I associate acceptance of negative emotions with having to like negative emotions and perhaps for this reason I was reluctant to accept unpleasant feelings, such as anger, sadness, or anxiety. I also viewed them as something ‘wrong’. However, on further reflection, avoiding negative emotions seemed to cause me more physical and emotional difficulties. For instance, over the years I have learned how to suppress my anxiety and not let it show to others. However, after an extensive period of time I have started to suffer from constant nausea. Doctors found no physiological explanation for these symptoms and suggested that they are psychological. In personal therapy I had the opportunity to explore the nausea and it seemed that anxiety was at the core of my difficulties. Once I started to express my feelings of anxiety in therapy and was not

rejected by the therapist, I have realised that feeling anxious is okay. I continued to express and acknowledge my anxiety and gradually the nausea subsided. I have become aware that over time I have started to welcome emotions more than before, including stress, despite it being a difficult process. While conducting research interviews I was surprised when my participants expressed positive views on stress, since I expected them to talk about stress as something purely negative (which was perhaps a projection of my personal negative feelings towards stress at the time). Hence, my participants' accounts made me wonder about the positive perceptions of stress. And perhaps this impacted on me as a person, as I was given the opportunity to view stress in a more favourable light. For instance, I started to appreciate how moderate levels of stress motivated me to work harder. Also, I felt less judgmental when listening to my clients' experiences of stress and appreciated the fusion of both positive and negative experiences in relation to stress. Although my perceptions of stress have started to shift and I see stress in a more positive light rather than purely negative, it is possible that I still hold some reminiscent negative feelings about stress.

My research experience is in quantitative research and therefore I was apprehensive about using a qualitative method. One of the main challenges for me was when I was faced with the prospect of conducting research interviews. Perhaps due to the duality of my role as a clinician and a researcher, I was concerned that I would employ psychological interventions or interpret participants' accounts, skills that I was trained to use. Conducting a pilot study (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2011) made me feel more confident and less anxious because I was able to test my research performance within a qualitative framework. When listening back to the recording of the pilot interview, it became apparent that I did get pulled into interpreting the participant's account. The awareness of this phenomenon informed my reactions in the subsequent interviews by being mindful of what is going on in the present and by paying

attention to what each participant said. Furthermore, I managed the situation by reading literature on the differences in interview techniques in clinical and research interviews (Kvale, 1996) and by reminding myself of my researcher role, which was to uncover another person's experience in as much detail as possible with as little disruption as possible from my side.

As I interviewed participants, I became more aware of my trainee status and my own positive and negative perceptions of the course. Due to the academic, psychological and time demands of the course, I perceived the course as an opponent who tried to challenge me and made my training journey difficult. It seemed to me that some lecturers adopted a philosophy whereby trainees learn best when they fail, which strengthened my negative perceptions of the course. On the other hand, my perceptions of the course were also positive, as I perceived the course as a nurturing environment where people were willing to share their knowledge with me and where they supported me when I went through difficult times. The combination of these two experiences made it both an interesting and a challenging process. At times I felt held by the course, whereas at others I felt let down, which made me feel apprehensive. Due to the inconsistency of the course, it seemed to me as if I have developed an ambivalent attachment (Slade, 2004) with the training course, whereby I wanted to stay in contact but at the same time I attempted to distance myself from the course. Consequently, during my interviews on many occasions I was tempted to say *“I know!”* or *“I agree/disagree”*. In such situations I had to stay aware of my assumptions and refrain from adding ideas to participants. I had to keep my own reactions in check by putting them mentally aside during interviews, as well as throughout the research process, thus trying to stay as personally uninvolved as possible and remaining in the researcher role (Willig, 2012). There was a sense of familiarity between me and the participants, which was evident when participants ended their sentences with *“you know?”*, *“right?”* or *“doesn't it?”*. When participants assumed that I knew what their experience was like, I put myself in an outsider role and asked for clarifications. This was

challenging at first but with more practice I became intrigued by what the participants would say if they were asked to explain their experiences to a non-trainee.

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview and Background

The introduction chapter will provide background to mental health within mental health professionals in general, before describing the historic context of research on stress in psychotherapy and counselling in particular. Then, it will introduce the reader to research on common stresses among qualified professionals within counselling psychology. This chapter will end by presenting key concepts and specific definitions of terms that will be used and referred to throughout the study.

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) report (2014), professionals working in the human health and social work industry reported the highest rates of work-related stress and psychological disorders in Great Britain. Numerous studies have indicated that mental health professionals are at an elevated risk of suffering from stress, depression, anxiety, burnout and/or suicidal ideation (Kleespies et al., 2011; Pope & Tabachnick, 1994). According to Moore and Cooper (1996), professionals working in the field of mental health suffer from additional stress due to the nature of conducting clinical work. There is evidence to suggest that burnout among both qualified and trainee psychologists may have a negative impact on the well-being of their clients (Maslach, 2003). Specifically, mental health professionals may suffer from emotional exhaustion, have a sense of emotional detachment and a depersonalisation of clients, which may negatively impact on the therapeutic relationship and clinical work. Furthermore, a study on stress and coping among clinical psychologists indicated that trainees reported more stress than qualified psychologists (Cushway & Tyler, 1994). Similar demands together with less clinical experience perhaps make trainees more vulnerable to stress than qualified psychologists and therefore it is

necessary to investigate the stress experience among psychology trainees, since it may impact on the trainees’ well-being, the clients’ well-being and the overall quality of care provided.

Development of Research on Stress in Psychotherapists and Counsellors

The experiences of psychotherapists started to be researched in the 1970s. Among the first researchers to investigate this research area were Daniels (1974) who researched psychiatrists using a self-report measure, McCarley (1975) who researched stresses of psychotherapists by conducting small group discussions, Farber and Heifetz (1982) who investigated therapist burnout using qualitative analysis, and Deutsch (1984) who explored psychotherapists’ sources of stress using a self-report measure. Due to the scope of this thesis, these studies will not be reviewed in detail but the author believes that it is important to acknowledge the beginning of research in this field in order to contextualise the origins and to consider the impact on future developments. The studies that used self-report measures were developed using items pre-selected by the researchers. As a result, the findings may be constrained by what the authors considered enquiring, and thus the generation of new knowledge may be limited. However, despite some of the potential method limitations, these studies provided the initial point of inquiry into the sources of stress encountered by psychotherapists. Moreover, these studies started to focus on psychotherapists rather than on psychiatrists and to focus more on interpersonal and intrapsychic (rather than on external) sources of stress. Furthermore, the studies postulated that stress could lead to a disruption of the therapeutic relationship or burnout. However, Deutsch (1984) noted that stress could also occur without these negative effects.

A more recent study by Brady, Healy, Norcross and Guy (1995) systematically reviewed available research on stresses in counsellors. They identified seven categories of difficulties

that counsellors face, namely client behaviours, work conditions, emotional depletion, physical isolation, psychological isolation, therapeutic relationships and personal disruptions. Brady et al. argued that understanding the stresses of counselling improves clinician's well-being and clinical effectiveness, and thus enhances the well-being of clients.

This section briefly introduced the origins and context of research on stresses among mental health practitioners providing psychotherapy or counselling. Now the chapter will turn to research on stresses in counselling psychologists.

Research on Stress in Counselling Psychologists

Research suggests that counselling psychologists suffer from psychological stress in relation to different domains of their profession. According to the research on clinical and counselling psychologists in South Africa by Jordaan, Spangenberg, Watson and Fouché (2007), half of the participants involved in an internet survey displayed emotional stress, specifically mild levels of depression and above average levels of anxiety. According to the findings, psychologists employed dysfunctional coping strategies, such as self-blame, denial or a lack of acceptance, which increased their levels of anxiety and/or depression. The researchers observed that psychologists who accepted their stress experience seemed to report less anxiety. This suggested that counselling psychologists, although helping other individuals to cope with stress, struggle with the management of stress themselves. The cross-sectional research design allowed for the establishment of correlations rather than causations. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that future research could include a qualitative study to investigate the experience of stress among psychologists, which could provide the field with a greater understanding of how psychologists perceive and manage their stress.

Burnout among counselling psychologists in the US was explored using a quantitative method by Vredenburgh, Carlozzi and Stein (1999). Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), the study revealed that the group of counselling psychologists reported low to moderate levels of burnout. Further, psychologists in hospital settings experienced more burnout than psychologists in private practice. The researchers accounted this to less autonomy and less income within hospital employment. Further, it was found that levels of burnout among counselling psychologists decreased with age. This implied that younger counselling psychologists were more likely to experience burnout. This was accounted to expectations, the development of coping strategies over time and unspecified personal characteristics. However, this was only speculative and therefore further research in this area is needed.

Papadomarkaki and Lewis (2008) used Thematic Analysis (TA) informed by IPA to explore counselling psychologists' experiences of occupational stress, specifically how psychologists perceive their work demands and their coping strategies. Four major themes were identified, including uncertainty at work, relationship with significant others, being oneself and criticism of professional identity. Counselling psychologists further reported that meaningful relationships where they could express themselves and where they received a sense of support was often used as a coping strategy for work stress. This was one of the first qualitative studies on occupational stress in counselling psychologists and therefore the researchers were able to discuss their findings only in relation to literature on work stress in psychotherapists. This is suggestive of a gap in literature, which may be addressed by more studies on occupational stress among counselling psychologists.

Stevanovic and Rupert (2004) focused on the stresses and satisfaction of professional psychologists, including counselling psychologists, in the US using a survey method. The psychologists reported high levels of career satisfaction; the top strategy to increase one's satisfaction was to spend quality time with one's family or partner. In terms of gender differences, female psychologists reported more sources of satisfaction related to work than male practitioners. According to the researchers, female psychologists indicated that a potential for self-growth was considered an important source of work satisfaction. Furthermore, the researchers emphasised the importance of regularly monitoring psychologists' well-being and stresses experienced due to the constantly changing healthcare culture. Therefore, future research could address these issues in order to further identify effective coping strategies and sources of satisfaction.

Gilroy, Carroll and Murra (2002) used a survey to investigate how counselling psychologists experience their own depression and treatment. According to the findings, 62% of respondents reported suffering from depression; the prevalence of self-reported depression was higher among female practitioners. There was a significant difference between depressed and non-depressed women in terms of the number of clients seen per week, with depressed female practitioners reporting a higher number of direct client contact hours. The researchers revealed that the experience of depression was viewed by the psychologists as both positive and negative. As a positive, the psychologists rated most frequently an increase in empathic understanding and as a negative, they rated most frequently reduced energy levels. In the evaluation of their research the authors caution that the use of a self-report measure and a small sample number within their quantitative study may be problematic in terms of generalisability.

It can be seen that there is a considerable amount of research on stresses experienced by counselling psychologists. Based on these findings, it can be hypothesised that trainees in counselling psychology may experience the same stresses as professionals because they appear to encounter the same stresses in their professional lives but may be less experienced managing these. If burnout is not managed early in individuals' training, trainees may continue to experience the symptoms of burnout in their later lives (Figley, 1995). This may extend to impact on their clinical work and particularly on the care provided to clients. This suggests that it is important to investigate the issue of stress among trainees; however, as will be evident in the next chapter, the stresses in counselling psychology trainees were not researched to the same extent as stresses among qualified counselling psychologists. This seems surprising, since training can be considered as an important developmental stage for counselling psychologists. The next section will include conceptualisations of important terms used throughout the paper.

Definitions

Counselling psychology. The British Psychological Society (BPS, 2010b) defined counselling psychology as emphasising "the exploration of the meaning of events and experiences, especially emotionally. Therefore, counselling psychologists focus on people's mental representations of events, and the particular significance of these for relationships with themselves and with others" (p. 4). This account of counselling psychology suggests that the discipline emphasises investigations in the field of emotions, with the aim of promoting the quality of individuals' relationships.

The BPS (2010b) suggested that there is an overlap between counselling psychology, psychotherapy, counselling, clinical psychology and psychiatry. However, Woolfe (1990) argued that counselling psychology differs from other psychological disciplines in terms of its

focus. Counselling psychology focuses on the importance of the therapeutic relationship, between the psychologist and the client, more on humanistic and less on medical values, and rather than focusing on sickness, it focuses on the development of client's well-being. According to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC, 2012), counselling psychologists share a set of expectations with other practitioner psychologists but differ in others, such as their recognition of appropriate boundaries, understanding of the dynamics in the therapeutic relationship and the reflexive capacity involved in the therapeutic process. This may be indicative of the specific challenges and potential stressors that counselling psychology trainees may encounter in their training.

Additionally, counselling psychology training has its specifications and is different to clinical psychology. For instance, clinical placements in counselling psychology training are not set or pre-arranged by the training institutions and therefore there is an element of the trainee's responsibility and flexibility in choosing and arranging placements. Also, these clinical placements may last longer than six months. Counselling psychology training is not funded and moreover, due to the counselling psychology emphasis on engaging with one's intersubjectivity (Orlans & Van Scoyoc, 2009), personal therapy is mandatory.

Stress. According to Aldwin (2007), researchers in the field of stress often argue about the definition of stress, as one group of researchers argues for the distinction between external and internal states of stress, whereas the second group argues for an integration of the two states. Aldwin argued that the process of stress consists of six main components: physiological reactions, emotional reactions, types of stress, temporal dimensions, cognitive appraisals, and intensity. As this research is interested in all the components that might or might not be experienced by young female counselling psychology trainees and for the

purposes of this study, a definition that integrates both internal and external stressful states will be used because it incorporates individual’s perceptions of stress: “Stress refers to that quality of experience, produced through a person-environment transaction, that, through either overarousal or underarousal, results in psychological or physiological distress” (Aldwin, 2007, p. 24).

There are various theories of stress that attempt to conceptualise reactions to life stressors. Due to the scope of the current thesis a brief summary of the stress-response theory will be presented, which has been linked to health care providers (Rice, 2012) and thus may be relevant to counselling psychologists. The theory was coined by Selye (1976) who proposed that the human body responds to stress physiologically. He elaborated on this by describing the process of general adaptation syndrome (Selye, 1976), whereby the body responds to stressors in different stages. Higher levels of stress may disrupt normal body functioning and therefore impact on the well-being of an individual. Further, stress is unhelpful and harmful only in excessive degrees, by lowering the body’s resistance, which may eventually lead to exhaustion (Selye, 1976).

Burnout. Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2001) defined job burnout as “a psychological syndrome in response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job” (p. 399). According to the authors, the experience of burnout consists of three elements: emotional and physical exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, and a sense of a lack of achievement. The definition of job burnout is included in this research because it is related to one type of stress that counselling psychology trainees might be in contact with, specifically occupational stress. According to Maslach (2003), the stress that contributes to the development of burnout is the result of a social interaction between a carer and an individual in need. Since counselling

psychology trainees are in the helping profession, they will inevitably be interacting with clients who require their care. As a result, it could be speculated that counselling psychology trainees are at high risk of developing burnout syndrome.

Adversarial growth. In order to provide a more balanced perspective, positive changes following stress will be included with the focus on growth and development. The concept of adversarial growth encompasses a post-traumatic growth and a positive psychological adaptation as a response to a major life crisis or trauma (Linley & Joseph, 2004). There are various variables associated with adversarial growth, such as event type, sociodemographic factors, cognitive processing or coping strategies (Linley & Joseph, 2004). According to Tadeschi and Calhoun (2004), who reviewed empirical evidence for post-traumatic growth, individuals who experienced a traumatic event reported an affective quality to their learning and development, suggesting that they engaged emotionally in the processing of the trauma and benefitted from the whole experience.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Overview

The previous chapter served to contextualise the research and define concepts used throughout the thesis. In the following chapter, a critical review of the relevant literature will be presented. The chapter will begin with the presentation of perspectives on stress in training; it will continue with the presentation of research on motives to train as a counselling psychologist and how this may be relevant to the experience of stress during such training. The existing literature on stresses in counselling psychology training will be presented, and gaps in the literature will be identified. As a result of these identified gaps in the literature, studies on clinical psychology training and counselling training will be considered in order to develop the reader's understanding of the current state of research. The chapter will conclude with the presentation of the rationale for the current study and the research aims.

Perspectives on Stress in Training

There is limited research on stress in counselling psychology training from the perspective of academic professionals. Despite limited research available on trainer perspectives, there is an ongoing debate amongst professionals in the field about the presence of stress in counselling psychology training. Stress may be viewed as an intrinsic component of the training, a component that may be considered a requirement to be experienced by all trainees. On the other hand, stress may be experienced as unwanted and intrusive, and exerting a negative effect on trainees, their learning and their work.

According to Rizq (2006), who presented a psychoanalytic perspective on training in counselling psychology, trainees are often faced with the difficulty of choosing the 'right' theoretical model of orientation for individual clinical cases. She argued that the presence of

ambiguity is central in a pluralistic framework. Trainees often experience stress, uncertainty, anger and irritation when faced with the decision of adopting a particular orientation. Anxiety about professional and personal competence and the uncertainty of the appropriate model may increase the frustration levels of trainees. The increases in self-awareness, disappointment and disillusionment associated with training are, however, inevitable, and may lead to growth and development if embraced (Rizq, 2006). Alternative views include that the imbalance between trainee expectations and the reality of training programmes could be addressed by eliminating the gap between the two (Szymanska, 2002). Szymanska (2002) suggested that the unrealistic nature of trainee beliefs may develop prior to the start of training, presenting potential difficulties for trainees. When confronted with the reality of the training programme, the imbalance between reality and beliefs may cause substantial stress. Szymanska (2002) proposed that trainees might need to alter their expectations in order to match the reality of training and thus to diminish disillusionment. She further suggested strategies trainees might consider as preparation for training, such as asking questions, reading the literature and establishing support systems.

It can be seen that there are differing views on how to approach stress in training, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There is an absence of trainee accounts in this discussion, indicating an important gap in research. Only a limited number of studies have focused on trainee perspectives. According to Alred (2006), it is important to understand the experience of training from trainees' perspectives because training can be viewed as an individual, personal journey. This account suggested that because training is personal, it is necessary to investigate discrete trainee accounts in order to develop an understanding of individual experiences.

The importance of exploring trainee perspectives has been highlighted. In the next section, the factors motivating individuals to become counselling psychologists will be discussed.

Motivations to Become a Counselling Psychologist

In this section, the characteristics of counselling psychology trainees and their motivations to become counselling psychologists will be described. In order to understand the trainee experience in greater depth, the role of personality in the development of stress in training will be presented.

Cushway and Tyler (1994) proposed that providing psychotherapy or counselling is an inherently stressful profession owing to the need to become emotionally involved. According to Cushway (1995), motives for becoming involved in helping professions may be associated with difficulties experienced by would-be counsellors in childhood. She reviewed existing literature on this topic and revealed that would-be counsellors and psychotherapists often reported a history of difficulties in early childhood, which the literature associates with the concept of the wounded healer (Cushway, 1995). This concept refers to a personal intrapsychic wound in the caring practitioner, which may constitute both a positive and a negative factor in healing individuals (Miller & Baldwin, 2000). Cushway (1996) argued that counselling training demands the development of self-awareness not in order to expose vulnerabilities but rather to strengthen trainees. Therefore, the perceived intolerance of mental health difficulties in counsellors might have created more stress for trainees. A more recent study by Martin (2011) who conducted a heuristic research on the concept of the wounded healer proposed that the perfect human being is an illusion; that therapists should acknowledge their personal wounds, as this may facilitate a beneficial therapeutic alliance between therapist and client. Despite changing conceptualisations of the wounded healer and

the emphasis on self-reflective practice in counselling psychology training, it can be argued that trainees may still struggle to recognise their mental health difficulties, which may increase their stress.

A qualitative study by Barnett (2007) explored unconscious motivations to work in the field of counselling or psychotherapy. The researcher interviewed qualified therapists with psychoanalytic and psychodynamic orientations, and analysed the data using narrative analysis. Experienced psychotherapists were hypothesised to be able to provide better insight into their motivations to train as therapists (Barnett, 2007). Two major themes emerged. The first theme was of early loss and an associated sense of abandonment, isolation and loneliness in early childhood. The second theme, that of narcissistic needs, referred to the need to care for others, often owing to feelings of guilt. The author suggested that the profession of psychotherapy offers contact with others and may therefore appear attractive to would-be psychotherapists with these unconscious motivations.

Amongst previous studies on what motivates individuals to choose care-related professions, research by DiCaccavo (2002) on motivations to become a counselling psychologist is perhaps most relevant to the focus of this study. Psychometric tests were used to investigate the importance of early experiences in counselling psychology students, particularly of parentification, self-efficacy towards caring, and parental bonding: concepts which were found significant in other helping profession groups (DiCaccavo, 2002). Counselling psychology trainees were compared with art students, and counselling psychology trainees reported less care from their parents and greater self-efficacy in caring for others (DiCaccavo, 2002). According to the researcher, these findings may be attributable to the development of caring roles in early childhood or perhaps to counselling psychology training itself, whereby

students are trained to become more aware of their family relationships and to develop their efficacy for care. A limitation of the study was its low statistical power and thus its ability to detect differences between the two groups.

These findings are further supported by Halewood and Tribe (2003) who conducted a between-group quasi-experimental study on narcissistic injury in pre-doctoral counselling psychology trainees and mature postgraduate students. The Narcissistic Injury Scale (Slyter, 1991) was used to measure the restriction of emotional affect, the lack of understanding of the self, the need for mirroring, problems with setting boundaries, grandiosity, depression, perceptions of the parent-child relationship, perfectionism and feelings about the self. Results revealed high levels of narcissistic injury in counselling psychology trainees, and a negative association between the perceived parent-child relationship and the degree of narcissistic injury. The researchers suggested that the implications of these findings for trainees and trainers include the need for self-awareness and self-reflection in order to prevent negative consequences for clients and potential burnout in trainees. The authors asserted that the Narcissistic Injury Scale (Slyter, 1991) has cultural and linguistic limitations, which may especially have impacted the scores of control group participants, who reported confusion. The face validity of the scale was also viewed as problematic because the items on the scale clearly appeared to measure narcissistic injury. According to Segal and Coolidge (2004) obvious face validity could be seen as a limitation because the purpose of the scale is revealed and thus the participants may respond in a different way. Halewood and Tribe (2003) suggested that participants' responses in their study could be influenced by the participants' defensiveness or by the participants' wish not to appear having narcissistic traits. Thus, the participants could engage in attempts to hide or deny their narcissistic traits.

From the above research it could be seen that both qualified psychologists and trainees seem to be motivated by their intrapsychic wounds and/or narcissistic injuries. To understand in more detail how these motivations may relate to the development of stress among counselling psychology trainees, the notion of narcissistic injury will be expanded upon. According to Miller (1981), who described healthy narcissistic development, a narcissistic injury may develop if the child's needs are not adequately responded to by the caregiver. Such caregiver does not respond to the child's needs but rather requires the child to respond to their caregiver's needs. This places emotional demands on the child and results in oversensitivity to others' narcissistic needs. Furthermore, the outcome of this unhealthy development is “a lack of awareness of their own feelings and needs” (Miller, 1981, p. 501). From a more psychoanalytic perspective, since the child is unable to integrate these authentic feelings and needs into the developing personality, they hide their ‘true self’, emotionally withdraw, and create a ‘false self’, which pretends to cope (Miller, 1981). As a result of this, the ‘true self’ is well hidden in compliance with parental wishes and threats of potential judgment and disapproval from others. From this it can be seen that individuals with narcissistic injury seem to use unconscious defences to hide their genuine feelings and instead focus on others' needs. Glickauf-Hughes and Mehlman (1995) expanded on this and suggested that individuals with narcissistic injury may take on a role in the family, whereby they respond to the emotional needs of their caregivers and this recurrent pattern is then taken up when in contact with clients in clinical practice. This therapist-client interaction then acts for the therapist as a way to indirectly heal the therapist's narcissistic injury (Jalali Bidgoli, 2014).

Some authors argue that narcissistic injury is associated with separation from other people and isolation (Lasch, 1979). This suggests that individuals with narcissistic injury may lack the intimacy of personal relationships. Resultantly, would-be counsellors and psychotherapists

perhaps seek to become members of the helping profession in order to overcome this social isolation and in order to have constant access to social interactions. The unconscious reparative process between therapist and client is further described by Mander (2004) who suggests that this is accompanied by processes of identification and internalisation. She argues that would-be psychotherapists are motivated to join the psychotherapy profession by their unconscious wish to restore internal objects. This is in line with research on the concept of wounded healer, which claims that would-be counsellors are motivated by their own vulnerabilities (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1999). Thus, based on these perspectives, it can be assumed that would-be counselling psychologists may be motivated to join the counselling psychology profession due to their vulnerabilities and intrapsychic wounds. Unconscious processes may then be used to attempt to restore damaged internal objects.

A quantitative study conducted by Zamostny, Slyter and Rios (1993) explored the causal relationships between narcissistic injury, early trauma and adjustment to college. Based on structural equation analyses, the researchers concluded that there are links between early trauma, psychological damage, early resources and subsequent adjustment. Moreover, there was a direct effect of psychological damage (narcissistic injury) on adjustment. From this it can be seen that narcissistic injury seems to have an impact on the adjustment of individuals who decide to attend higher education. Based on these findings, it can be speculated that individuals with narcissistic injury who decide to study psychology at a university level (and perhaps including those who choose counselling psychology training) may experience adjustment difficulties as a result of their psychological damage.

In conclusion, helping professionals appear to be drawn to this type of work as a result of their personal histories, the wish to help others, the wish to relate to others and sometimes

their status of a wounded healer. Training may be the first time these individuals are confronted with their own mental health difficulties. The literature suggests that counselling psychology training attracts a certain type of individual, who may expect to resolve their difficulties during the course or whose wish to care may be misplaced. If this is indeed the case, training may be stressful for these individuals.

This section highlighted motivations for becoming a counselling psychologist. In the next section, the literature on stress in counselling psychology trainees will be presented.

Existing Research on Stress in Counselling Psychology Training

Many studies on counselling psychology training focused on individual components of the training and trainees' overall experiences of these components. For instance, Schlosser and Kahn (2007) focused on the advisor-advisee relationship using quantitative methodology and the findings suggested a moderate level of agreement on the advisory alliance. Athanasiades (2008) offered her reflective account on integrating different identities that were elicited during the course of her training and suggested that this integration improved her work. Giovazolias (2005) presented his personal account on integration in counselling psychology by reflecting on how he integrated research, theory and practice as part of his development and suggested that his development is continuous rather than concluded. Shivy, Mazzeo and Sullivan (2007) used postal survey method to research clinical and counselling psychology trainees' perceptions of internships. The results indicated a difference in preferences for an internship between the two trainee groups, with less counselling psychology trainees selecting medical settings as their preferred internship site. These studies provide an insight into trainees' experiences in training, however, many of them were conducted in the US and there

may be a cultural difference in trainees’ experiences compared to a study conducted in Britain (Pelling, 2004).

As this study is concerned with the stresses of counselling psychology trainees, the following section will present a detailed review of studies that were identified by the researcher as the closest to exploring the area of stress in counselling psychology training. As will be evident, research on the experiences of stress of counselling psychology trainees has been scarce and most of the literature seemed to focus on pre-doctoral programmes in counselling psychology.

Stresses and stressors. The only study identified as focusing solely on the stresses in counselling psychology training was a study by Kumary and Baker (2008). The authors attempted to fill in a gap in research by conducting a comprehensive study investigating stress across a variety of aspects of counselling psychology training, compared to previous studies that focused only on individual components of training. The researchers conducted a quantitative study using a postal survey to investigate whether there is an association between stressors experienced in training and trainees’ levels of distress. The trainees researched were enrolled on a BPS accredited Diploma in counselling psychology programme in the UK. The researchers found that high levels of psychological stress were rated for academic items, personal and professional development items, and placements items. The researchers suggested that the high-rated items could be grouped into two categories of stressors: practical/organisational issues (such as finding available time, funds, placements) and training’s intrinsic issues (such as academic pressure and professional socialisation). However, the researchers did not present their rationale for grouping the items into these categories. The authors found a positive correlation between stress ratings for the training and non-psychotic mental health distress measured using the General Health Questionnaire 12

(Goldberg & Williams, 1988). Further findings suggested that levels of trainees' distress remained steady over time with no significant difference between training years. Findings suggested that there were differences in stress levels between trainees based on their gender and age. Male trainees reported lower levels of stress on the total stress scale and on the academic subscale than female trainees. The researchers further found that older trainees rated lower levels of stress on the total scale and on the placement subscale than younger trainees. The authors suggested that younger trainees might be at greater risk of placement-related stress due to their inexperience in negotiating clinical placements and thus not offering an attractive image of themselves to their potential employers. This is however only a speculation unsupported by data or previous research.

There was a relatively low response rate (41%) but no investigation was initiated into the reasons underlying this trend. One of the major limitations of this study is the survey method chosen (postal survey) with its disadvantages. According to Shaughnessy, Zechmeister and Zechmeister (2003), postal surveys are a convenient way to collect information but the major disadvantage is the response bias and associated unrepresentative sample of the population researched. Kumary and Baker (2008) developed a measure to assess stress in counselling psychology trainees on the basis of a stress survey for clinical psychology trainees (Cushway, 1992). Despite the piloting of this survey on counselling psychology trainees and adjustments made, the cross-transfer of such a measure to a different training programme is questionable. After presenting the limitations of the study, the researchers presented questions for future research, including a question about whether trainees face unacceptably high stress levels in training.

Despite its limitations, this study was original and valuable because it considered a new approach to studying trainees’ experiences of stress. Different aspects of counselling psychology training were considered and researched in a comprehensive manner, filling the gap in research. The study is the only quantitative study exploring counselling psychology trainees’ stresses. However, it focuses on pre-doctoral counselling psychology training and therefore there is no account of how training is experienced by doctoral trainees. Other studies on counselling psychologists in training focus on individual components of their training programmes rather than specifically on stress. In spite of this, some of the studies do relate their findings to stresses experienced by trainees. As the literature on stresses in counselling psychology training is limited, these studies will be reviewed in the next section, in order to present the reader with an overview of what has been researched within counselling psychology training and what was found to be associated with stress.

Burnout and career choice satisfaction. Clark, Murdock and Koetting (2009) investigated burnout and career choice satisfaction in counselling psychology trainees enrolled on a Doctorate programme in the US. The researchers conducted a quantitative study to research associations between levels of stress, social support and career satisfaction. Trainees were asked by their course directors to complete a web-based survey. Overall, relatively low burnout rate was found among trainees. Global stress, advisor support and psychological sense of community mitigated the effect of stress on burnout and career choice satisfaction. Findings suggested that trainees with low levels of stress reported higher career choice satisfaction. Further, trainees who felt like equal members in the psychological community were more satisfied with their choice of career.

Clark et al. (2009) systematically presented theory and literature base, thereby giving confidence to the reader into the robustness of their method and into the topic they were researching. According to Greenlaw and Brown-Welty (2009), web-based survey methods have lower response rates than paper-based survey methods. Despite the limitations of using web-based survey, Clark et al. (2009) were successful in obtaining an unusually good response rate (76%). One of the limitations of this study was that within the measure for social support, the researchers pre-selected groups of social support that were investigated; however they omitted certain social support categories, such as spirituality. This might have limited and influenced trainees’ responses and thus findings. Measures used were presented in great detail, together with reliability and internal consistency. However, the measures were not individualised to counselling psychology students.

Financial implications. Bor, Watts and Parker (1997) researched financial and practical implications of MSc counselling psychology training in the UK. They conducted an exploratory quantitative study to investigate profile of trainees who enrol on the programme, financial implications and relevant time organisation. Trainees were asked to complete a set of questionnaires that was given to them by their course tutors. The results of the study were only descriptive in nature. The authors found that half of the sample perceived the course fees as reasonable, had a paid job in a field unrelated to psychology and arranged their clinical placements on their own. The authors concluded that many trainees suffered from debts as a result of having to pay for their tuition fees, personal therapy and at times supervision sessions.

Bor et al. (1997) speculated that trainees experienced substantial stress when arranging for their clinical placement. However, this was only a speculation. Trainees were asked to

evaluate how easy or difficult setting up a placement was. The authors implied that when trainees viewed setting up a clinical placement as difficult, then this meant it was stressful. However, this reasoning was not supported by data. There are no studies that the authors could draw upon, as this was one of the first studies on MSc trainees’ experiences of counselling psychology training. The sample of trainees lived in London and therefore the findings might not be representative for all training experiences across the UK, as the area of London is associated with higher costs of living and therefore the financial implications might be different for trainees in this area. The major limitation of this study was the survey method chosen (postal survey) with its disadvantages. The method section in the study was insufficient for a replication because the description of procedure lacked detail.

Personal therapy. As will be evident in this section, three studies researched personal therapy as a component of counselling psychology training. Grimmer and Tribe (2001) conducted a qualitative study to investigate how trainees perceive the effects of personal therapy. This was investigated in relation to the impact of personal therapy on professional development of trainees. The participants were trainees enrolled on a Masters counselling psychology programme and recently qualified counselling psychologists in the UK. The participants were interviewed on the contribution of personal therapy to professional development. Using grounded theory the researchers observed that personal therapy was perceived as having a positive influence on professional development. Trainees reported that therapy had a beneficial effect specifically due to individuals being in the role of a client, socialisation experience and support. Trainees described a presence of fear of being negatively judged as practitioners, which prevented them from disclosing in therapy. Grimmer and Tribe further reported that personal therapy was considered by some participants as a form of stress management. For others personal therapy increased the levels of stress,

especially during difficult times when participants were already dealing with higher levels of stress.

As Grimmer and Tribe (2001) reviewed the literature, a large part of their review was based on studies from 1937 to 1988. From today’s point of view the studies presented are relatively outdated. The view of the society towards personal therapy might have changed over time and therefore the literature might not accurately represent common attitudes today.

A different study by Kumari (2011) also investigated the component of personal therapy in counselling psychology training. The researcher conducted a qualitative study using IPA to investigate the impact of therapy on personal and professional development of Masters level counselling psychology trainees in the UK. The results of the study identified four major themes: experiential learning, personal development, the stress of therapy and personal therapy for therapist being essential. Within the major theme of stress of therapy, the findings suggested a similarity to the findings by Grimmer and Tribe (2001), whereby participants reported that personal therapy was perceived as helpful when dealing with high demands. However, at times personal therapy seemed to increase the levels of stress. According to Kumari (2011), trainees described the financial cost of therapy and the pressure of having to accumulate a set number of personal therapy hours within a time limit as strenuous. Next, trainees who did not have a concrete problem reported that attending personal therapy was stressful for them as they found the process of having to come up with things to say in therapy difficult. Also, for some trainees, attendance in personal therapy disrupted their subsequent functioning.

In terms of the research method, Kumari (2011) interviewed participants from a university institution where she was enrolled herself on an MSc counselling psychology training. This could potentially lead to a dual relationship as the participants recruited were second and third year trainees. There is a possibility that some of the participants were acquainted with the researcher and this may potentially have an impact on the results of the study. Further, in the method section the author did not describe the sample of participants in great detail, for instance the age of participants was omitted. The age of participants may be considered as important because it may be related to participants' personal and professional development. To conclude, the analysis section was clear but did not provide enough detail for a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The author presented descriptive comments of what participants reported but she did not engage in the interpretative element of analysis.

Another study exploring trainee perceptions of personal therapy in the UK conducted by Moller, Timms and Alilovic (2009) used thematic analysis. The trainees were enrolled in either a Diploma in counselling, a Doctorate in clinical psychology or a Doctorate in counselling psychology. Trainees were asked at the beginning of their training to complete qualitative questionnaires about their views of personal therapy in their training. The results of the study suggested that trainees viewed personal therapy as an instrument that supported them in the development of their clinical practice. The results further suggested that trainees associated personal therapy with particular costs. Financial cost was one of the subthemes within this theme. Trainees reported that self-funded personal therapy triggered anxiety in them, it was described as stressful and it was considered a liability. Moreover, trainees viewed personal therapy as potentially unsettling and reported a presence of anxiety as a result of processing difficult issues in therapy. According to the authors, trainees expressed concern

about potential negative consequences of personal therapy on training, self and clinical work. However, the authors did not consider that an unsettling experience in personal therapy might be useful for trainees or that the same process is experienced by clients who attend therapy. According to Moller et al. (2009), additional trainee fears included the fear that therapy will interfere with their training, fear of being diagnosed with a serious mental health disorder and fear of others discovering that one is incompetent and unstable for the clinical practice.

Compared to previous research on personal therapy who investigated considerations of personal therapy after some time, Moller et al. (2009) enquired about trainee views of personal therapy at the onset of their training. This means that the trainee views were captured prior to their actual experience of personal therapy. Further, the participants involved in this study came from different training programmes. One limitation of this study is that all the researchers held dual roles when conducting this research. They all were trainers at institutions who subsequently approached trainees for their participation in this study. This duality of role may have had an impact on the results.

Integration in training. Ward, Hogan and Menns (2011) researched perceptions of counselling psychology trainees, counselling psychologists and counselling psychology course directors towards integration in training. The research was presented as a pilot study that aimed to explore individuals' views on the learning process and integration of various therapeutic perspectives. The researchers conducted telephone interviews to collect their data, which were subsequently analysed using thematic analysis following grounded theory principles. The data were analysed independently by each researcher; the themes were later discussed and agreed on by all researchers, a process which allowed for a validity check. According to the findings, participants found integration challenging since the process of

integration was not presented to them in a systematic way. Further, participants reported feeling stressed as a result of tensions in the training between course, clinical supervisors and clinical placements. Despite the stressful experience of these conflicts, the participants described these also as promoting their development.

In terms of the limitations of this study, it was described as a pilot study throughout the paper, perhaps suggesting that the findings were preliminary. When Ward et al. (2011) presented their limitations of the study, they scrutinised their small sample size. However, there were twelve participants, which may seem adequate for a qualitative study (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Further, the authors did not present sufficient information about the participants involved in the study (age, gender or course enrolled on), which could have been useful to understand the conclusions of the study and to inform future research.

Vicarious trauma. Adams and Riggs (2008) researched vicarious traumatisation among counselling psychology and clinical psychology graduate trainees in the US. The aim of this exploratory study was to use a quantitative methodology in order to examine the relationship between vicarious traumatisation, defence styles and related factors. For the purposes of their study the researchers developed a new instrument that assessed participants' trauma-related clinical experiences and training, demographic information and a history of personal trauma. Further, an inventory to measure vicarious traumatisation and a self-report questionnaire on defence styles were used in this postal survey. The findings suggested that one third of trainees reported a personal trauma history and there was a significant association between trauma symptoms and defence style. The majority of trainees reported the use of mature defence mechanisms, specifically self-sacrificing and adaptive styles. Helpful coping strategies moderated the effect of vicarious traumatisation, however, self-sacrificing defence

style was associated with the development of trauma symptoms. Furthermore, trainees with less clinical experience reported more preoccupation with self-concerns. The authors suggested that these trainees who see clients for trauma work may exhibit symptoms of identity confusion or disorganised perceptions of self.

In terms of the limitations of this study, Adams and Riggs (2008) highlighted a low response rate. Also, the nature and length of trauma history of trainees was not assessed in detail. The authors presented suggestions for future research, such as the use of a more comprehensive assessment of historic trauma, or an exploration of how attendance in personal therapy may impact on trauma symptoms. The study highlighted the stress resulting from working with trauma clients and the authors recommended general training in self-care. However, details on how secondary stress was experienced by trainees was unavailable and specific self-care strategies were not illustrated.

The identified and selected studies related to stress in counselling psychology training were reviewed individually. The following summary will recapitulate the findings across the studies and implications for the current research will be presented.

Summary of Existing Literature on Stresses among Counselling Psychology Trainees

To summarise the reviewed literature, it could be seen that except for one identified study that purposefully focused on stress in training, there was a lack of research on counselling psychology trainees’ experiences of stress. Further, it could be seen that the existing literature within this field focused on counselling psychology programmes that were not of a doctoral level. Furthermore, many of the studies identified were concerned with focusing on personal therapy as a requirement of the training. Some of the reviewed studies included other trainees

rather than only counselling psychology trainees. As a result, it is questionable to what extent the findings of these studies reflect purely the counselling psychology training experience. However, the review of available studies on trainees’ experiences of stress in the counselling psychology training suggests that trainees are faced with high levels of stress related to different elements within training.

As the research on stresses in counselling psychology training is limited, the subsequent section will focus on stresses in clinical psychology, psychotherapy and counselling training in order to see how some of the gaps in literature can be understood from a different perspective. Further, the following section will attempt to explore how the findings in other training programmes might fit in with the counselling psychology training.

Stress in Counselling and Psychology Training

Counselling is a broad field of practice where the psychotherapeutic approach might determine the stresses experienced. However, there are certain common denominators between counselling and counselling psychology: clinical practice, personal therapy, clinical supervision, writing about one’s clinical work and the experience of being formally assessed. However, a major difference between psychotherapy/counselling training and counselling psychology training that needs to be emphasised is the doctoral level research component, which consists of a thesis and a viva voce examination, which adds another element to the training and may act as a potential additional stressor.

According to Truell (2001), counselling trainees experience anxiety or depression at some point during their training. The researcher investigated different aspects of counselling training that increase trainees’ levels of stress. Using grounded theory, the author identified

that trainees experienced changes in interpersonal relationships and changes in self-perceptions; they held unrealistic beliefs about their competence and they had unrealistic expectations to always achieve high goals. Furthermore, the programme was perceived as stressful due to evaluation and competition. This research did not consider how these stresses are managed or how much impact they have.

The area of trainees' experiences of stresses in psychology training was investigated by researchers in different areas of applied psychology, mostly using a quantitative research framework. Cushway (1992) investigated stressors in clinical psychology training and trainees' coping strategies using a postal survey. The researcher developed a new stress survey for clinical psychology trainees covering four areas derived from a pilot study: academic stressors, placement stressors, organisational stressors and personal stressors. Trainees were asked to indicate what stresses they had experienced and to rate how intensely they experienced them. The trainees' responses were analysed and results suggested that the stressors reported in clinical psychology training include course structure, workload, poor supervision, disruption of social support, self-doubt and difficulties in client work. Results indicated that second and third year trainees experienced higher levels of stress than first year trainees. The author speculated that these findings might be due to the presence of the research component in the final year, searching for jobs or the cumulative effect of stress.

Despite these findings, a gap in the literature means there is no evidence to support or deny whether or how clinical and counselling psychology training programmes differ from each other in terms of the experienced stress. Clinical psychology is an applied field of psychology and many of the programme components are similar to the counselling psychology programme. If it is assumed that the training programmes are similar, then no literature

suggests whether or not there is a difference between doing the training in 1992 and doing the training in mid-2010s. The next section will present the research question and aims of the current study.

Conclusions and Rationale of the Current Study

From the literature review it can be seen that most studies used quantitative methods that suffered from methodological issues and focused mainly on individual aspects of training courses. Previous research suggested what the major stressors within counselling psychology training might be; however, the findings did not offer an exploration of how these aspects of training were stressful. There was a lack of sufficient knowledge about the experience of stress in counselling psychology trainees and how this population could be understood. Furthermore, the investigations on stresses in training presented stress as negative, however, perhaps stress can be experienced positively, for instance as suggested by Norcross, Prochaska and Farber (1993), in the form of job satisfaction.

To summarise, it could be seen that studies on counselling and clinical psychology trainees (Cushway, 1992; Kumary & Baker, 2008) suggest that female trainees experience more stress than male trainees. Kumary and Baker (2008) also suggested that the vulnerability for stress is higher among younger counselling psychology trainees. Additionally, Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) described the stages of professional development in counsellors and argued that the final stage in training is associated with intense personal exploration and with high demands for trainee functioning. Also, trainees in their final year may be in a better position to reflect on their experiences that were accumulated over the training years. However, these findings were not further explored by previous researchers.

Therefore, further research is needed to provide detailed information on the stress experience of young female trainees in their final year. This gap in literature led to the exploratory aim of the present study: to gain an understanding of what it is like for final year young female trainees to experience stresses on their doctoral counselling psychology training programmes and what sense they make of what is happening to them.

Relevance to Counselling Psychology. This study and its emphasis on the stress experiences of trainees is relevant to the profession of counselling psychology by focusing on the training of future counselling psychologists. Training could be perceived as one of the major stages in professional development of counselling psychologists. According to the Division of Counselling Psychology (2005), the discipline integrates both phenomenological and scientific practice. Further, it is stated that professionals are responsible to themselves, clients, colleagues and society. This suggests that counselling psychologists should be concerned with themselves, implying their own personal and professional development, which are components encompassed in training programmes. The professional practice guidelines for counselling psychologists state that one of the practitioner’s obligations and responsibilities is fitness to practice safely. Individuals are expected to monitor their work effectiveness and to ensure personal functioning. Furthermore, according to Norcross and Guy (2007), self-care is a therapist’s ethical responsibility. This implies that it is necessary to research the development of would-be counselling psychologists within training, specifically the stress experience, in order to increase the awareness of trainees’ well-being and quality of life.

Furthermore, the study may be also relevant to counselling psychology training programmes within academic institutions and the BPS. It could inform these institutions about what

aspects of stress are perceived as the most challenging, how young female trainees are affected cognitively, emotionally and physically, and how these adjustments are managed. Furthermore, it could provide an insight into how trainees think about the stress on training and how they would like it to be addressed, if at all. The study is also relevant to the induction process of new would-be psychologist applicants and it could inform how elements related to stress, such as self-care (Baker, 2003) and burnout (Acker, 2012), are addressed.

This study is also relevant to the profession by attempting to develop a deeper understanding of a stress experience among a particular group of trainees, which could be utilised to develop client-centred interventions tailored to young female trainees in personal therapy (a requirement of the counselling psychology training). According to Orlans (2011), counselling psychology is concerned with subjectivity, understanding of meaning and individual client's needs. Therefore, since counselling psychology trainees are required to attend personal therapy and to become clients themselves, tailored interventions could enhance the therapeutic relationship by helping practitioners to better engage with trainees and attend to their specific needs. This may also apply to clinical and research supervision.

Research Question and Aims of the Study

Whilst searching the literature it became clear that there is little research focusing on the experience of stress among counselling psychology trainees, especially a lack of comprehensive qualitative research. Furthermore, the literature on this topic seemed to relate to pre-doctoral programmes. As could be seen, little is known about what is stressful about the training for young female doctoral trainees. Therefore, this research aims to develop an understanding of how stress in training is experienced by young final year female counselling psychology trainees on doctoral programmes in the UK. Now that the rationale for the current

research has been proposed, the next chapter will focus on the method used to address the research question.

Chapter Three: Method

Design

Methodology. A qualitative methodology is interested in meaning and in giving a voice (Willig, 2013) and therefore it appeared to be appropriate for this research because it allows for a more idiographic understanding of young female trainees’ lived experiences. According to Willig (2013), compared to quantitative methodology, which adopts a positivist epistemology and which argues for a single objective reality, qualitative methodology adopts a social constructionist epistemology, which argues for the existence of multiple subjective realities that are constructed by an individual and influenced by the context. Given the exploratory nature of the current study, qualitative methodology was considered as more suitable because it enabled the research to focus on individuals’ own experiences and their context (Coyle, 2007).

Ontological and epistemological position. The researcher assumed a relativist ontological position, whereby she believed that the nature of reality has a range of interpretations (Willig, 2013), thus she focused on the subjectivity, rather than the objectivity of being. The relativist standpoint conceptualised the researcher as central in research due to the researcher’s role in the construction of findings (Willig, 2013), whereby the researcher uses data in a particular way to develop constructions of reality using interpretations that are inherent to the researcher. Further, the counselling psychology identity of the researcher had an impact on the epistemological stance. The core values of counselling psychology practice emphasise the importance of clients’ subjective experiences (Strawbridge & Woolfe, 2010), respect of individual’s experiences, and the recognition of social contexts (BPS, 1995). This is in line with social constructionism, which argues that individuals create their own realities in their minds. Further, the meaning of these realities is derived from a process of interpretation,

a phenomenon originating in the hermeneutics approach (Ponterotto, 2005). This suggests that an interaction between the researcher and an individual will guide the process of interpretation.

Rationale for phenomenology. Phenomenology is a philosophical tradition concerned with the study of lived experience and meanings (Smith et al., 2009). From a phenomenological perspective, an individual perceives objects in the world with intentionality, which refers to the process of directing one’s consciousness towards objects (Sokolowski, 2000). The researcher adopted this phenomenological standpoint, whereby reality is interpreted by an individual, resulting in an experience, which is valid for that particular individual (Willig, 2013). This suggests that subjective experiences are at the core of phenomenology. The following section will attempt to briefly outline how IPA differs from other phenomenological approaches and why it was considered an appropriate method for this study.

There is a range of approaches that are informed by phenomenological philosophy and which vary in their focus of research, involvement of interpretation in description or the extent to which they attend to researcher subjectivity (Finlay, 2009). According to Giorgi (2008), within phenomenological psychology, two approaches have been presented in detail - descriptive pre-transcendental Husserlian phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology. Giorgi (2008) reported that the former approach was based upon the philosophical thoughts of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty and was further developed by Giorgi who introduced changes to allow for the development of a method suitable for psychological results. The latter approach was based upon the thoughts of Heidegger who supported a more interpretive methodology and IPA is a method within this approach (Giorgi, 2008). Interpretive phenomenology, and

particularly IPA, has an idiographic emphasis, focuses on interpretative features in analysis, offers a flexible approach to analysis where the researcher adapts the method (Giorgi, 2008), and is interested in variability of human experience (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

Rationale for the use of IPA. Phenomenology, hermeneutics, idiography and symbolic interactionism are the philosophical underpinning of IPA. The phenomenological stance of IPA is reflected in one of the main objectives of IPA, which is to investigate how individuals experience their world and to understand what meanings they attach to their personal experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This is done by exploring individuals’ cognitive processes and patterns. An important element of IPA that distinguishes it from other methods is the concept of the hermeneutic circle, which refers to the relationship between the part and the whole, as well as the relationship between researcher and participant (Smith, 2007). Further, double hermeneutic refers to the dynamic where the participant tries to make sense of their own experience and the researcher then tries to make sense of how the participant tries to make sense of their experience (Smith & Eatough, 2007). IPA is idiographic in its commitment to in-depth analysis of lived experiences (Smith, 2011). Since IPA’s idiographic approach focuses on individual case studies, a small and homogenous sample size is recommended (Smith & Eatough, 2007). This served the purpose of this study, as this study wanted to articulate something very particular about a very narrow and well defined small group of people – final year, young, female trainees. IPA is also influenced by symbolic interactionism, which refers to the process whereby individuals develop their understanding of the world by socially interacting with other people using significant communications (Howitt, 2013).

IPA is set within the epistemological position of constructivism, which is compatible with the research question, and therefore it was considered as a method for the purposes of the current study. According to Smith and Eatough (2007), IPA is an appropriate method within qualitative methodology for health and clinical psychology because it intends to bridge the divide between social cognition and discourse (Smith, 1996). Since counselling psychology is a branch of applied psychology concerned with individuals’ experiences, IPA was considered as an appropriate method to be considered for the current study. Smith (2004) suggested that IPA is a suitable approach for relatively novel topics. Furthermore, counselling psychology acknowledges the otherness of clients, uses individualised approaches and works with complexities (Cooper, 2009), which is in line with the philosophical underpinnings of IPA.

Other qualitative methods were considered for the purposes of this study. TA was considered as a method of analysis, due to its focus on exploring the experiences of a particular group (McLeod, 2011) and its focus on developing themes. However, in contrast to IPA, TA is not linked to any particular set of theoretical assumptions (Howitt & Cramer, 2014). For the purposes of the current study, IPA was considered as more suitable due to its philosophical underpinnings.

Narrative analysis (NA) was also considered due to its shared phenomenological basis and its concern with the experiences of individuals. The key feature of this approach is the study of self and identity, and the central roles of language and stories (Crossley, 2007). Compared to IPA, some researchers using NA emphasise the social aspects of a narrative (Griffin & May, 2012). For the purposes of the current study, IPA method was seen as the more appropriate approach due to its concern with close proximity to individuals’ experiences.

Grounded theory (GT) was considered due to its epistemological stance. One of the main goals of GT is to develop a theoretical analysis that can explain a particular phenomenon and what happens (Charmaz, 2008), which suggests a different objective to IPA. According to Holloway and Todres (2003), GT adopts an explanatory model and is concerned with a formulation of a theory. Since the aim of the current research was not to develop a theory but rather to develop a deep understanding of the meaning of trainees’ stress experience, an element that is missing in the existing literature, GT was discarded as unsuitable.

Discourse analysis (DA) is set within a social constructivist approach and is concerned with the construction of phenomena through language (Smith et al., 2009). DA and IPA share their interest in the role and function of language. However, IPA perceives language as a route to access individual’s cognitions through an analytic process, whereas DA is not concerned with cognitions and considers language as a form of behaviour to be analysed (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). As the research question was interested in the individuals’ experiences and the meanings they ascribed to those experiences, and not predominantly in the language these individuals used to construct their experiences, DA method was discarded.

Participants

Participants were eight final year female trainees currently enrolled on counselling psychology doctoral programmes in the UK, accredited by the BPS and the HCPC. The age ranged from 25 to 30 years, with the mean age of 27 years (see Table 1). The participants were from four training programmes.

Table 1

Summary of participants’ details

Participant (pseudonym)	Age
Alexandra	28
Ciara	29
Genevieve	25
Holly	30
Macy	26
Pamela	30
Samantha	25
Zoe	26

Materials

An interview schedule was constructed using suggestions by Smith et al. (2009) (see Appendix A for interview schedule and Appendix B for a rationale for interview questions). Semi-structured interviews were used in order to allow for an element of flexibility to the extent that it allowed the participants to actively engage and guide the process (Smith & Eathough, 2007).

Other materials used included an audio recorder, transcription software and a transcription pedal provided by the researcher. Interview rooms were negotiated with the participants. Further materials included the cover letter (see Appendix C), e-mail templates, (see Appendix D), participant information sheets (see Appendix E), informed consent forms (see Appendix F), debrief sheets (see Appendix G), distress protocol (see Appendix H) and lists of available psychological services (see Appendix I).

Procedure

Pilot study. A pilot study was conducted prior to recruitment in order to explore the feasibility of data collection (Leon et al., 2011). One trainee enrolled on a doctorate in counselling psychology programme at London Metropolitan University participated in the pilot study. This trainee was not included in the final sample. The aim of the pilot study was to examine the feasibility of the interview schedule with the target sample and to practice interviewing strategies. The outcome of the pilot interview suggested that the interview schedule enabled the participant to open up about her experience in sufficient detail and all questions were comprehensible. Since no difficulties were highlighted, the interview schedule was not modified.

Sampling. Smith et al. (2009) suggested having between four and ten interviews for a professional doctorate research. Due to the purposive nature of sampling within IPA, it was determined that eight interviews will allow for a sufficient examination of divergence and convergence in this sample (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). To ensure homogeneity of the sample, only trainees who were enrolled on a BPS and HCPC accredited counselling psychology programmes in the UK were considered. The BPS' and the HCPC's involvement in regulation of these programmes suggests that the same accreditation criteria had to be met. To address the purpose of the study, the following inclusion criteria were further required to be met: female, 24 - 30 years old, to be in the final year or to have passed all requirements of the penultimate year. As discussed earlier in the introduction section, studies on counselling psychology and clinical psychology trainees (Cushway, 1992; Kumary & Baker, 2008) suggest that female trainees experience more stress than male trainees. For this reason, only female trainees were selected for this study. Further, Kumary and Baker (2008) suggested that the vulnerability for stress is higher among younger counselling psychology trainees. Thus,

the age range of the sample was chosen to be between 24 and 30 years of age in order to explore the experiences of the youngest trainees on the programme. All participants were in their final year as Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) argued that the final stage in training is associated with intense personal exploration and with trainers' high demands for trainees' functioning. Further, research on supervision of trainees by Rønnestad and Skovholt (1993) claimed that there is less variation among trainees who have advanced in their training, and thus the mode of training was not incorporated in the inclusion criteria.

Recruitment. The first method of recruitment included negotiating access to participants through course directors, research tutors, course administrators and academic staff on doctorates in counselling psychology. Educational institutions were contacted and individuals responsible for dissemination were asked to communicate to their trainees the research purpose and the need for participants. The second method of recruitment included advertising the study on the Facebook Group called Counselling Psychologists UK (www.facebook.com). This was a closed group for qualified and trainee counselling psychologists. The third method of recruitment included advertising the study on the LinkedIn group called Counselling Psychologists in Training UK (www.linkedin.com). Further, the study was advertised on the Recruit website of The Division of Counselling Psychology (www.bps.org.uk).

When potential participants expressed an interest in taking part in the research study, they were sent an initial e-mail to check whether the research inclusion criteria were met. When the inclusion criteria were met and the participants agreed to take part in the research, an interview date was arranged.

Interview procedure. The semi-structured interviews lasted a mean length of 84 minutes (ranging from 52 to 153 minutes) and took place at a time and place convenient for the participant. The researcher travelled to a location that was convenient for the participant and safe for both. Two interviews were conducted on participants’ university premises, five participants chose to be interviewed in their own homes and one participant chose to be interviewed in a cafe. Prior to the research interview the researcher obtained a written consent form from each participant for the participation in the study and for the audio recording of the interview. The participants were reminded that they had the right to withdraw their consent up to four weeks after the interview date. This step was taken to restrict retrospective withdrawal of consent since removal of data would be difficult after the research completion.

Analytic Strategy

All interviews were transcribed verbatim using orthographic transcription method (Howitt, 2013) by the researcher, which allowed for more familiarity with the data. In order to ensure anonymity, all transcripts were assigned a pseudonym and all identifiable information was omitted. The transcripts were analysed using the IPA method as described by Smith et al. (2009). The analytic procedure included reading and re-reading each individual transcript of an interview several times, in order to ensure that the participant was the main focus of the analysis (Smith et al., 2009). This process was simultaneously accompanied by listening to the audio recordings.

The text was examined and exploratory comments were made in the right margin of the transcript. These comments included initial impressions, anything that seemed important to the participant, language used in the transcript and particular phrases that seemed of interest to

the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This initial noting focused on descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments (Smith et al., 2009).

In the next analytic step, emergent themes were identified and noted in the left margin of the transcript. This left side coding was more interpretative, researcher’s own language was used and it included various concepts from the researcher’s psychological knowledge (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). The research question was used to guide the researcher towards relevant themes (Huff et al., 2014). In order to ensure that the emergent themes were grounded in the participant’s accounts while incorporating the researcher’s interpretation, all identified themes were checked again against the participant’s quotes (see Appendix J for an example of initial notes and emergent themes for Zoe).

Next, all emergent themes were listed chronologically and then transferred onto individual pieces of paper with line numbers (see Appendix K for a sample list of identified themes with line numbers and key quotes for Zoe). The individual themes were then moved around in order to look at similarities and differences between themes. The aim was to establish connections across the emergent themes, to group them into semantic clusters and to capture a recurring pattern (Storey, 2007). Spatial representation of the themes was used to help the researcher to explore the links between themes. Descriptive labels were given to clusters of themes that appeared to be significant for the participant and her experience. A map was created to represent the connections between superordinate themes and subthemes (Huff et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2009) (see Appendix L for a documentation of how themes were arranged to lead to subthemes and superordinate themes for Zoe).

The same steps were followed for each individual transcript. When moving to the next case, the researcher attempted to bracket previously identified themes in order to comply with the idiographic commitment of IPA, while acknowledging that the analytic process will inevitably be influenced by the previous analysis (Smith et al., 2009).

In the next stage of analysis, the individual cases were looked across in order to establish existing patterns. During this stage the researcher looked at similarities, differences and connections across participants' themes. This integration of themes generated superordinate themes with relevant subthemes for the group of participants. At this stage some themes were changed or relabelled to represent the complexity of participants' experiences. The theme selection followed suggestions by Smith et al. (1999); themes were selected based on their richness, their fit in the structure of themes and how they illuminate the existing literature on how young female counselling psychology trainees make meaning of the stress they experience and how they understand it in a very particular way. In the next stage of the analytic process, a summary table was constructed, which illustrated superordinate themes, subthemes and prevalence across participants (see Appendix M). A more detailed table was also constructed to encompass superordinate themes and key quotes from each contributing participant (see Appendix N). Finally, a narrative account was developed, which aimed to provide an analytic interpretation of the lived experience of the participants, while presenting transcript extracts to support the analytic commentary (Smith et al., 2009).

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the code of ethics and conduct developed by the BPS (2009, 2010a) and London Metropolitan University research ethics policy and procedures (2010). The study also received ethical clearance to proceed (see Appendix O).

The vulnerability of potential participants and the sensitivity of the topic were assessed as low and therefore distress by participants during the interview process was unexpected. Nevertheless, a distress protocol was devised for this eventuality. As the participants did not become distressed, the distress protocol was not needed. At the conclusion of their participation all participants were debriefed through a debrief sheet in order to provide them with information about the nature of the research and to identify any unforeseen discomfort. If necessary, it was planned that participants would be referred to alternative appropriate resources of assistance and they would be provided with a list of available psychological services. Since no distress was experienced, the list was not given to any of the participants.

Participants' consent forms were stored separately from interview transcripts to maintain confidentiality. Audio recordings were transferred to and saved on an external hard drive that was password protected. Only the researcher had the knowledge of this password. The hard drive was then stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office in order to protect the information against unauthorised access. The transcripts of interviews and consent forms will be kept for a maximum period of five years and then will be securely destroyed. All data have and will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

Quality

Throughout the study the researcher was aware of the importance of validity in qualitative research. Yardley's (2000) criteria for assessing validity and the researcher's assessment of the sufficiency of quality control within this research will be presented in the discussion chapter where the impact the researcher had on the data will be assessed.

An actual independent audit was not conducted due to the scope and time limits of this research. Participant validation was considered but was found as unsuitable because it was not involved in the initial agreement with participants. According to Kvale (2003), participant involvement in the analysis stage of research could increase the objectivity and validity of research. This was further supported by Finlay (2008) who argued that participant validation may strengthen the researcher's interpretations and assertions. On the other hand, Giorgi (2008) argued that participants may be unaware of particular connections or meanings within their own accounts, unlike researchers, and therefore they are not in a position to validate an analysis. Also, Finlay (2008) presented the perspective of researchers from a more relativist position, who may argue that the specific context of the study (the researcher, time of the study) will always have an impact on the findings in phenomenological research. When taking these arguments into consideration, had an independent participant audit been done, perhaps the results might have been different. However, within qualitative methodologies, researcher's involvement in the analysis process is acknowledged and addressed using reflexivity (Willig, 2013) and, within IPA, researcher's interpretative engagement is involved as part of the double hermeneutic (Smith et al., 2009).

A virtual audit as suggested by Smith et al. (2009) was conducted, whereby all data and research process notes were recorded and filed in an organised manner to provide an audit trail that would allow an external researcher to follow the exact procedures and the researcher's decision making. According to Smith et al. (2009), virtual audit may enhance the credibility of research. In order to increase the credibility (Kasket, 2013), a peer counselling psychology trainee researcher was asked to review the process of data analysis. The peer researcher reviewed the entire process of analysis, from initial coding to narrative analysis. The feedback of this peer audit did not suggest changes or further elaborations to the

interpretations. As no new interpretations were established, the analysis was not modified. A reflexive journal was kept throughout the research process as suggested by Koch and Harrington (1998), in order to increase the rigour of research. Furthermore, discussions and mini audits were conducted in supervision to achieve validity (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011) and thus to ensure that the phenomenon under exploration is focused on, rather than the researcher imposing her own meanings during the process of analysis.

Chapter Four: Analysis

From the analysis of semi-structured interviews using IPA, three superordinate themes emerged with eight identified subthemes. The three superordinate themes identified included: ‘identifying ambivalence in training’, ‘the impact of training on self and self-and-other’ and ‘managing the lack of boundaries in training’. A summary of these three superordinate themes, their constituent subthemes and key quotes was developed (see Table 2).

This chapter will explore the superordinate themes and the subthemes. Verbatim extracts (see Table 3 for transcript notation key) will be used to illustrate each theme and researcher’s interpretations will be presented. When the order of the presentation of superordinate themes was considered, the major theme of ‘identifying ambivalence in training’ was prioritised to keep the analysis from falling into a stereotypical direction, since there is a presence of a negative discourse in existing literature presenting stress as largely negative and thus pulling the readers towards that kind of negative positioning. The ‘identifying ambivalence in training’ theme will be discussed first to destabilise that, since the participants did not perceive stress as something wholly negative and perhaps were more conflicted about stress than that.

Table 2

Summary of superordinate and subordinate themes with key quotes

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Key quote (participant name and line number)
Identifying ambivalence in training	Stress as a dynamic and destructive element	“I think it’s designed to break you down. I felt that there wasn’t a part of my life that wasn’t impacted by it and that wasn’t ravaged by it.” (Holly, line 12)
	Stress as positive and integral	“It’s inevitable that we’re gonna experience stress and like also it’s a Doctorate and you can’t if you no- if it’s not gonna be challenging and if it’s not gonna be new and er difficult, then you know then there’s no point doing it really.” (Ciara, line 1232)
	The unknown in training	“I think the most kind of stressful thing about that experience was kind of feeling like you didn’t really know the ground that you were standing on.” (Macy, line 62)
	Questioning the worth of training	“Is it really worth it what I’m doing?” (Zoe, line 698)
The impact of training on self and self-and-other	Lack of life outside of the training	“Like I was just in this bubble of the course disconnected from everything else.” (Ciara, line 1191)
	Risk of failure	“So there isn’t any leeway so if you make the smallest amount of mistakes, smallest mistake, that’s it.” (Macy, line 417)
Managing the lack of boundaries in training	Merging with the training	“It just becomes you after a while” (Zoe, line 163)
	Forced maturity	“I feel more more mature than perhaps I should at my age ((laughs)).” (Zoe, line 180)

Table 3

Transcript notation key

Symbol	Explanation
()	Unclear talk
(())	Nonverbal behaviour
...	Significant pause
-	Unfinished word
[]	Explanatory material added by the researcher
[...]	Material omitted

Identifying Ambivalence in Training

The first superordinate theme is concerned with how the participants’ reactions to stress in counselling psychology training involve an element of ambivalence. This superordinate theme consists of the following subordinate themes: ‘stress as a dynamic and destructive element’, ‘stress as positive and integral’, ‘the unknown in training’ and ‘questioning the worth of training’. The following section will explore each subordinate theme in depth and illustrate how it applied to the participants in this study.

Stress as a dynamic and destructive element. This theme refers to the participants’ perceptions of stress as something forceful that made them deteriorate. As will be illustrated below, the participants experienced their interactions with stress in training as energetic, which led to a sense of deterioration in self. All participants used elements of nature in their language to describe stress, as demonstrated by Holly, Macy and Samantha:

“I was so drowning in stress.” (Holly, line 1005)

“It kind of went up and down.” (Macy, line 12)

“You’re in the mountain of work, you’re in the mountain of kind of worries and stresses.” (Samantha, line 53)

Of interest is how in order to evoke the dynamic and energetic nature of stress, elements of the natural world were used. The participants’ imagery of stress was often vividly depicted as one of the elements of nature, particularly water, tide and mountains, however, the natural elements seemed to suppress and overwhelm participants in their own individual ways. For instance, Holly reports that she was drowning in the liquid form of stress, which may be associated with the image of an approaching death. Macy seems to agree with Holly’s perception of stress in a liquid form, since Macy describes stress as going up and down, which gives the impression of waves in a sea. Macy appears to be talking about the fluctuating dynamics of stress and this implies that the stress is not constant but rather changeable, which indicates that it may involve an element of surprise, whereby she is perhaps washed over by the wave of stress. Samantha refers to the formation of stress, which seems to create an image of the dynamic activity and distress created by tectonic plates. Being in a mountain of stress creates the impression that Samantha is buried below the work, stresses and anxieties. This burial creates a picture of funeral and thus related death.

From the above quotes it can be seen that stress is presented as a natural element that involves the risk of being engulfed. Furthermore, the stress seems to be seen as something external, as the participants do not take part in creating the natural elements. It appears as if no interaction between the participants themselves and the stress is considered. This may suggest that the

participants find it perhaps easier to put the responsibility on an external force, rather than blaming themselves for contributing to the stress.

When Alexandra talks about her progress into the final training year, she seems to highlight the need for a different natural element in training, that of air:

“[I] felt the breeze of comfort you know and air. I can breathe again.” (Alexandra, line 635)

It seems as if Alexandra complements all the previous accounts by referring to the comfort of the ability to breathe again. It seems as if Alexandra is unable to breathe while she is in training and perhaps lacks a different natural element, that of air. Since breath is essential to keep an organism alive, it appears as if the stress in training suffocates the trainees or prevents them from breathing and thus from living.

Of interest is that young women in training use concepts of the natural world to illustrate a certain relationship to the idea of a dynamic stress and perhaps to their gender. Water and waves seem to depict stress, whereas air and breeze seem to represent a form of respite. One wonders why water and stones are used, rather than fire, which could also be considered as destructive. According to an ethnographic study on gender division by Bourdieu (2001), the element of fire is often considered as masculine, whereas earth and water are considered as feminine. Taking this into consideration, the same gender division is perhaps integrated in the culture the participants operate within and thus they perhaps indirectly portray how the stress experienced in training destroys their femininity.

Most of the participants found it difficult to talk about being a female trainee. A part of the research question was about the meaning of being a female trainee on the counselling psychology doctorate; however, the majority of the participants struggled with answering this question and did not know what to say. The lack of accounts on the process of being female seems to indicate that either there is a lack of femininity or the theme of gender is perhaps unspeakable. Perhaps for some reason the experience of gender in training cannot be thought about by the trainees. Whilst they seemed to find it difficult to talk about their gender directly, some participants, like Samantha, seemed to talk about her gender and femininity indirectly using the natural world:

“This is another part of my life and I need to pay you know it’s almost like I need to water that part of me and you know I’ve been watering a lot of this course part of me this course identity erm and it’s kind everything else was kind of you know wilting a little bit so I I need to pay attention to that for my own well-being for my own kind of erm my overall identity I need to water lots of lots of parts of it.” (Samantha, line 476)

Samantha seems to talk about her identity and uses the metaphor of a plant or a flower that needs to be watered; otherwise some parts “wilt” away and die. The symbol of a plant or a flower is often perceived as representative of female sexuality (Frownfelter, 2010). Perhaps Samantha perceives herself as a woman who needs to be nurtured in order to grow and to bloom. Still, perhaps as a result of the training Samantha lost her human-like form and rather adopted a vegetative state, thereby losing some of her consciousness of her identity. If the previous participants’ accounts were considered, it seems as if the training “water[s]” some aspects of the trainees, yet too much water is considered unwelcome since it leads to

drowning. Samantha talks about her “*overall identity*” that is essential for her well-being and one wonders whether indirectly she perhaps hints at other elements of her female identity.

All participants said that the training is destructive in one way or another. As will be illustrated below using examples from Holly and Pamela, participants experienced a sense of deterioration in self as a result of their interactions with training.

“I think it’s designed to break you down. I felt that there wasn’t a part of my life that wasn’t impacted by it and that wasn’t ravaged by it.” (Holly, line 12)

It sounds as if the fragmentation of self was done by the training on purpose. For Holly her whole life was impacted and of interest is her use of language of her life being “*ravaged*” by the course. The use of such verb may imply a severe disturbance or destruction.

For Pamela the process of destruction is experienced in a slightly different way to Holly:

“There have been times where I thought this course is gonna kill me.” (Pamela, line 629)

Pamela remarks on her thoughts about the training killing her. It may imply that the training is viewed by Pamela as a threat or perhaps as something dangerous that she may need to be wary of. What further comes across is Pamela’s sense of anxiety and helplessness. Using “*there have been times*” implies that the process of deconstruction perhaps occurs at regular intervals throughout training. Both Holly and Pamela describe destruction, however, each described the source in a different way – Holly as if she described a natural disaster and

Pamela as if she described a killer. Of interest is how the violent impulses seem to be coming from the training course, which is portrayed in the form of a sadistic male perpetrator. One interpretation of this may be that the participants perhaps have a need to externalise some of their own violent impulses, which may vary in severity. Another possible interpretation may be that the participants view their own femininity as taken over by the course, which may imply that they perceive themselves as passive victims.

The majority of the participants talked about how they felt about their bodies while in training. Embodiment was evaluated by the researcher as a significant theme because it is considered as a “fraction” of the lifeworld within phenomenological psychology (Ashworth, 2003). Among the participants there seemed to be a shared experience of somatisation of stress. For instance, Genevieve talked about her somatisation in general:

“This is not a conscious thing that happens but I somatise massively.” (Genevieve, line 1759)

Other participants specified the kind of somatisation and their body ailment:

“So all that stress came up and I was just I felt sick to my stomach.” (Macy, line 271)

It seems like higher levels of stress manifest themselves in the bodies of the participants. Based on how Genevieve describes her experience, the somatic symptoms seem to be out of the participant’s control and occur outside of her conscious awareness. The participants appeared to perceive the stress in training as a threat to their lives and bodies. This may be

indicative of the participants’ relationship with stress, whereby the stress is viewed almost as an energetic enemy that intends to damage them.

Stress as positive and integral. There was a consensus among the participants regarding the positive experiences related to stress. For the majority of participants the training seemed to include two different sides that were nevertheless closely related. This will be demonstrated using quotes from Alexandra and Holly:

“I also have a very different experience that balances it you know. Erm so yeah that’s that’s why I think it’s it’s not just one thing, it’s always there’s a lot of ambivalence ((laughs)) in training you know. Pretty much everything has a very positive side to it and a quite erm demanding or challenging side to it.” (Alexandra, line 209)

“So I don’t know I mean I kind of I swing between thinking it’s too much and thinking it has to be this way.” (Holly, line 1958)

These accounts are presented in a counterbalanced way. Both Alexandra and Holly seem to suggest that for every experience there is another experience that balances it out. It sounds as if there are opposing experiences in training that seem to be contradictory but interestingly their effects do not cancel each other out and therefore the stress experience is not described as neutral. This seems to suggest that perhaps both positive and negative elements of the training are memorable in their own way and thus leave an imprint on the participants. Of interest is Alexandra’s use of words. She starts to talk about the balance in training but then decides to use the word “*ambivalence*”, which is followed by laughter. One wonders whether she is potentially ambivalent about the balance in training and the use of laughter seems to

accentuate this. Furthermore, as is evident in Holly’s account, the majority of the participants seemed to change their opinion about the presence of stress in training, which created a sense of variability in the participants’ impressions of stress in training.

In line with this, despite their previous description of stress as destructive, the participants also appeared to share the view that the stress experienced is positive and helpful, as demonstrated by Genevieve:

“I didn't love it but like it's not worst thing that's ever happened to me because I've grown so much from it.” (Genevieve, line 2075)

The participants seemed to perceive the stress in training as valuable. For Genevieve, it seems as if the experience of stress led to her experience of growth within the training, which perhaps created a sense of worthiness of the training. This quote creates the impression that the stress experienced is a beneficial and worthwhile aspect of the training.

Furthermore, the participants perceived stress as an integral and unavoidable element of the format of the training in counselling psychology, as demonstrated by Pamela and Ciara:

“I don't think this course is er easy for anyone. I think stress is part of it, I don't think you can avoid that.” (Pamela, line 611)

“And I think it’s inevitable when you’re learning something new. ... It’s inevitable that we’re gonna experience stress and like also it’s a Doctorate and you can’t if you no- if it’s not gonna be challenging and if it’s not gonna be new and er difficult, then you know then there’s no point doing it really. Like we’re doing it for that challenge and we’re doing it to be this professional that we weren’t four years ago. So it’s inevitable, there has to be a level of stress.” (Ciara, line 1232)

Many of the other participants shared Pamela’s and Ciara’s accounts of stress as an intrinsic element of the training in counselling psychology. Ciara, for example, gives the impression that due to the doctorate level of difficulty and due to the acquisition of new knowledge, there is a need for higher levels of stress in training. Ciara also seems to describe a normalisation process, whereby she realises that there is a purpose to the experience of stress on training. Further, the participants seemed to suggest that stress is an intrinsic aspect of the training that cannot be avoided or removed. Since stress is perceived as something that cannot be prevented, it appears as if stress is to be expected.

The unknown in training. This subtheme refers to the presence of uncertainty in training. The majority of participants reported a presence of uncertainty in training, specifically in regards to the coursework objectives, marking criteria, therapeutic orientation, disclosure in training and client work. For instance, Ciara’s quote below demonstrates the sense of uncertainty in relation to coursework and in-training behaviours:

“I think when you’re trying to live up to something er that you don’t really know what you’re trying to live up to er so there’s this kind of just uncertainty around erm what I was supposed to be doing.” (Ciara, line 27)

As Ciara describes her struggle “*to live up to something*”, there appears to be a presence of unknown, as she is unaware of what the training expectations are. This quote demonstrates how the participants attempt to meet certain standards in training that seem to be unfamiliar to them. This presence of unknown and novelty is highlighted in Macy’s quote below:

“I think the most kind of stressful thing about that experience was kind of feeling like you didn’t really know the ground that you were standing on.” (Macy, line 62)

Macy’s account suggests that there is a lack of knowledge about the ground that she stands on. The imagery used seems to create a sense of confusion and groundlessness. Since Macy experiences a groundless feeling, this can be interpreted as her lacking an essential support usually depended on for fundamental activities. The participants described the training as surrounded with a degree of unknown, and thus conveying an experience of novelty on the training.

The presence of uncertainty is also demonstrated in Genevieve’s quote:

“I was just kind of what the fuck do I do. Do I completely fall apart and try and help them or do I keep myself intact and like put those boundaries up there like what what do I what do I do?! ((laughs)) What do I do?!” (Genevieve, line 733)

Genevieve appears to find it difficult to decide what action to take when dealing with clients. She seems to voice the lack of knowledge about what is to be done, which seems to result in uncertainty. When she repeatedly asks herself “*what do I do?!*” and then laughs about it, what seems to come across is a sense of urgency and desperation to find an answer to her question.

The participants seemed to share this perception of a lack of concreteness and certainty in training. Participants voiced their wish for more definiteness that would enable them to have some knowledge about what was expected of them and about what the ‘right’ actions were.

Questioning the worth of training. Four out of eight participants expressed views and described experiences that demonstrated this theme. As will be evident in quotes by Alexandra and Zoe, some of the participants seemed to question the nature of the counselling psychology profession, their decision-making regarding the training and the returns of the training:

“As I’m approaching the end of the training I’m thinking you know is this gonna pay back somehow like and you know not as blatantly as that but kind of I would like to get something out of this.” (Alexandra, line 32)

“It makes you hate the course sometimes. It makes you hate you know you kind of feel wh- what for?! Is it really worth it what I’m doing? [...] I’m just not quite sure it’s worth it at the moment I have to say.” (Zoe, lines 698, 715)

Alexandra and Zoe appear to question whether they will receive something back for their investments. While these experiences may reflect a sense of doubt and uncertainty regarding the worth of the training, other interpretations exist. For instance, they may wonder about the purpose of the training or the meaning in their lives. Alongside questioning the value and the worth of the training, they perhaps also question their own value and worth. It can also be interpreted as the participants indirectly expressing their sense of dissatisfaction since it appears that their expectations of reciprocation were not met; however, these expectations

remain undefined. The participants perhaps started the training with particular expectations, such as the wish for the training to demonstrate to them what their value system should be. However, at the time of the interview, those expectations were not yet met, causing some dissatisfaction. And perhaps this is part of the stress, whereby the trainees do not know why they want to train as counselling psychologists or what they want the purpose of the training to be, or what compensation they want from the training.

The Impact of Training on Self and Self-and-Other

This superordinate theme refers to the participants’ wish for a normal life, since their lives have been impacted by the training. It consists of the following subordinate themes: ‘lack of life outside of the training’ and ‘risk of failure’.

Lack of life outside of the training. This theme refers to the majority of participants’ shared sense of disconnection from life outside of training, and training becoming one’s life. This is captured in how Ciara talks of the course experience:

“Like I was just in this bubble of the course disconnected from everything else.”
(Ciara, line 1191)

For Ciara, her sense of disconnection and isolation is described using a rich metaphor of being in a bubble. The training seems to encapsulate Ciara and she is prevented from connecting with everything else; she seems to be isolated from the external world. The course is described as a barrier between her and the world. The use of this particular metaphor seems to highlight the meaning for Ciara, creating a sense of loneliness and stuckness, since she is unable to connect. Yet, of interest is that for instance soap bubbles tend to have thin walls and

thus may burst easily. Ciara’s use of metaphor could be also interpreted as her acceptance of the disconnection, which seems to convey a lack of agency. Perhaps she succumbs to the bubble of the course, expecting no change in her circumstances and thus perhaps creating a self-perpetuating cycle of hopelessness. One wonders why she might need to do this. Perhaps staying in the bubble gives her a sense of security or perhaps her desire to become a counselling psychologist is stronger than bursting the bubble.

Further, more than half of the participants described the training as their life, as demonstrated by Pamela:

“I feel like er this is my life at the moment I feel like I don’t have a life outside of my training ... it feels like it’s my life. Erm it’s it’s like it’s taken over taken over so psychology is everything. ... I don’t feel like I have much of a life outside of my training.” (Pamela, line 78)

Pamela states she does not “*have much life outside of [her] training*” and this implies a sense of emptiness, loss and perhaps death outside of the training. However, Pamela seems to claim that this state is not permanent with the use of “*at the moment*”, which suggests that the situation may change in the future. Also, another perspective may be that Pamela gained a sense of wholeness, whereby the training is particularly meaningful and worthwhile for her and therefore she is everything she may be. As the participants hinted at the training taking over their lives, it gave the impression of a conquest, whereby their lives have been conquered by the training and they lost and/or gained something. This is evident in the contradiction between Ciara’s and Pamela’s accounts, whereby Ciara seems to talk about being separate from the training, yet Pamela seems to talk about merging with the training.

When describing a lack of life outside training, some participants voiced that the training created a sense of abnormality and the participants expressed their wish for normality in their lives. When talking about a normal life, the majority of participants referred to their same-age friends and there was a tendency for social comparison. Alexandra demonstrates how being on the training has created an abnormal life for her:

“Actually you know that’s a common joke that we that we have like with other trainees that erm we don’t have a normal life. Like training is like an altered state of consciousness that you’re in.” (Alexandra, line 284)

For Alexandra, “*normal life*” refers to having a job and social life. Alexandra describes the training as “*an altered state of consciousness*”, a term used to perhaps convey her dream-like state whereby her perceptions have been affected. It could be also speculated that once she suffers from an altered state of consciousness, she might have a different experience to others who are not in training.

The majority of participants also reported a sense of loss, being inhibited by the training and an additional missing out on things due to the trainee status. In the following extract Ciara talks about her experience of social comparison with non-trainees that perhaps led to her sense of being held back by the training:

“They’re in these jobs, they’re going out at weekends, they’re going on holidays to places, they have cars, they’re you know buying houses, they’re starting up their life like ‘cause they’re at that stage. Whereas I’m just like yeah I’m still a student and no I can’t go on that holiday and I can’t do that and I can’t do that and no I can’t plan. [...] I suppose what comes to mind is like you your life is kind of on hold for the four years three years that you’re on it.” (Ciara, lines 521, 963)

Ciara seems to talk about her life being held back by the training and how limiting it is since she cannot do things like other people and is therefore “*on hold*”. It creates the impression of her life having to be paused for some time. This is further highlighted when she talks about others being “*at that stage*”. It appears as if she is behind in her life and on a delayed stage behind her non-trainee peers. Yet, there is no sense that she chose to receive a doctorate instead of a car or a house. One wonders whether Ciara’s value judgment is based on her changing values or whether she perhaps wants it all. What seems to come across is a sense of frustration when she talks about not being able to do certain things or not being able to advance her personal life. This wish to advance one’s personal life can be also interpreted as a woman’s wish to settle down and perhaps plan a family. It seems as if being in training prevents the participants from “*starting up their life*” and thus from giving birth (to self and to another being). One wonders whether the training thus prevents the participants from being female and creating a new life. Furthermore, Ciara’s account seems to convey a life defined by others. Perhaps the training is stressful for these participants because they come up against standards of what life should look like. Perhaps they are faced with the need to accept or challenge these norms, however, it may be difficult to individuate or perhaps they do not wish to be divergent.

When engaging in social comparison, the participants’ accounts seemed to incorporate some expectations about normal life. One wonders whether the training has created an abnormal life for the participants or whether the participants could not connect with their non-trainee friends due to differences. However, the majority of the participants seemed to be bothered by the lack of fit with their friends and attributed this to the impact of the training.

However, some participants seemed to suggest that this sense of inhibition and life being put on hold was only temporary, as demonstrated by Samantha:

“I want to do this course because I enjoy it, I’m not gonna put my o- the rest of my life on hold because of this. I need I’ve got things to do in my life and you know this is just one of them.” (Samantha, line 986)

Samantha views the training as important. However, she refuses to put the rest of her life on hold because of the training; she refuses to allow the training to become her sole life. Samantha’s differing experience of the lack of life outside of the training can be interpreted as Samantha’s increased awareness of other areas in her life that she wishes to pursue. It appears as if Samantha has a wish for a more balanced life where the training is not overpowering and overwhelming. Another layer of interpretation is that Samantha recognises that this is the time for her to gain the doctorate, and there will presumably be more time to gain the other “things” in life she wants. Furthermore, from a psychoanalytic framework it seems as if Samantha tries (not) to say that she does not want to put other or mother on hold (“My/o- the r/est”). One interpretation of this may be that Samantha perhaps unconsciously expresses her wish for a family. Samantha’s account presents a different dimension within this theme. Unlike Pamela who seems to be content with the training becoming her life, Samantha

presents a more rebellious narrative whereby she wishes to have a life other than the one offered to her by the training. She seems to not want lose her life on account of the training.

Participants’ differing responses suggest that the lack of life outside of the training is perceived and dealt with differently. Some participants viewed this lack of life as perhaps intrinsic to the training and they seemed to accept this occurrence. However, some participants seemed to disagree with this notion and did not wish to accept this. Rather, they seemed to express their wish to take control and regain or rebuild their lost lives.

Risk of failure. This theme is concerned with the majority of participants’ perceptions of a risk of failure and high stakes in training and in life, as evidenced in a quote by Macy:

“So there isn’t any leeway so if you make the smallest amount of mistakes, smallest mistake, that’s it. [...] I just feel like you’re kind of walking on a tightrope, I guess that’s how I could say it. So if you make the wrong step, then you fall. [...] There’s no step or you can’t even catch yourself. Oh you just fall like to the gutter to the pits of hell.” (Macy, lines 417, 432, 1970)

In order to express her feelings Macy uses the metaphor of “*walking on a tightrope*”. This figure of speech seems to imply that training is a dangerous activity where Macy is unable to err slightly without great consequences and it also emphasises her need to be cautious. It could be speculated that Macy feels like she is in danger and needs to balance certain things in the training in order to remain in a safe position. The image of a trainee balancing on a tightrope seems quite significant, as a single misguided movement could be detrimental for the trainee. If Macy was to make a small mistake, then the consequences could be fatal and

she could “*fall*”. This imagery evokes danger, loss and death. Macy further expands on this imagery and highlights that there is no safety net for her to rescue herself if she falls off the tightrope. The course is compared to a tightrope that is not safe and lacks any safety precautions, thus implying great danger. However, from another perspective, the training may be perceived as a precarious rescuer that saves her from the danger of falling. Saying “*you can’t even catch yourself*” suggests that she is dependent on the training since she cannot save herself. Macy expands further on the danger by describing the potential fall and the image created seems striking and rich in meaning. The imagery of “*the gutter*” may be associated with poverty and dirt, while “*the pits of hell*” may be associated with eternal torment, suffering and a place of punishment. Perhaps using the imagery Macy attempts to describe the training as valuable because it is far away from the potential poverty and eternal torment and thus she places it visually high. Another interpretation may be that Macy feels dependent on the tightrope, which represents the training, however she has not installed the tightrope herself and therefore she may experience a sense of being out of control. Furthermore, she describes being on the tightrope on her own, left to her own devices; and there appears to be a sense of dissatisfaction with this state.

For Genevieve, the high risk in training is described using a different metaphor:

“You know like I it’s so easy like I could be I could walking on eggshells and I could trip.” (Genevieve, line 1034)

“*Walking on eggshells*” seems to convey the need of Genevieve to be careful in order to avoid a fall and may represent her sense of fragility. Once again there is the possibility that the trainee will descent, be downgraded or return to the ground in some way. Another

meaning associated with the word “*trip*” is that of a journey and one wonders whether training is like a journey into the profession of counselling psychology. The participants appeared to assert that the training involves a lot of risk. The participants seemed to indirectly talk about the risk of losing the status, wealth and prestige, which they associate with training. This perception of risk seemed to increase as the participants spent more time in training. Furthermore, one wonders why these participants chose to come on this risky journey. One interpretation is that perhaps they were unaware of the risks. Another interpretation is that perhaps they sought the risks on purpose, either consciously or unconsciously.

Managing the Lack of Boundaries in Training

This superordinate theme refers to a sense of identity change due to a lack of boundaries in training and how this process is negotiated. It consists of the subthemes of ‘merging with the training’ and ‘forced maturity’. The following section will present the analysis of the subordinate themes in more detail with evidence from the participants’ quotes.

Merging with the training. Seven out of the eight participants remarked on the process of change in their identities as a result of undergoing their training. As will be illustrated in Ciara’s quote below, there is sense of becoming an aspect of the training:

“Erm and we’re the research now it’s like I just feel like everything that I’m it’s just it’s just like this whole new thing.” (Ciara, line 481)

Ciara comments on her change in identity while in training as she identifies with the research and feels like she has become her own research. It seems like she has fused her own identity with the research. The use of the word ‘*everything*’ creates the impression that she has

developed a new research identity that encloses her whole character and does not allow space for anything else.

As well as Ciara, other participants appeared to voice a presence of novelty within training. More specifically, the participants described the newness within the change of identity, which may be indicative of the participants taking on roles or identities with which they were previously unfamiliar. Furthermore, it seemed as if the participants merged with the training and there seemed to be a lack of boundaries between themselves and the training.

As will be evident below, some participants described their identity fusion with the training:

“Sometimes you kind of yeah you give in to your role and you learn to do it so well () you know ((laughs)). It just becomes you after a while, doesn’t it?” (Zoe, line 163)

According to Zoe, there are times when she gives in to her trainee role. This seems to suggest a sense of being overtaken, perhaps forced into a state that she does not consciously choose and overall it conveys a sense of surrender. It appears as if the trainee role is a powerful one that leads to an assimilation of the original identity and the training identity. Zoe further asserts that the trainee role becomes her. It conveys the impression that she becomes someone new, perhaps creating a new self concept. The question at the end of the extract may be suggestive of Zoe’s uncertainty. Perhaps Zoe is doubtful and seeks certainty or validation of her self-experience from the interviewer. Perhaps she wishes to know whether her surrender is acceptable, and the same dynamic may be played out with the course, whereby she seeks an answer about what to resist and what to surrender to.

Of interest is Pamela’s account of her experiences of having only one identity, that of the trainee:

“Erm I don’t know if it will be different if I had like a family or a partner or I had more hobbies, maybe I would feel less like it’s all me you know, this training is all me. But erm I guess I just feel over time it’s kind of taken over and it’s been all about the training. [...] Erm and I think the only way I can do that is by letting it consume me ((laughs)).” (Pamela, lines 556, 586)

Pamela seems to suggest that her trainee identity is her sole identity. It appears as if her identity was confiscated by, and she was completely engulfed by, the training. The training seems to be all encompassing, integrated as part of her and this gives the impression that training and her life are inseparable. She seems to describe the process of alteration to her self and one wonders whether or not she knows who she is without training. Furthermore, Pamela uses rich imagery of letting the training consume her, which seems to be significant for understanding what is going on for her. One interpretation of this may be that Pamela feels eaten alive and devoured by the training and one imagines that the effect brought about by this is Pamela’s death. However, she does not seem to describe this consumption only in a negative way, as it seems like she decided to let the training consume her and thus give way to the development of a new trainee identity. This could be interpreted as Pamela’s loneliness or a lack of desire for things in life generating this decision, perhaps in order to fill in the emptiness. Alternatively, it could be interpreted as Pamela’s wish to be fully engaged in the counselling psychology training or perhaps her inability to maintain a separate identity to her trainee identity. Furthermore, Pamela’s use of laughter after this figure of speech seems to be in contrast with the symbol of death, hence highlighting the significance of the ending of an

identity. Furthermore, Pamela seems to indirectly talk about her identity as a woman, since she talks about not having a partner or a family. One wonders whether the lack of these commitments and responsibilities implies that she was able to allow the training to overtake her. Alternatively, one wonders whether she viewed the training course as a masculine violator of her own femininity who restricted her family planning or even prevented her from using her female reproductive system, and thus identified with the state of victimhood in this training-trainee interaction. The participants seemed to involve themselves fully with the training, perhaps due to the lack of boundaries between themselves and the training. This can be interpreted as perhaps the young participants not having families that would enforce or require the boundaries between self and the training. Thus, they seek the boundaries from the training instead, however, they may not receive it from the training, or they may resist it.

Other participants, such as Samantha, presented a different take on how their aspects of self had changed and how they perceived the merge with training:

“I think now again I keep referring back to this learning process. I’ve learned that you know I’m I’m not just a trainee, I’m not just me as a trainee and that’s all my life. I think I’ve learned that I do have other parts of my life, I am you know a daughter, a sister, an auntie you know, a partner erm and I am I’m all of these things but I think when I first came on the course, eve- everything was just I’m just a trainee, this is me, this is what I do and I think I think that increases the stress as well.” (Samantha, line 346)

In comparison to the previous accounts, Samantha’s narrative seems to convey a different perception of the merging of self with the training. Like Pamela, Samantha perceived her

trainee self as her sole identity, particularly at the beginning of the course. Throughout the course she became aware of how the training is unrepresentative of her whole life and she seemed to be more mindful of her other roles in life. Samantha’s differing experience of merging with the training seems to convey a sense of multiplicity of roles, which seem to reduce the stress experienced. Being only a trainee was implied to be problematic for Samantha, perhaps because everything is invested only in one area of her life. As is evident in the quote, Samantha acquired this differing perspective perhaps as a result of a learning process that has occurred during her training. It seems as if becoming more separated from the course has potentially led to a progress in her development.

Forced maturity. Out of the eight participants, seven described experiences that demonstrated this theme. This theme explored how participants experienced a sense of imposed adulthood within training and the majority of the participants described how being young was seen as problematic within the counselling psychology training. This is shown in Holly’s and Genevieve’s quotes below:

“Not not feeling ready in a way because I although I was quite mature I think for my age, I also felt in some ways like I wasn’t ready to be an adult you know. And it was like that was a bit of a strain for me if putting myself in all these adult situations. But it being in education in itself felt like maintaining my childhood.” (Holly, line 754)

“At first yeah I was a bit like oh shit like and it would kind of effect the way that I dressed for placement, I’d try to dress to make myself look a bit older and I think I probably still do that actually.” (Genevieve, line 1202)

Holly seems to dislike being in situations where she is treated like an adult. She also suggests that her young age is perhaps maintained by the training. Holly seems to perceive herself as a child who is unprepared for the status of an adult. On one hand the training seems to maintain her childhood status by keeping her in the educational system, however, at the same time the training seems to put demands on her to become an adult. It sounds as if Holly is mature for her age but is unready to be an adult. This creates the impression of Holly not as a child but perhaps as an individual in the adolescence stage. It can also be interpreted as the training forcing a developmental increase on the participants. Furthermore, Holly's account demonstrates that she may be ambivalent about how old she wants to be.

Genevieve attempts to conceal her young age in clinical placements and she seems to attempt to portray an older self. This seems to imply that her young age is perhaps an obstacle or an unwanted element in clinical placements that she attempts to rectify. The process of hiding her age by dressing differently suggests a wish to be of an older age and perhaps of a different identity. This need to camouflage her young age may be indicative of Genevieve perceiving her young age as problematic in the training. It seems as if she is forced to change her age and become older. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as a lack of boundaries between the participants' natural growth and the training, whereby the training perhaps impacts on the participants' development. Perhaps Genevieve resents the need to grow up and attributes this need to change to the training, thus blaming it for her forced growth.

Other participants, such as Zoe, presented their perceptions of the training as preventing them from being young, rather than their young age as being inconvenient:

“You’re missing out and you’re erm ... you can’t be young, you’re not allowed to be young, you have to be serious and mature ((laughs)) and you have to. You’re not allowed to be young.” (Zoe, line 801)

Zoe describes her sense of missing out on things while being in training. It sounds as if the training does not allow her to be young and instead places high demands on her in terms of seriousness and maturity. The repetition of “*you’re not allowed to be young*” seems to emphasise the significance of a sense of inhibition for Zoe. Zoe feels she is not allowed to be who she is – a young person. It sounds as if being young is undesirable in the training. Further, it sounds as if the training intentionally makes her grow old faster than in her natural course of development. This account again demonstrates that the trainees may have the need to position the restriction of young age as an external force, rather their own choice.

For some participants, such as Holly, training was viewed as a form of transition between young and old age:

“Yeah I mean maybe I’m reading too much into it but I do feel like there’s definitely a gang initiation type of vibe to it. [...] I mean I think there is a trial by fire that we all counselling psychologists have to go through.” (Holly, lines 1879, 1933)

Holly presents her perception of the training as “*a gang initiation*” and as “*a trial by fire*”. Both these analogies seem to convey an image of the training as a rite of passage that perhaps involves a process of acceptance into a group. It sounds as if the training is an entrance to or an admission ceremony into a community, perhaps the community of counselling psychologists. The image created by the term “*trial by fire*” can be interpreted as Holly’s

qualities being evaluated and judged. Perhaps she is subjected to a painful task in training, like in cultures where they use such trials to identify individuals who have become adults. From another perspective, the element of fire may be viewed as more masculine and one wonders whether the training not only challenges Holly’s young age, but her gender too.

Other participants, such as Zoe, talked about how the training involved an unwanted process of ageing during which she grew older:

“I feel more more mature than perhaps I should at my age ((laughs)).” (Zoe, line 180)

Zoe seems to experience the process of growth and maturity as a result of being in training. For instance, Zoe’s use of “*more more mature*” seems to convey the extent to which she feels she has matured. She further reports that there is a dissonance between her young age and the level of maturity. Zoe’s experience perhaps illustrates the unnatural ageing process on the training. The participants seemed to suggest that their development was altered and sped up by the training. This creates an image of a forced maturity, since the speed of ageing increased and there seemed to be a loss of young age. Furthermore, like in other participants’ accounts, Zoe seems to position the training as being actively involved in constructing the norms imposed on her age.

It could be seen that the participants’ accounts highlighted the complexity of meaning the stress in counselling psychology doctoral training held for them. In the next chapter the findings of the analysis will be reviewed and discussed in the light of the existing literature. Further, implications for research and practice will be discussed, followed by a presentation of considerations for future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This chapter will begin with an overview of the current research question and the main findings of this research. Then, the relationship between the findings of the analysis and existing literature will be examined in detail. Superordinate themes will be reviewed and explored in the same order as in the analysis section. This will be followed by a discussion on the implications of the findings for research, theory and practice. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion on the strengths and limitations of this study, followed by suggestions on how the research could be followed up and taken further.

Overview

The aim of this research was to develop an understanding of young final year female trainees' subjective experiences of stress in training. Three superordinate themes emerged. The order of the themes was initially determined by their richness and representativeness among participants. However, on reflection, there may be a chronological order to the themes, whereby they may represent a parallel process to professional and personal development in counselling psychology training. This will be expanded upon further in this chapter.

The first major theme focused on how participants experienced a sense of ambivalence about the stress experience of training. Participants perceived stress as a destructive element and felt they were impaired by this stress on both psychological and physical level. Nonetheless, participants also perceived stress as beneficial due to its positive effect on personal growth. Participants felt the stress was intrinsic to the training, thus conveying their impression that perhaps the stress was unavoidable. The way in which participants questioned the value of training highlight the indecision, confusion and dissatisfaction that they experienced.

The second major theme detailed the impact of training on self and the relationship between self and other. Participants disclosed their wish for a normal life after experiencing training as abnormal or different to ordinary life. Participants discussed their sense of disconnection from the external world and resultant sense of inhibition. They seemed to express their sense of missing out on things while in training and their wish for those things that were unavailable to them. The findings demonstrated that participants felt that training was very risky due to the high risk of failure and this highlighted their need for caution.

The third major theme referred to how participants experienced a sense of lack of boundaries in training. Participants voiced their sense of identity change in terms of merging with the training. This identity fusion with training appeared to change as one progressed through the training. Participants also conveyed their sense of early maturation in response to the lack of boundaries in training. Further, participants felt they were constrained by the presence of uncertainty in training because it created a sense of groundlessness.

Research Findings and the Existing Literature

Theme one: identifying ambivalence in training. As was evident in the critical literature review chapter, previous studies on counselling psychology training identified various stressors, such as practical issues in training (Kumary & Baker, 2008), financial demands (Bor et al., 1997) or elements within personal therapy (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Kumari, 2011). Previous researchers have not discussed what it is about these stressors that makes them challenging for counselling psychology trainees. The current study did not aim to identify specific stressors in training; however, the participants' accounts indicated that stress was perceived as a destructive element of the nature that tested trainees. The analysis

highlighted how the sense of destructiveness has a significant psychological as well as a physical element.

Of interest is how all participant accounts seemed to describe stress as an external force that could not be controlled by them. This may be perhaps indicative of a tendency for external locus of control by this group of participants. One wonders whether perhaps it was easier for this particular group of participants to focus externally and blame the dynamics of stress, rather than to focus internally on their unhelpful coping strategies. A review on locus of control and the response to aversive events by Lefcourt (1976) suggested that the impact of stressors is lessened for individuals with internal locus of control. Perhaps the participants in the current study experienced the stress as destructive because of their external locus of control. Gray-Stanley et al. (2010) conducted a more recent study on work stress and depression among mental health professionals and the findings suggested that locus of control was found to moderate effects of workload. However, research on stress, burnout and locus of control among school psychologists in the US by Reece (2011) found no relationship between these factors. From another perspective on the external force of stress, Barnett (2007) explored the motivations of psychotherapists to train and identified a sense of shame from early childhood which may lead to psychotherapists striving to be idealised parents to clients. The outcome of this may be “therapists’ overvaluation of themselves and a projection of all that is bad into clients” (Barnett, 2007, p. 267). In the current study participants seemed to talk about the relationship they had to their course, which may be parallel to the one they have with their clients, whereby they seemed to project all that is bad into the course and present themselves as innocent victims.

In particular, the participants seemed to depict the training course as a masculine offender who took over some of their female qualities and left them in a position of subdued and resigned victims. This is in line with research on the characteristics of victimhood, which suggests that adult victims tend to have an external locus of control (Zur, 2005). The author suggests that victims often attribute life experiences to external factors and have a sense of being out of control. This is further accompanied by feelings of helplessness, self-pity and self-inefficacy. The participants in the current study attributed the undesirable stress experience to the training course, thus perhaps perceiving themselves as out of control. Furthermore, as the participants seemed to feel out of control, they viewed the training as uncontrollable and perhaps as a result of this perception adopted a passive position when interacting with the course. Another interpretation of this adopted victim position may relate to the narcissistic injury that the participants may have sustained prior to enrolling on the training. Perhaps the participants sustained intrapsychic wounds, which led to psychological pain, which was again experienced when interacting with the course and experiencing unwanted stress. Perhaps due to this familiarity of the psychological pain, the participants continued to engage in the trainee-training interaction and continued to adopt states of victimhood.

As indicated in the analysis chapter, the majority of the participants found it difficult to openly talk about what it means to them to be a female trainee. However, within participants' narratives there seemed to be an indirect expression of gender and femininity. The participants seemed to portray the course as engaging in masculine and violent actions, whereas their own identity appeared to acquire more passive and victimised characteristics. According to Stets and Burke (2000) gender identity is defined as “the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman

in society” (p. 997). The authors further suggest that individuals view their gender identity on a feminine-masculine dimension, which subsequently influences their behaviours. For instance, if a woman in a Western society views herself as more masculine, then she will use her own subjective meaning of masculinity (such as being competitive), which will guide her behaviours (such as taking part in competitive sports). The authors additionally suggest that in Western cultures, males are stereotypically depicted as aggressive, strong and competitive, whereas females are depicted as passive, ‘soft’ and expressive. From this it can be seen that the stereotypical notions of gendered identity portray the two as polar opposites that embody different physical and abstract properties. The participants in this study used very vivid metaphors to describe their experiences of the training and the meanings they apply to their feminine identity. For instance, the participants described how they were “consumed”, “ravaged”, “killed” or “taken over” by the course. It seems as if the social construction of the opposition between feminine and masculine affected the narrative of these participants and thus perhaps provides an insight into what it means for these participants to be female trainees. Stets and Burke (1996) investigated problem-solving in relation to gender identity among married individuals. Their findings suggest that women who are perceived as subordinate by their partners have a tendency to respond to this inferior position in society by engaging in more dominant behaviours. This seems to be in line with the dominant verbal behaviours asserted by the participants in this study. Perhaps the participants attempted to counteract the society’s (and their own) view of themselves as weak by using more expressive and dominant language.

Furthermore, the use of vivid imagery by the participants could relate to the motivations for becoming a counselling psychologist. As was presented in the literature review chapter, previous literature suggests that would-be psychologists have acquired narcissistic injury or

seem to demonstrate characteristics of the wounded healer. Research on feminine development and masochism conducted by Isidor (1983) suggests that females acquire narcissistic injury as a result of the realisation that there are genital differences and subsequent thoughts of females being deficient in this area. This is one of the factors that predisposes females to masochistic pathology (Isidor, 1983) and thus to the seeking of self-inflicted suffering (Inbar, Pizarro, Gilovich, & Ariely 2012). The participants in the current study described the training course as a violent perpetrator but they did not consider removing themselves from the situation, which seemed to cause intense experiences of stress. Research on narcissistic injury and sexual victimisation conducted by Billingham, Miller, & Hockenberry (1999) suggests that female college students with higher levels of narcissistic injury place themselves in situations where they are more likely to experience male aggressive behaviours or sexual victimisation. In the current study, perhaps the narcissistic needs of the participants and thus their vulnerability played out in the training-trainee interaction. Perhaps the participants' continuous distress and a lack of avoidance could be explained by the seeking of self-inflicted masochism, which perhaps felt familiar and therefore comforting to some extent. This is in line with research by Kashgarian (1997) who found that when criticised, individuals with narcissistic injury experienced feeling inferior and inadequate, which was followed by engaging in self-harm.

The data analysis further highlighted the degree of the participants' focus on stress as positive and integral to the counselling psychology training. In particular, some participants' accounts showed how the stress in training was evaluated as beneficial, particularly when the participants experienced a sense of growth, which seemed to outweigh the negative aspects of stress. Likewise, the research by Farber and Heifetz (1982) found that psychotherapists' sense of satisfaction with therapeutic work is associated with an opportunity to learn and grow.

The theme of ‘the unknown in training’ within the major theme of ‘identifying ambivalence in training’ seemed to be among the more researched topics in existing literature. Current findings were in line with the conclusions made by Papadoumarkaki and Lewis (2008) who asserted that counselling psychologists perceived a sense of uncertainty as a result of their experience of occupational stress. Participants described change, role in the system, struggle to accomplish a task and demanding clients among the major challenges encountered that led to a sense of uncertainty. When comparing these perceptions of qualified counselling psychologists to counselling psychology trainees, the current sample also reported a sense of uncertainty in their training, which referred to novelty in training, confusion about what they should do and the course requirements (specifically coursework, theoretical orientation or client work). Further, a study on counselling and therapy novices by Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) suggested that novice practitioners faced a lack of task clarity, which may result in evaluation stress. This is in line with the findings of this study, whereby the participants highlighted a degree of uncertainty present in training when considering coursework evaluation. Furthermore, within the theme of the unknown, the participants referred to uncertainty about using different therapeutic interventions, which may reflect the difficulty of counselling psychology trainees when dealing with the plurality of theoretical approaches. As was evident in some of the participants’ accounts, there was an endeavour to choose the ‘right’ action or clinical intervention. This is in line with Rizq’s (2006) psychoanalytic exploration of disillusionment in counselling psychology training, whereby she suggested that the acceptance of uncertainty is inherent to the field of counselling psychology.

Findings of this study further suggest that the subtheme of questioning the worth of training reflects the participants’ dissatisfaction with the returns on the training. Farber and Heifetz (1982) conducted a qualitative study on burnout in psychotherapists during which they

investigated major sources of stress and burnout. Their findings suggested that psychotherapists expected to receive something back for their constant giving. The researchers argued that if psychotherapists do not receive compensation, then there is a likelihood of a burnout. This is similar to some extent to the current research findings, as the participants expressed their doubt about receiving revenues for their investments in the training. According to Mawdsley (2007) individuals with narcissistic injury who are confronted with a sense of lack of achievement struggle to perceive a sense of worthiness in life. This seems to be in line with some of the participants' accounts. The participants talk about encountering stress in training and simultaneously talk about questioning the worth of training and of their current life. Perhaps this sense of lack of value in training is related to the narcissistic injury the trainees acquired. Given the findings of this study, when talking about reimbursement, young female trainees seemed to desire self-worth, acknowledgement of self, allowance for young age and financial compensation (in the form of a house, a car or a holiday). It could be assumed that if trainees in counselling psychology do not receive some form of compensation or if they do not understand what specifically they seek, then they are perhaps as likely as practicing psychotherapists to experience burnout.

Theme two: the impact of training on self and self-and-other. This major theme refers to the participants' accounts of a lack of life outside of the training and to the high risk of failure intrinsic to the training experience. Previous authors have not discussed this theme and therefore there is no opportunity to compare these findings to existing literature. However, the current finding suggests that the participants perceived the training experience as involving an element of abnormality, particularly when they compared themselves to non-trainees. The abnormality seemed to be conceptualised in terms of cultural norms, whereby the participants compared themselves to non-trainees in their age and gender group, thus

maybe illustrating what the cultural expectations for their age and gender are – to be building a life, earning money, buying houses and settling down. Further, this was accompanied by a sense of loss, inhibition and missing out on a perception of ‘normal’ life. Furthermore, the participants’ focus on high stakes involved in training suggests that the fear of failure may be of a high level.

According to Szymanska (2002), prior to the commencement of training, would-be counselling psychology trainees expect that the training will be incorporated into their daily life without difficulties. She postulated that this is an unrealistic expectation, since the training is associated with stressors of time pressure, relationship difficulties and financial cost; stressors which will impact on trainee’s lifestyle.

A recent study by C. Sougleris (personal communication, March 23, 2015) in preparation towards publication in a peer reviewed journal on the relationships between beliefs/schemas, programme demands and burnout in clinical and counselling psychology trainees from around the world, claims that the Self-Sacrifice and Unrelenting Standards schemas as defined by the Young Schema Questionnaire (Young & Brown, 1990) were the most prevalent. As presented in the critical literature review chapter, a study by Adams and Riggs (2008) also identified the self-sacrificing defence style as prevalent among trainees. It could be argued that the high prevalence of the Self-Sacrifice schema could be linked to the findings of the current study, specifically to the identified wish for a normal life among this group of young female trainees. The Self-Sacrifice schema refers to an individual’s excessive focus on others’ needs, which may result in the impression that one’s needs are not being valued by others (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003). Perhaps the participants in the current sample demonstrate this early maladaptive schema when they express their sense of lack of life outside of training. Perhaps

there is an excessive focus on the training, whereby other needs in the trainees’ lives are not being adequately met, resulting in a sense of loss, inhibition and missing out. Moreover, as could be seen in the analysis chapter, the training course was portrayed as a sadistic male perpetrator and the resultant perceived inhibition and submission of the female self could be linked to the Self-Sacrifice schema. According to Margolin (2010) the dominant gendered discourse in society postulates that women must engage in continuous self-sacrifice for others. The Self-Sacrifice schema is perhaps what causes some trainees to need the course to be something or the other. Perhaps the course was constructed by the participants as an embodiment of a violent masculine offender, who demands them to meet ‘his’ needs at the expense of their own feminine needs. Furthermore, the focus on others’ needs may be perhaps indicative of the trainees’ external locus of control, whereby they perceive their well-being as not being within their control, but rather attribute it to external factors, such as the training. This is in line with research by Roddenberry and Renk (2010), who investigated locus of control, self-efficacy and potential mediators among college students. They established that there was a relationship between external locus of control and general and academic stress.

Theme three: managing the lack of boundaries in training. According to research on themes in therapist development by Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992), as counselling and therapy trainees progress in their training their ability to use and implement boundaries increases. For instance, trainees increase the boundary clarity in their emotional involvement in clinical work. The findings of this research were to some extent in line with this assumption. The participants’ accounts showed how they experience a sense of a lack of boundaries in training but as they progress in training they implement more boundaries. Some of the participants reported a sense of merging with the training, which resulted in a change in self, specifically in a sense of becoming something training-related. From one perspective,

this lack of boundaries may relate to the external locus of control that the participants seemed to demonstrate throughout their accounts. Perhaps a merger with training refers to the participants’ own boundaries and their problematic process of separation, which got transferred into the course and their relationship with it. The notion of a lack of boundaries or difficulty with regulating emotional boundaries between self and the training seems to be lacking in the existing literature; and it is unclear whether this dynamic is specific to being a young woman. However, some of the participants reported that as they progressed in training, there was a sense of implementing more boundaries and thus separating more from the training.

Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003) attempted to conceptualise the management of cognitive and emotional involvement for novice therapists, however, they considered this only in the context of trainee-client interactions. The current findings highlight the context of trainee-training interactions as the accounts showed a sense of being merged with the training and being forced to mature, perhaps due to a lack of or weak boundaries between self and the training. This is in line with a study by Halewood and Tribe (2003) presented in the section on motivations to become a counselling psychologist, which suggested that trainees reported a higher degree of narcissistic injury, a psychological damage that includes difficulties with setting boundaries. Mann (2004) conducted a quantitative study on narcissistic injury, perfectionism and institutional attachment among college students. According to the findings, there was a negative correlation between narcissistic injury and institutional attachment, suggesting that higher levels of narcissistic injury were associated with less attachment to an academic institution. The researcher speculated that the fragmented self, which relates to narcissistic injury, does not allow an individual to attach to an educational institution (and thus to meet its demands). In the current study the participants seemed to express their

experience of the lack of boundaries in training and perhaps this reflects the difficulties they experience when attaching to an educational institution. This is further supported by Baltacioglu, Essizoglu, Yenilmez, & Kaptanoglu (2015) who suggest that individuals with narcissistic injury may attempt to prevent the fragmentation of self. This is consistent with Savitz (1986) who claims that an individual with a narcissistic injury is longing for a relationship with the other but at the same time experiences an intense fear of potential loss and separation. As a result of this ambivalence, these individuals may prefer an illusionary relationship rather than an actual relationship. From this it can be seen that individuals with narcissistic injury seem to experience ambivalence regarding relating to the other (and perhaps to the training course) and one of the unconscious motivations for this may be their attempts to protect their fragmented selves. Taking this into consideration, perhaps the young women in this study projected their own problems with managing boundaries (which they have come with into training) into the course. Alternatively, perhaps the young female trainees attempted to prevent their selves from disintegrating, since the current findings highlight their expression of a need for the course to manage the boundaries better.

Further, within this superordinate theme, the participants' accounts reflected a sense of merging with the training, whereby there was less distinction between themselves and the training. The findings showed how the participants fused their identity with the training, which led to the development of a single identity. As could be seen in the analysis chapter some participants' accounts in this study challenged this notion and suggested that they perceived themselves as more separate from the training as they became more aware of other roles in their lives. These descriptions are highlighted in the findings of a study by Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2014) who explored professional identity development among counselling practitioners. Using GT they identified a theme of 'separation versus integration',

in which novice counsellors separated their professional lives from personal lives. It was further observed that experienced counsellors reported a sense of integration in their identity, whereby their professional self and personal self were less separate. In the current study the participants' accounts perhaps indicate that the participants are at different stages in their professional identity development.

As was evident from the participants' accounts within this theme, it seemed as if a progress in trainees' development was associated with more separation. One wonders whether the training can teach some young female trainees how to separate, or whether separation is perhaps a requirement of the training, necessary for trainees' development. From an attachment perspective (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994), perhaps the course is unconsciously perceived by the trainees as a mother and the experiences they describe is another form of separation. Perhaps the participants experience a form of separation anxiety from the course as they proceed into the final stages of training and thus unconsciously wish to merge with another (the course) in order to alleviate this anxiety. One also wonders whether all the trainees can endure this separation process, or whether only some can bear it.

Existing literature has not discussed the trainees' sense of being forced by the training to mature faster than their natural development. However, when Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) described the advanced student phase of counsellors, they suggested that counsellors in the final stage of their training appeared less playful, less relaxed and engaged in less risk-taking. These behaviours could be associated with a transition into adulthood and the authors accounted these to the trainees' perception of the need to set high performance standards and to act accordingly. This may be the case; however, when considering this assumption in light of the findings of this study, the participants accounted their faster development and forced

departure from the adolescence stage to the course. It seems as if the separation/integration theme reflects the experience of this particular group of young female trainees and thus this process might be gendered and aged. Of interest is how a theme of developmental ideas about age has emerged in the analysis. Unlike the participants’ difficulties with speaking about their femininity, the participants seemed to find it easier to talk directly about their age. One wonders what makes age more bearable and more definable than gender. Perhaps the training has actively constructed a more defined set of rules for age-appropriate behaviours and therefore age is more thought about. Or perhaps the somatisation of stress leaves a more evident mark on their young bodies and this may therefore act as a constant reminder of their lost youth.

The following section will focus on the implications of this study on research, theory and practice. Considerations of the implications and contributions to the field of counselling psychology will be emphasised.

Implications for Research and Practice

It was hoped that this study would contribute to the field of counselling psychology by improving the understanding of the training experience, of the profession and by informing clinical practice by investigating how stress was experienced professionally and personally by a specific group of young female practitioners.

As could be seen in the analysis chapter, the accounts of participants showed how there is a presence of ambivalence in training. This ambivalence refers to the presence of stress in training, the unknown in training and the questioning of worth of the training. This particular sample of young female trainees seemed to voice their mixed views on the presence of stress

in training. These new findings may have implications for the training of counselling psychologists. Training programmes may be interested in these findings, which suggest that the participants seemed to view the presence of stress as integral to the training and seemed to perceive it as a destructive force, while also acknowledging its nourishing properties for their growth. Further, the participants seemed to talk about the stress as having a purpose in training. This finding adds another dimension to the discussion on whether stress is a necessary (Rizq, 2006) or an unnecessary (Szymanska, 2002) element in counselling psychology training. Given the current findings, the participants agree with Rizq (2006) as they saw it as an integral part of training and also agree with Szymanska (2002) since they perceived it as harmful to some extent. Practical implications within training programmes might include the development of interventions that would offer support to young women prior to and during training. This might help trainees to complete the training, thus addressing the dropout rate and perhaps improving the quality of training offered.

Further, the findings of this study can inform the practice about the current needs of trainees. Specifically, the participants in this study appeared to voice their wish for a normal life, which included a wish to have more life outside of training, a wish for more normality compared to non-trainees and a wish for the training to be less risky. Further, the findings were suggestive of participants' external locus of control within several themes, whereas the training seemed to demand an internalised locus of control. These findings could be beneficial for the practice of therapists and supervisors working with trainees. The therapists' and supervisors' understanding of trainees' experiences might expand, particularly of the requirement of training for internal locus of control among trainees, and thus they could develop interventions to shift the locus of control more internally. Furthermore, interventions might target the adjustment process, encourage acceptance of newness and uncertainty, or address

the potential difference between cultural expectations of young women and the training norms.

As this study provided a clearer insight into the trainees’ experiences of stress, universities and the BPS may contribute potential changes or redesign the training programmes. However, in a more tentative way in relation to future research, it is questionable in what ways courses fail to enhance trainees’ personal and professional development. At the moment to bridge the gap between trainee experience and the BPS organisation, the BPS encourages all trainee representatives to talk to trainees in each university programme, to collect comments or suggestions and then bring them to the BPS Counselling Psychology committee. This research could act as yet another way to bridge the gap between the two. Making training in counselling psychology a more comfortable experience might not be feasible because of the nature of personal and professional development being inherently challenging (Rizq, 2006). As was suggested by the participants in this study, stress is an integral element to being a trainee. Perhaps a redesign of training courses is unnecessary but the new knowledge could be used to develop targeted interventions for trainees. GT study by Barland Edmondson (2010) on self-care among psychology doctoral students suggested that training courses could focus more on prevention of personal and professional impairment by increasing students’ self-awareness. Specifically, the current research suggests that personal and professional planning programmes could have input on age, gender, ambivalence, uncertainty, value system, separation/merging, norms or fear of risk of failure. According to Palmer and Gyllensten (2010), there is a number of organisational interventions that could be used for stress management and stress prevention, such as structural changes, improved resources, increased stress awareness or promotion of well-being. For instance, educational organisations could begin to increase the trainees’ awareness of stress within training or to provide more targeted

support for trainees, such as self-care, awareness training of symptoms of burnout, or occupational stress workshops tailored to trainees based on the identified themes. Furthermore, it could be seen that the majority of the participants perceived stress as resulting in a positive change and growth. Resultantly, facilitation of adversarial growth could be perhaps considered by training programmes and personal therapists working with trainees.

Finally, the findings of this study may be of interest to future trainees or trainees who are currently in the early stages of training. Having a better knowledge of the expectations of training could be beneficial for trainees, as Szymanska (2002) argued that many trainees experience a sense of disillusionment as a result of having unrealistic beliefs of training. It follows that an increase in awareness of the stress experience would enable trainees to develop more realistic expectations, which could aid them in their preparation for training by helping them consider new norms that they will be expected to fit.

The next section will evaluate the current study by considering both strengths and limitations. In light of this discussion, suggestions for future research will be presented.

Evaluation of the Current Study and Suggestions for Further Research

This section will critically review methodological issues in this research. The findings of this study met the initial aims of the research by using a qualitative approach of IPA, which was appropriate to the research aims. Due to the idiographic focus of IPA the findings of this study are not generalisable since they reflect the accounts of a specific group of participants in a specific context.

The title and aims of this study involved the concept of stress and potentially attracted a particular group of participants. Also, it is acknowledged that the interview schedule could have had some effect on the themes that emerged during the process of analysis. Perhaps the participants who were motivated to take part in this study had experienced an intense reaction to stress on the training, or were of a particular personality type that allowed them to speak about stress and perceive stress in a very particular way. It is acknowledged that participants' motivation to take part in this research could have a potential impact on the findings of this study and a differently phrased research question would perhaps attract different participants. Some could argue that in this study the researcher focused more on the challenging aspects of stress. However, this research focused on stress intentionally due to the identified gap in existing literature and during the interview process the researcher used open questions to give participants an opportunity to talk about all aspects of stress. This became apparent in the analysis chapter of this study, where participants talked about both positive and negative aspects of stress.

In order to meet the aims of the study, purposive sampling (Willig, 2013) was employed to select participants who have a specific shared experience of stress in training, and to increase the homogeneity. However, it could be argued that this method of sampling still recruited individuals with different experiences. There are various factors which could be considered to have influenced the homogeneity of the sample, such as the theoretical orientation of the course, which may have had an effect on trainees' stress experience. However, since the participants were counselling psychology trainees, the epistemological pluralism of counselling psychology (McAteer, 2010) was considered as inherent in all training courses, regardless of the theoretical orientation, and thus granted a level of common ground. Furthermore, as this study adopted an approach that was interested in subjective experiences,

rather than in representativeness, purposive sampling was considered as suitable for the objectives of the study (Smith et al., 2009). Despite the limitations of purposive sampling, it has potential implications for further research. For instance, the relationship status of participants was unknown; however, future studies may wish to consider this factor as potentially influencing the diversity in participants’ accounts on stress. Also, future studies could investigate the relationship between theoretical orientation of training and stress experiences in order to identify whether for instance an existentially oriented training will produce different themes to the ones generated in this study. Further, taking into consideration the unique accounts of stress experience among young trainees reported in this study, future research could conduct an IPA study to focus on how older trainees experience the stress in training. Furthermore, since this research enhanced the knowledge on young female trainees’ experiences of stress, future research could conduct a GT study to examine what factors influence how trainees experience and manage stress that goes on in the training, in order to develop an explanatory model. These further studies might be of interest to courses, as they might need to develop more targeted training to support their trainees.

To meet the criteria for quality in qualitative research as stipulated by Yardley (2000), the researcher took the following steps. Firstly, within sensitivity to context, relevant existing literature on stress among counselling psychology trainees was critically reviewed. The philosophy and epistemology of the IPA method, namely its commitment to phenomenology and idiography (Smith et al., 2009), together with ethical issues was considered and explored. This was achieved when the study received an ethical clearance to proceed. Secondly, within commitment and rigour, thorough data collection was attended to by engaging in recruitment for a prolonged period of time (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001), rather than relaxing some of the inclusion criteria. Thirdly, within transparency and coherence, the researcher

engaged in a continuous process of reflexivity and furthermore, the research method and step-by-step data analysis procedure were presented in detail in order to achieve a level of transparency and to offer sufficient detail for a potential study replication. The process of interpretation was cyclical and required the researcher to consider several levels of interpretation. According to Elliott, Fischer and Rennie (1999), using examples to support researcher's interpretations in qualitative research acts similarly as significance tests in quantitative research. Analysis in this research and the emerging themes were based on constant verification of supporting accounts from the data. The quotes used within this study acted as evidence for researcher's interpretations and meaning making of the participants' meaning making. According to Smith et al. (2009), analysis is the product of both the participant and the researcher. It is impossible for the researcher to stay completely uninvolved because IPA is a subjective method of analysis and therefore there is a great element of the researcher in the study. However, the subjectivity involved in this research was dialogical and systematic (Smith et al., 2009), thus allowing to be examined by the reader. Lastly, the discussion chapter considered how the research findings could be of theoretical and practical interest to current and future trainee counselling psychologists, individuals working with trainees and to university programmes, thus meeting the criterion for impact and importance.

According to Yardley (2008), within the criterion of sensitivity to context, socio-cultural setting is an important factor to be considered for evaluation of the validity of qualitative psychology research. She argues for the researcher to analyse the “interacting effects of context and time” during the meaning-making process (p. 246). This is supported by Heidegger (1962) who postulates that interpretations of the world are mediated by the sociocultural and historical backgrounds of an individual. Larkin, Watts, & Clifton (2006)

support this view and highlight the importance of understanding individual experiences within a specific context. They argue that this specific context links the individual to their particular lived experiences. This is further supported by the underpinnings of social constructionism, which emphasise the recognition of context (Roy-Chowdhury, 2010) and postulate that human experiences are mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2003). Social reality is therefore constructed by the individual. A review conducted by Hatch and Dohrenwend (2007) investigated the association between stressful life events and sociocultural variables. The researchers found that stressful life events were related to low socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic minority groups and young age. In the present study there was potentially a dual influence of sociocultural factors, such as religion, economic status or ethnicity, in the development of themes. Firstly, the participants' sociocultural backgrounds influenced the findings by shaping the participants' narratives. This sociocultural context could account for the convergence and divergence amongst the participants' accounts on their stress experience. For the purposes of this research, information on gender was collected and Wagner (2012) argues that gender is a sociocultural factor that may have an influence on one's identity and one's worldview. Other sociocultural factors that could inform the researcher of the participants' background were not considered. However, the differences in background among this specific group of participants could reflect and explain some of the similarities and differences in their accounts. This could have implications for the findings and also for future research, as more stringent purposive sampling could be employed in future studies and data on sociocultural factors, such as ethnicity, relationship status or employment status could be collected. This would provide information on a specific context within which a particular phenomenon (stress experience) occurs. Secondly, the sociocultural position of the researcher could impact on the development of the themes in this study (Patton, 2002). This is supported by Mauthner and Doucet (2003) who argue that research

practice may be affected by similarities or differences in sociocultural background among the researcher and the participants. In the current study, perhaps the researcher’s cultural background influenced the process of analysis and thus could have an impact on the findings. The researcher addressed the influence of her own sociocultural background on the analysis through the continuous process of reflexivity (Willig, 2013), which is described in more detail in the second part of the reflexive statement.

For the purposes of future research, it may be important to consider how trainees perceive and talk about their stress experiences in training, as it may differ from trainers’ perceptions. It may be important to conduct research on trainers’ perspectives on stress in training in order to explore their understanding and to allow them the opportunity to express their experiences. It would be valuable to investigate what is happening from the perspective of individuals who run the training programmes in order to gain a balanced view and to get a better understanding of how trainers may or may not be tied down by regulations or guidelines. For this purpose a focus group using discursive analysis could be conducted to explore whether and how trainers talk differently about stress compared to trainees. This study might offer an exploration of how these two groups differ in the conceptualisation of stress using language and how they co-create meaning of the stress experience (Gale, 2010).

Furthermore, in the light of the current findings on boundaries and the separation/integration process, a future study could be conducted to explore motives for training. Specifically, a psychoanalytic approach may be suitable for this purpose, since it claims that an individual’s discourse is mediated by unconscious processes, while focusing on the social and cultural context (Frosh & Young, 2008). Factors of individual differences could be further explored, such as personality traits of counselling psychology trainees, previous stress experiences or

coping strategies. Following on from this, future research could also investigate the relationship between stress experience and motivation to become counselling psychologist in more detail. The relationship between what attracted individuals to enrol on the counselling psychology training and their training experience could be investigated to determine whether perhaps their motivation moderates the stress experience.

Reflexive Statement Part Two

The first part of the reflexive statement was concerned with my pre-results reflections. Following on from there, this section will include my reflections on the analysis and findings of this study.

One could argue that the interactions with my participants may have been perhaps affected by their knowledge of my training status. Perhaps my role as a trainee influenced what the participants told me. Initially, I believed that the shared training status perhaps inhibited the participants in telling me about their experiences in detail, as they perhaps assumed that I have the same experiences as them. However, on reflection, I have realised that this was based on my own history, whereby sharing with others was not encouraged. While it is possible that the shared training identity inhibited some participants, other participants may have felt at ease as I was in the same position as they were and thus it could result in greater sharing. I attempted to manage this potential bias by limiting imposing of my own personal experiences onto participants and by trying to remain open.

Throughout the research process I attempted to ‘bracket’ my knowledge, participants’ assertions of truth and my personal experiences as suggested by Ashworth (1996) but nevertheless some of my research biases may have impacted the research analysis. The continuous reflexivity in this research has allowed me to become more aware of certain parts of myself, such as my wish for certainty and structure. For instance, during the analysis process my background in quantitative research became apparent. I have become aware of how I wanted everything structured and reduced. At one point I attempted to control the analysis by mapping it out, perhaps a defence against the flexible approach and uncertainty of IPA. It became conspicuous to me that a part of me craved diagrams that would control the

analysis, which is something not in line with the epistemology of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). I managed this craving by engaging in discussions on the assumptions underpinning IPA and by continuous self-reflection. Furthermore, as was evident in the analysis chapter, the participants seemed to portray the training course as a masculine object with characteristics of strength, violence and power; while portraying their feminine self as weak, submissive and unimportant. When reflecting on the participants’ gender stereotypes, I found myself in agreement with some of the notions of femininity and masculinity (Stets & Burke, 2000). I have realised that despite my awareness of and attempts to change my own gender stereotypes, I too succumb to these. I tend to view femininity as embodying characteristics such as weakness, nurturance and emotional inclination. In contrast, I view masculinity as embodying characteristics such as strength, aggression, independence and stoicism. While reflecting on this, I felt angry with myself and my inability to regard femininity as something ‘stronger’. It seemed to me I failed to fulfil my duty to uphold the female gender; masculinity has ‘won’, by embodying strength and dominance, and thus I did not change or challenge the traditional gender stereotypes. On further reflection, my sense of failure was perhaps a parallel process of perceiving my own female identity as passive and victimised – perhaps I viewed the society as being the male perpetrator that has created these social constructs of gender, felt violated by this and thus once again adopted the role of a victimised female. These reflections have increased my awareness of the discourses which surround the notion of femininity, my participants’ and my own.

Moreover, as was evident in the discussion chapter, my sociocultural background could have impacted on the research process. For instance, I identify myself as white, middle class and spiritual young woman who was non-UK born. This specific sociocultural background could influence how I understood and interpreted the accounts of the participants. Since my native

language was not English and I was born outside of the UK, perhaps these language and cultural differences could have both positive and/or negative impact on the process of analysis. Perhaps some of the metaphors used by the participants were not understood from the participants’ cultural contexts but rather from my own cultural context. This could lead to a potential misunderstanding in the meaning-making process or it could lead to an enhanced interpretative reading by allowing me to consider more abstraction (Eatough & Smith, 2008) while staying close to the participants’ accounts. I addressed the influence of my own sociocultural background on the analysis through the continuous process of reflexivity (Willig, 2013), whereby I continuously reflected on how my attitudes and values (which were influenced by my sociocultural background) might affect the research process. Through the process of increased self-awareness (Willig, 2013) I was then able to critically examine how some of my beliefs about stress (such as the belief that stress is a “bad emotion”) could influence my interpretations and thus I actively attempted to monitor these beliefs and to ‘bracket’ (Smith et al., 2009) them.

In order to attempt to achieve an ethical interpretation of the data, I acknowledge that due to the absence of active involvement of the participants in the analysis stage, the interpretations that were made are my own, and as was evident in the analysis chapter of the thesis, I am using my voice in the interpretation of the themes, while ensuring that the participants’ accounts are the foundations of these interpretations. In order to follow the ethical dimensions of interpretation as suggested by Willig (2012), I attempted to explore different layers of meaning in order to avoid reducing the data to only one layer of meaning by considering the historical and cultural context within which the interpretations were made.

To conclude, analysing the data was frustrating due to the presence of uncertainty but also fascinating due to the rich world that I was privileged to uncover and present. On reflection, conducting this study has changed the way I think about stress. I have become more willing to talk about my own stress without feeling ashamed and I have become more aware of the positive effects of stress. I believe this will impact on my clinical practice by providing me with a new perspective on stress that could be used to get a clearer understanding of my clients' subjective experiences.

Concluding Words

The review of existing literature identified a gap in research, whereby previous research used mainly quantitative methods, focused on pre-doctoral training programmes and focused primarily on individual components of the training experience. Previous studies have also suggested that young female trainees experience higher levels of stress, however, no investigation was initiated to explore this further. As a result, this study used a qualitative method of analysis, specifically IPA, to provide a new understanding of the stress experience among young female trainee counselling psychologists. The findings of this research highlight young female trainees’ mixed perceptions on the presence of stress in training and how they perceive it as hindering and beneficial. The findings suggest that as a result of comparison with their peers, trainees view the training as different and abnormal. Also, this study offers an insight into the trainees’ accounts of how their experience of stress is described as involving a sense of lack of boundaries, which may be related to their sense of their young age. The findings have informed the field of counselling psychology by increasing awareness of a specific aspect of the training experience among would-be counselling psychologists. The implications for would-be counselling psychologists, trainers and related professionals have been outlined and include a review for would-be psychologists prior to their commencement of training, considerations for personal therapy or suggestions for targeted input within professional planning programmes at universities.

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Appendices

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Appendix O: Ethical clearance certificate from the research ethics review panel, London Metropolitan University

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

1) Do you think you have experienced stress during the course of your training? If so, could you describe to me a recent episode when you experienced high levels of stress?

- Describe a situation, symptoms, causes, other people, actions
- How do you feel when you are stressing? Focus on affect/ cognitions/ physical sensation.
- How does this stress affect your everyday life? Focus on work, relationships, interests, other activities.
- What do you do when you feel stressed? Is it getting in the way of you doing things you need to do? Do you have particular strategies for helping you?

2) What do you think are the main stressors of the training you are enrolled on? (I wonder whether you could list top 5 stressor)

- Could you tell me about times when you have been feeling stressed about the academic demands of the training? (coursework/ client work/ personal therapy/ supervision/ research/ integration of theoretical models)
- Could you tell me about times when you have been feeling stressed about the client work that is a requirement of the course? (Focus on affect/ cognitions. Aspects of client work that are stressful? Impact on clinical work and clients? Coping with the emotions? Difference in clinical work when feeling stressed? Level of clinical experience and level of stress?)
- Could you tell me what sense you make of the organisation of the training?
(Structure, time frame, administrative components. Focus on cognitions and affect)
- Could you tell me about times when you have been feeling stressed about personal issues? (How often? Focus on affect. Can you describe how the counselling psychology training affects your relations with other people? (partner, family, friends, work colleagues).)
- Could you tell me about what your life has been like since you have started the training? Focus on particular stages – training year, academic demands

3) What does it mean to you to be a female on this training?

- Do you think there is a difference between being a male or a female trainee?
- What similarities/ differences do you perceive between you and male

trainees?

- Could you speculate what it might be like as a male trainee in this training?

4) What does it mean to you to be a younger trainee?

- Similarities/ differences perceived between you and older trainees?
- Advantages/disadvantages?

5) Has doing this training made a difference to how you think you will manage stress as a qualified psychologist/in your personal life/both?

- If so, how? How would you say your management has changed? Has the training gone inside you, what has it done to your personality in relation to stress? Going forward as a qualified clinician?

6) If you have experienced stress during your training, what do you think should be done about it?

- How might the course/profession engage differently with stresses such as these? Stress as an intrinsic component of the training Vs. Stress as a harmful component of the training?

Ending questions:

Is there anything I have not asked you but you think might help me understand your experiences better?

How have you experienced this interview today?

Do you have any questions?

Appendix B: Rationale for Interview Questions

Semi-structured interview schedule was constructed using suggestions by Smith et al. (2009). The questions were guided by the gaps in knowledge and findings identified in the existing literature. At the beginning of the interview I explained the process of the interview to the participants as I wanted to ensure that they know what is expected of them. Further, I wanted to ensure that the participants feel relaxed and comfortable talking.

The use of open questions aimed to encourage participants to talk freely about their experiences. Questions at the beginning of the interview schedule were more general in order to allow for the development of rapport between the researcher and participant (Willig, 2013), whereas subsequent questions were more specific. Questions were accompanied by prompts, which were used to encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

- 1) The first question is a narrative question that aims to encourage participants to speak openly (Willig, 2013). The researcher did not want to assume that the participants experienced stress but rather wanted to keep the question as open as possible in order to allow participants to talk about all aspects of stress in training. The question aims to facilitate participants' thinking about stress in training and aims to address the research question. As it is the first question in the interview, it attempts to engage the participant. Further, it was hoped that a question about a recent episode of stress would enable participants to recall a stress experience easily.
- 2) This question aims to gain an understanding of the major stressors in counselling psychology training. Research has shown that there were four major stressors in clinical psychology training: academic, placement, organisational and personal (Cushway, 1992). This research was interested in the counselling psychology trainees' experiences of these stressors. Prompts were prepared to aid participants in thinking about potential stressors in training.
- 3) As this research is interested in how female trainees experience stress, this structural question (Willig, 2013) aims to address the research question by enquiring about the

participants’ knowledge organisation. According to Kumary and Baker (2008), female counselling psychology trainees are more vulnerable to stress than male trainees. This question focuses on an aspect of the trainees’ identity and is interested in what it is like to be a female on this training. Since the participants struggled with answering this question, all prepared prompts were used in all interviews.

- 4) As this research is also interested in how young trainees experience stress, this question aims to address the research question. According to Kumary and Baker (2008), younger counselling psychology trainees are at a greater risk of experiencing stress than older trainees. Further, Vredenburg et al. (1999) argue that young age among counselling psychologists is positively correlated with experience of burnout. This question focuses on an aspect of the trainees’ identity and is interested in what it is like to be a younger trainee on this training.
- 5) This future-oriented evaluative question aims to explore participants’ coping strategies and potential future changes in coping strategies. Research by Jordaan et al. (2007) suggests that counselling psychologists use unhelpful coping strategies to manage their stress levels. This question aims to explore how trainees believe they are coping and how they see themselves as coping in the future. This question also aims to investigate how trainees make sense of the potential consequences of the stress for their future as qualified counselling psychologists.
- 6) Rizq (2006) suggests that stresses and limitations in training are integral to the counselling psychology training and should be accepted by trainees. On the other hand, the Division of Counselling Psychology (2005) emphasises the need to investigate these limitations further. This question aims to explore what trainees think about the discussion on stress as an integral part of training or as an unnecessary element that could be avoided.

Ending questions. These questions aim to encourage participants to share anything else that they feel is relevant and may help the researcher to understand their experiences. These open questions further aim to encourage the participants to talk about their experiences in a less structured way, thus allowing for IPA’s inductive epistemology (Smith et al., 2009).

Appendix C: Cover Letter for Participants

To all counselling psychology trainees,

I am contacting you to request for your valuable participation in my research. I am conducting research as part of a Professional Doctorate Course in Counselling Psychology at London Metropolitan University. This research aims to investigate how trainees experience stress and major stressors in counselling psychology doctoral training. Your participation in this study would mean attending an interview that would last approximately 60 - 90 minutes, at a time and place convenient for you.

If you are interested, please contact me on **EVS0079@my.londonmet.ac.uk** and I will send you an information sheet which will provide you with further information.

This study is supervised by Dr Russel Ayling (R.Ayling@londonmet.ac.uk)/ Dr Angela Loulopoulou (A.Louloupoulou@londonmet.ac.uk) and the project has received ethical clearance to proceed by the Research Ethics Review Panel, School of Psychology, London Metropolitan University.

I would appreciate your participation and I look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks

Eva Sykorova

Appendix D: E-mail Templates Used in Recruitment

E-mail to course leaders:

To whom it may concern,

I am conducting research as part of a Professional Doctorate Course in Counselling Psychology at London Metropolitan University. This research aims to investigate how trainees experience stress and major stressors in counselling psychology doctoral training.

I am contacting you as the course leader at XXX. I would be grateful if you could forward the attached document (cover letter) to your trainees on the Counselling Psychology Doctorate.

Please contact me should you have any queries.

With kind regards

Eva Sykorova
Counselling Psychologist in Training

E-mail template for inclusion criteria check:

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your interest in this research study. Could you please provide me with the following details in order to ascertain whether you meet the research inclusion criteria.

Gender:

Age:

University:

Year of training:

Full-time or part-time:

Kind regards

Eva Sykorova
Counselling Psychologist in Training

E-mail template when inclusion criteria were met:

To whom it may concern,

Once again, thank you for your interest in this research study. I have attached further information for you (*participant information sheet*). I am hoping to conduct interviews in the coming weeks. Please could you let me know what would be a convenient date, time and place for you to attend an interview? I could book a room for the interview at London Metropolitan University (Holloway Road) or I will be happy to travel to a location that is convenient for you: please let me know what works for you.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Eva Sykorova
Counselling Psychologist in Training

E-mail template when inclusion criteria were not met:

To whom it may concern,

Once again, thank you for your interest in this research study. At the moment I have a sufficient number of participants for this first phase of my research. However, it is possible that I might like you to participate in a later phase of the research, and hope you might be prepared to participate at a later date. I will be in touch in a few months' time to let you know whether I would like to arrange an interview with you.

Kind regards

Eva Sykorova
Counselling Psychologist in Training

E-mail template to potential participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria when recruitment was completed:

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your interest in my research study. I would like to inform you that the recruitment process has been completed now and I no longer need more participants. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for your willingness to participate.

Kind regards

Eva Sykorova
Counselling Psychologist in Training

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

Purpose of the study:

This research is being carried out as part of a Professional Doctorate Course in Counselling Psychology at London Metropolitan University. As part of my doctoral thesis, I am conducting research which aims to investigate how final year female trainees under the age of 30 experience stress and major stressors in counselling psychology doctoral training. The purpose of the study is to collect information on your experience of academic demands, placement stressors, organisational stressors and personal stressors. Your participation in this study would mean attending an interview that would last approximately 60 - 90 minutes, at a time and place convenient for you.

Voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw

If you decide to take part in this study, then you will be asked to sign a consent form. You have the right to withdraw your consent from this research study during the interview and up to four weeks after the interview date. If you decide to withdraw your consent, then all information you have provided will be destroyed. During the interview you may decline to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable with and you do not have to provide an explanation for your decision.

Your role as a participant in this research project

If you decide to participate in this study, please contact the researcher. You will be requested to sign a consent form and you will be invited to a face-to-face interview that will last for approximately 60 - 90 minutes to discuss your experiences on the training programme you are currently enrolled on. The interview will take place at a time and place convenient for you. The researcher will either book a room for the interview at London Metropolitan University or will travel to a location that is convenient for you (on the basis that you can access location that will be undisturbed for the period of the interview and safe for both the researcher and yourself). All interviews will be audio-recorded.

Treatment of information collected

All collected data are stored securely, access is strictly controlled and they are anonymised to protect personal data. As this research study might be published in the future, information collected will be kept for 10 years and then securely destroyed.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential in this research study. However, there are certain situations where the researcher has a legal or moral duty to breach confidentiality – (i) If you are considered to be a danger to either yourself or others. (ii) If there was a disclosure of abuse of a child or an adult. (iii) Situations where there is a legal obligation to do so. Further, you have the right to withdraw your consent for participating in this research study during the interview or up to four week after the interview date. With your permission the interview will be audio recorded and transcripts from those recordings will be potentially used as part of the researcher’s submitted research project at London Metropolitan University. Participation in this study is anonymous. All identifying information will be altered (a pseudonym will be used) or omitted from the audio recordings and/or the transcripts, so that no one other than the researcher will be able to identify you. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your information.

Potential risks

It is not anticipated that participating in this research study will cause you unusual discomfort or negative consequences for your future life. However, should you experience unusual discomfort, at the conclusion of the interview you will be debriefed by the researcher and a list of available psychological and counselling services will be provided to you.

Making a complaint

If you wish to make a complaint about any aspect of the study, you can contact my research supervisor, Dr. Russel Ayling at London Metropolitan University, at R.Ayling@londonmet.ac.uk / Dr Angela Loulopoulou at London Metropolitan University, at A.Loulopoulou@londonmet.ac.uk.

Findings of the study

You have the right to receive summary of the research findings. To obtain a summary of research findings, please e-mail the researcher EVS0079@my.londonmet.ac.uk and you will be sent the findings of the study once they are investigated.

Your contribution to the study

Your participation is greatly appreciated as it will help us to find out what is going on for you when you experience demands and stress in your training. This will then contribute to our understanding of what makes the counselling psychology training courses stressful and how these demands of training interact with other factors.

This project has received ethical clearance to proceed by the Research Ethics Review Panel, School of Psychology, London Metropolitan University

Thank you.

Eva Sykorova

EVS0079@my.londonmet.ac.uk

Appendix F: Consent Form

Title of the study: A qualitative study of how young final year female trainees experience stress and major stressors in counselling psychology doctoral training - How do these trainees experience academic demands, client work, organisational stressors and personal stressors?

As a final year counselling psychology trainee you will be asked to share your understanding and experience of stress and the major stressors in your doctoral training. Before you give your consent for participation in this research study, it is important that you understand and agree to each of the points below. Please initial each box next to each point. Ask the researcher if you need any clarification.

- I understand the purpose of this study. ☐
- I understand that by participating in this research I am giving permission to the researcher to audio record our interview. I am also giving permission for those audio recordings and/or transcripts from those recordings to potentially be used as part of the researcher's submitted research project at London Metropolitan University. ☐
- I understand that participation in this study is anonymous. All identifying information will be altered (a pseudonym will be used) or omitted from the audio recordings and/or the transcripts, so that no one other than the researcher will be able to identify me. However, there are certain situations where the researcher has a legal or moral duty to breach confidentiality – (i) If the participant is considered to be a danger to either himself or others. (ii) If there was a disclosure of abuse of a child or an adult. (iii) Situations where there is a legal obligation to do so. ☐
- I understand that the researcher will keep the audio recordings of our interview in a secure location at all times so that no one else will have access to them. ☐
- I understand that the results of the study will be accessible to others on completion and that excerpts from my interview (minus identifying information) may be used within the study. ☐

- I understand that I have the right to obtain information about the findings of this study and details of how to obtain this information will be provided on the debriefing form.
- I understand that the audio recording of my interview will be erased immediately after the research project has been assessed.
- I understand that I am not obliged to give my consent. I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time during the interview, and up to four weeks after the interview.
- **I give permission for the participation and audio recording in this research study.**

Participant's printed name

Signature of participant

Date

Researcher's printed name

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix G: Debrief Sheet

Thank you for participating in this research study. This debrief sheet offers you the opportunity to find out more about the purpose of the study, your participation and implications of this research.

For your information, based on research on stresses in counselling psychology training, almost all trainees experience unrealistic expectations, changes in interpersonal relationships, anxiety, depression and stress (Dryden & Thorne, 1991 in Truell, 2001; Truell, 2001; Rizq, 2006). Some studies suggest that there are gender and age differences in terms of trainees' stress ratings (Kumary & Baker, 2008). This study investigates how final year female trainees under the age of 30 experience major stressors in counselling psychology training. The purpose of the study is to develop an understanding of how this specific group of trainees experience academic demands, clinical work, organisation and personal stressors.

As mentioned before, the results of this study are confidential and all results will be published anonymously. All identifying information will be altered (a pseudonym will be used) or omitted from the audio recordings and/or the transcripts, so that no one other than the researcher will be able to identify you. The results of this study will be accessible to others on completion and excerpts from your interview (minus identifying information) may be used within the study report. The information you provide will be stored in a safe place with a locking system so that no one else will have access to them. The audio recordings of your interview will be erased or destroyed immediately after research project has been assessed. In case the research study is published, then the transcripts of interviews will be kept for a maximum period of 10 years and then will be destroyed. Confidentiality is essential for this

research study. However, there are certain situations where the researcher has a legal or moral duty to breach confidentiality – (i) If the participant is considered to be a danger to either himself or others. (ii) If there was a disclosure of abuse of a child or an adult. (iii) Situations where there is a legal obligation to do so. Further, you have the right to withdraw your consent for participating in this research study up to four week after the interview date.

If participating in this research study has resulted in any distress or discomfort or you have other issues to discuss, then please refer to the list of available psychological or counselling services.

You have the right to obtain information about the findings of this study. To obtain a summary of the findings of this study, please e-mail the researcher. If you have any concerns or questions about this research, please feel free to contact my research supervisor Dr Russel Ayling / Dr Angela Loulopoulou at London Metropolitan

Contact details:

Eva Sykorova (researcher): **EVS0079@my.londonmet.ac.uk**

Dr Russel Ayling (research supervisor): **R.Ayling@londonmet.ac.uk**

Dr Angela Loulopoulou (research supervisor): **A.loulopoulou@londonmet.ac.uk**

Appendix H: Distress Protocol

This protocol has been devised to deal with the possibility that some participants may become distressed and/or agitated during their involvement in this research into stresses experienced in the counselling psychology training. There are three levels of distress that the researcher will monitor during each interview and she will follow this protocol to respond in an appropriate and acceptable manner. The researcher is currently undergoing professional training in Counselling Psychology, recently attended a first aid training organised by the British Red Cross, and therefore is experienced in managing situations with high levels of distress. It is not expected that extreme distress will occur, nor that the relevant action will become necessary. However, in case the participant does experience excessive distress, this protocol will be followed.

Mild emotional distress

Signs of distress during the interview:

- Participant exhibits behaviours suggestive that the interview is too stressful
- Tearfulness
- Difficulty speaking/ voice becomes choked
- Participant becomes distracted – inability to follow the discussion

Action to take:

- Ask participant if they would like to continue
- Offer them time to pause and compose themselves
- Remind them they can stop at any time if they become too distressed

Severe emotional distress:

Signs of distress during the interview:

- Uncontrolled crying/ wailing, incoherent speech
- Panic attack- e.g. hyperventilation, shaking, sweating

Action to take:

- The researcher will intervene to terminate the interview
- The debrief will begin immediately

- Relaxation techniques will be suggested to regulate breathing/ reduce agitation
- The researcher will recognize participants’ distress, and reassure that their experiences are normal reactions to talking about emotional difficulties
- If any unresolved issues arise during the interview, accept and validate their distress, but suggest that they discuss with mental health professionals and remind participants that this is not designed as a therapeutic interaction
- Details of counselling/therapeutic services available will be offered to participants (see Appendix F)

Extreme emotional distress:

Signs of distress during the interview:

- Severe agitation and possible verbal or physical aggression
- In very extreme cases possible psychotic breakdown where the participant relives the traumatic incident and begins to lose touch with reality (dissociation)

Action to take:

- Maintain safety of participant and researcher
- If the researcher has concerns for the participant’s or others’ safety, he will inform them that he has a duty to inform any existing contacts they have with mental health services, such as their GP.
- If the researcher believes that either the participant or someone else is in immediate danger, then he will suggest that they present themselves to the local A&E Department and ask for the on-call psychiatric liaison team.
- If the participant is unwilling to seek immediate help and becomes violent, then the Police will be called and asked to use their powers under the Mental Health Act to detain someone and take them to a place of safety pending psychiatric assessment. (This last option would only be used in an extreme emergency)

**This distress protocol was originally developed by Chris Cocking, London Metropolitan University, November 2008, and was adapted for the purposes of this research study.*

Appendix I: List of Available Psychological or Counselling Services

If you require counselling or support for any issues, you may want to contact any of the following services. This list is not exhaustive, but attempts to include organisations that may be useful to you if you require them (the list was developed based on details available on the internet).

British Psychological Society (BPS)

Includes resources to help you find a psychologist

St. Andrews House, 48 Pincess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR

Tel.: +44 (0)116 254 9568, Website: www.bps.org.uk

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Includes resources to help you find a therapist

BACP House, 15 St. John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB

Tel.: 01455 883300, Website: www.bacp.co.uk

UK Council for Psychotherapy

Offers resources for finding different types of psychotherapy

2nd Floor, Edward House, 2 Wakley Street, London EC1V 7LT

Tel.: 020 7014 9955, Website: www.psychotherapy.org.uk, E-mail: info@ukcp.org.uk

Mind

Organisation providing support for individuals with mental health problems

15-19 Broadway, Stratford, London E15 4BQ

Tel.: 020 8519 2122, E-mail: contact@mind.org.uk

Samaritans

24-hour support telephone line

Tel.: 08457 90 90 90, E-mail: jo@samaritans.org

Nightline

Telephone listening for London, 6pm-8am term-time only

Tel.: 0207 631 0101, E-mail: listening@nightline.org.uk

Students Against Depression

Website for students suffering the effects of depression and suicidal thinking

Website: www.studentsagainstdepression.org

You may wish to access the **student counselling service at your university:**

City University: Tel.: +44 (0)20 7040 7040, E-mail: studentcentre@city.ac.uk

Regent's College: Tel.: 020 7487 7555, E-mail: therapy@regents.ac.uk

Roehampton University: E-mail: health&wellbeing@roehampton.ac.uk

University of East London: Tel.: 02082237611/ 02082234440, E-mail: wellbeing@uel.ac.uk

University of Surrey: Tel.: 01483 689498, E-mail: k.norman@surrey.ac.uk/
centreforwellbeing@surrey.ac.uk

University of the West of England: Tel: +44(0)117 32 86268, E-mail: wellbeing@uwe.ac.uk

University of Wolverhampton: Tel.: 01902 322572

University of Manchester: Tel.: 0161 275 2864, E-mail: counsel.service@manchester.ac.uk

University of Teesside: Tel.: 01642 342277, E-mail: a.kyriakopoulos@tees.ac.uk@tees.ac.uk

University of Strathclyde: Tel.: 0141 548 3510, E-mail: student-counselling@strath.ac.uk
Glasgow Caledonian University: Tel.: 0141 273-1393, E-mail: positiveliving@gcu.ac.uk

You may want to contact your **GP** to access free and confidential counselling or psychological therapy.

Appendix J: An Example of Initial Notes and Emergent Themes for Zoe

	Zoe	
Constant worry process	711 time. Erm ... but you know you're constantly worried	Constant worry process
	712 about the next thing that you have to do. Or you're	Worries about what needs to be done next (thinking about things to do, workload?)
	713 constantly worried about what you haven't done that you	Worries about what has not been done and what should be done
	714 should have done. And making time for everything and	Making time for things – searching for time and time allocation?
	715 ... and it kind of feels like [cracks fingers] well you	
Social comparison	716 know, I'm still in my twenties, I cannot find it yeah it's a	Social comparison
	717 bit difficult to to accept and comparing other people.	Others enjoy themselves and do things that she does not
Missing out	718 Other people are enjoying their lives, they're doing	- sense of missing out on things?
	719 things that you're not. It kind of makes you feel like well	- miss – fail – is late for something?
Questioning the worth of the training	720 do I I know in the long term in theory you know, you	- doing different things to others
	721 should get a good job and and do something that you	- does not enjoy her life? Lack of joy in her life?
Uncertainty	722 enjoy and stuff. But erm at the same time it kind of feels	The training feels <u>so long</u>
	723 like this training is so long.	- long duration of training
	724 R: Umm.	- training as time consuming?
	725 Z: And so intense and ... yeah I'm just not quite sure it's	
	726 worth it at the moment I have to say yeah. Erm ... yeah.	Training as <u>so long</u> and <u>so intense</u>
	727 R: What makes you think that it's not worth it right	- emphasis on the lengths and intensity of the training
	728 now?	Uncertain whether the training is worth it
	729 Z: I suppose the sacrifices that you you make to get to	- uncertainty, questioning the worth/ value of training
Making sacrifices (loss)	730 get to that both in terms of your social life and your	- questioning (not certain, not confident?)
	731 personal life and your like financially erm and yeah ...	
	732 you just give so much I suppose that you kind of feel	<i>R: Zoe seems thoughtful after her last sentence and I want to explore what her thoughts about the worth(lessness) are and what she means when she says that it is not worth it at the moment.</i>
	733 like and you have to live with it every single day and the	Making sacrifices
Fast ageing	734 stress I suppose it kind of it feels like you've aged before	- making sacrifices makes her question the worth of the training
	735 [laughs] you	- is it worth it?
	736 R: Umm.	- are the sacrifices of too high value? And training is not?
		- loss, to give up
		- having to give something up? Loss?
		Giving, investment
		<u>Have to live with it</u>
		- sharing something?
		- cannot get rid of it, cannot get away from it
		- inescapable situation?
		Living with it and stress makes her feel like she's aged – ageing process, getting older before her time? Increased speed of ageing? Loss of young age?
		<u>Every single day</u> – constantly, all the time, constant presence

	Zoe	
Uncertainty	737 Z: Before your time in a way. So yeah erm ... and that	Ageing earlier than is her time
Lack of guarantee	738 that's the worst thing I suppose is knowing that there's	- ageing process as faster when on training
	739 no guarantee that you're gonna get a job at the end of	- ageing – maturity? Development? Old age? Loss?
	740 this [laughs] so it is it's not erm it's not like you were	Deterioration?
	741 doing the training and then you're definitely gonna get a	No guarantee, absence of guarantee and lack of certainty about her
	742 good job and you're gonna be having you know your	future job – uncertainty, being unsure
Dissatisfaction/	743 ideal job or whatever. You still have to compete in still a	Still needs to compete – continuation of competition, no end to
disappointment?	744 very competitive market. And erm you might have to	competition, no rest?
	745 apply for a while before you can actually get a job and	Competitive market – sense of competition, struggle, things not being
	746 you start with a salary that ... that that's good but it's not	easy
	747 really you know, bankers' get more than that for	Good salary but it's not really ... – what she expected or wished for?
	748 example you know.	Bankers get more – comparison of salary with other professions
	749 R: Umm umm.	
Questioning the value of	750 Z: That's kind of it kind of makes you feel yeah, is it	Is it really worth it?
training	751 really worth it or? Yeah.	- others get more, so is the training worthy financially?
	752 R: Right.	- considers her financial situation
	753 Z: Yeah.	- questioning the worth/ value of the training in terms of the
	754 R: And you've also mentioned your age, that you're in	revenues and salary
	755 your twenties	
	756 Z: Yeah, yeah.	
	757 R: And maybe you'll be doing something different.	
	758 Z: Yeah.	
	759 R: So I wonder what does it mean to you to be a younger	
	760 trainee on this course?	
		R: Previously Zoe mentioned her young age in relation to comparing herself to other people. I want to enquire further about her perception of her young age identity and how it is experienced within the training. I refer back to her previous comment, in order to link it to our previous conversation, and I use an open question to explore what sense she makes of her young age. This question is also on my semi-structured interview schedule but I don't enforce it on Zoe, I rather use what she has told me to meet my interview question.

Zoe

761 Z: Erm ... I think when I was applying for courses erm I
762 remember I've come across a couple of times like a
763 minimum age limit erm ... I don't think it was in
764 counselling psychology courses, maybe counselling or
765 something. But I kind of it didn't make sense back then.
766 But now thinking about it, it kind of does make sense
767 'cause when you're when you're young you wanna
768 experience life perhaps and you know be silly and do
769 things, go out. Erm ... and I comparing to m- my
770 colleagues my classmates are a bit older I suppose. They
771 seem to have everything under control you know. They
772 they got families and there were things sometimes and
773 yet they they're well ahead in with their research and
774 everything and they're submitting a week before the
775 deadline sometimes and things like that. Erm and
776 yeah it's it's hard when you wanna be all there, playing
777 in a way [laughs] you know you're you have to be
778 trapped studying indoors and the weather is nice so you
779 can see it from the window but you can't really go out.

780 R: Umm

781 Z: Erm ... so yeah, it feels like you know it's a waste of
782 the best years of your life sometimes. Erm.

783 R: Right, right. And you mentioned that the other
784 classmates who might be older or something, have
785 everything under control and they have families.

786 Z: Yeah all this year [laughs]. I mean they still get
787 stressed and that stuff, I'm sure they do. But erm ... but
788 yeah I don't know how people do it with families and

In young age there is a wish to experience life – wants to live and have life experiences?

Wish to experience life but cannot? Sense of loss? Prevented from doing what she wants?

Wish to be silly and do things, go out – during the training she cannot experience life? Cannot do things? Inhibition?

Older trainees seem to be in control despite having families

- older trainees seem to manage better and seem to be advanced (ahead)

- comparison of self (younger trainee) to older trainees and their performance on the course

Wish to be playing – wish for carefree, less responsible, more fun life?
All there

- all of her wants to be there?

- wants something but cannot get it? (frustration?)

Has to be trapped indoors – inescapable situation? Someone trapped/ caught her? Cannot get out?

Can see nice weather outside but cannot go out

- use of metaphor

- being captured inside, there are nice things outside but she is prohibited? Not allowed? Trapped like an animal?

- has to miss out on things?

- missing, loss, inhibition

Waste of the best years of life

- loss, throwing something away, not using it, wasting best years of her life

- great loss, cannot be given those years back

R: Once again Zoe refers to the process of comparing herself to others and I wonder whether this repetition is significant. I reflect back what she has told me to explore this further.

<p>Comparison with older trainees</p> <p>Lacking skills (due to young age)</p> <p>Missing out</p> <p>Inhibition</p> <p>True self not allowed</p> <p>Never ending training</p>	<p>Zoe</p> <p>789 stuff. It kind of feels like erm ... you know they've got</p> <p>790 everything well planned ahead and erm ... yeah their</p> <p>791 dissertation seems to be progressing smoothly and they</p> <p>792 don't miss deadlines, they don't erm. So yeah I don't I</p> <p>793 don't really know, maybe with ... with time I don't</p> <p>794 know, you develop skills that come naturally with age, I</p> <p>795 don't know</p> <p>796 R: Umm.</p> <p>797 Z: Yeah.</p> <p>798 R: And what is it like, it's really sunny out there and</p> <p>799 you're trapped here, you gotta study and you said it's</p> <p>800 almost like missing out on the funny stuff of your life.</p> <p>801 Z: [laughs] Yeah, yeah, yeah it is definitely that. You're</p> <p>802 missing out and you're erm ... you can't be young.</p> <p>803 you're not allowed to be young, you have to be serious</p> <p>804 and mature [laughs] and you have to</p> <p>805 R: So you're not allowed to be angry?</p> <p>806 Z: You're not allowed to be young.</p> <p>807 R: Oh, young.</p> <p>808 Z: Yeah, sorry, yeah. And so you have to it's difficult,</p> <p>809 it's very difficult. Erm ... and it as I said it's hard to kind</p> <p>810 of see the end of it as well, so kind of I suppose if you</p> <p>811 could see the end of it you could say oh it's okay, it's</p> <p>812 another ... another essay and that's it or whatever. But</p>	<p>It seems to her like older trainees are progressing smoothly without problems</p> <p>Perception that older trainees have everything planned ahead – better planning/ organisational issues?</p> <p>She's uncertain why the older trainees seem to cope better but speculates that with time and age these skills develop naturally – being at a disadvantage of lacking these skills due to young age?</p> <p>Not knowing – repetition, unsure, uncertain about how older trainees manage better</p> <p>Difficulties encountered due to young age and lack of skills? Unfair?</p> <p><i>R: I refer back to Z779. The imagery that Zoe used struck me as significant and I want investigate this further: i) I want to check whether it is significant for her and ii) I want to explore further what the experience is like for her.</i></p> <p><u>Missing out</u> – fails to experience something 'outside'?</p> <p>Cannot be young, not allowed to be young (although she is a younger trainee) – inhibited?</p> <p>Not allowed to be something that she is?</p> <p>Not allowed to be who she is? One of her characteristics (young age) as not allowed or not desirable?</p> <p>Must be serious and mature – need to grow and age faster than her natural development? – must be something she is not? Part of her inhibited?</p> <p><u>You're not allowed to be young</u> – cannot be her true self?</p> <p><i>R: I misheard angry instead of young. My process? Clarified with Zoe.</i></p> <p>Difficulty seeing the end of the training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cannot envisage the end? - absence of end – training seems as never ending and very lengthy?
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	Zoe	
	813 now it's kind of yeah, another essay and another this and	Cannot see the end
	814 that and form another.	Another this, another that
	815 R: And how does it feel not being able to be young?	- sense of the training being never ending
	816 Z: Erm.	- always something to do?
	817 R: 'Cause you gotta be serious and professional as you	- sense of continuity, on-stop
	818 described.	- high workload?
	819 Z: Yeah, I tell you that my friend erm has a list of the	No respite, no end, no relief, cannot see the end – sense of
	820 things that she wants to do [laughs] erm after [laughs]	hopelessness, despair, is there no end?
	821 she finish it, after we finish the course.	
	822 R: Uh-huh.	<i>R: Not being able to be young – Zoe talks about her young age and this</i>
	823 Z: Erm ... so it's difficult, it's very difficult to answer	<i>sense of being prohibited to be young seems significant for her. I would</i>
Not allowed to be young	824 your question. It's erm ... it's awful really, it's it's bad	<i>like to explore this specific experience further and therefore ask an open</i>
Inhibition	825 erm ...	<i>question about her feelings about this in order to encourage her to talk</i>
	826 R: Bad in what sense?	<i>about her experiences further.</i>
	827 Z: ... Bad in that you you can't do the things that you	
	828 wanna do.	Not being able to be young?
	829 R: Umm.	It's awful and bad not being able to be young – negative experience/ perception
Discrepancy between demands and wishes	830 Z: So it's kind of discrepancy between what you should	<i>R: I wonder why it is difficult for Zoe to answer my question and I am curious</i>
	831 be doing and what you want to be doing. So it's kind of	<i>what she means by bad. I ask for clarification to get a better understanding and</i>
	832 the two of them don't match. Erm so you have to you	<i>to make sure that I understand her point of view.</i>
Loss	833 know reassure yourself and comfort yourself that it's	Inability to do things that one wants to do – being inhibited in some way?
Denial	834 okay you know, they'll come in time. Erm but when the	Stopped? Wants to do things but cannot – frustration and disappointment?
	835 time comes you'll be older as well, so so it's kind of	
	836 yeah it's difficult to accept that sometimes erm ... yeah	Disagreement between what she wants to do and what she should do
		- discrepancy, gap, mismatch, wish Vs should?
		Mismatch
		Need for self-reassurance and self-comfort – what happens to her that she
		needs these?
		Soothes/ comforts herself that her wishes will come in time (later?)
		- hope that her wishes will be fulfilled
		- need for self-talk
		She will be able to do what she wants when she's older and that's difficult to
		accept
		- difficulties accepting, sense of change in age – sense of loss?
		- or the need to wait? Missing out?
		- hope that <u>they'll come</u>

Appendix K: An Example of a List of Emergent Themes with Line Numbers and Key Quotes for Zoe

Line number	Emergent theme	Quote
Z16	Fluctuating stress levels	It's since year one and there was times when it kind of erm got s
Z25	Autonomy	So erm I suppose firstly was finding placements, so that was kir
Z25	Feeling unsupported	So erm I suppose firstly was finding placements, so that was kir
Z32	Not being wanted (due to lack of clinical experience)	And because we didn't have experience, no one wanted to recru
Z35	Novelty	Erm and then obviously the first essays and you you cannot writ
Z35	Uncertainty	Erm and then obviously the first essays and you you cannot writ
		same time as studying, so it's kind of making the time if you if
Z46	Multi-tasking	you look at my diary it's kind of [laughs] big mess but it's like
		getting things organised, requesting time off from work to
		same time as studying, so it's kind of making the time if you if
Z46	Time as limited	you look at my diary it's kind of [laughs] big mess but it's like
		getting things organised, requesting time off from work to
		so it's kind of yeah it it definitely impacts on on your life
Z55	Impact of training on life	generally. And making time to go see people as well you
		so it's kind of yeah it it definitely impacts on on your life
		generally. And making time to go see people as well you
Z55	Time as limited	That's kind of definitely yeah I think that's probably the most d
Z60	Searching for balance	And having the constant kind of fear I suppose that because I'm
Z66, Z71	Fear of uncertainty	Balancing, yeah, that's that's kind of yeah, I think that's and tall
Z75	Searching for balance as a shared experience	Erm yeah if you have to work as well, that kind of takes over re
Z81	Time as limited	Erm and that free time that you do have, you kind of feel like I s
Z83, Z90	Conditional rules ('shoulds')	Erm and that free time that you do have, you kind of feel like I s
Z83, Z90	Guilt	that's difficult sometimes.
Z92	Time as limited	Erm, practically speaking doesn't leave you much time, so time
Z100	Loss of time	Erm it's kind of always at the back of your mind in a way, so yc
Z101	Cognitive preoccupation	Erm it's kind of always at the back of your mind in a way, so yc
Z101	Inability to relax	It's quite heavy, isn't it? Sometimes it's yeah you kind of take
		it home sometimes. And although you try hard not to do that,
Z109, Z114	Transgression of clinical work into personal life	it's you might have a difficult session, so you might end up

Z122	Wish for stronger boundaries (between clinical work and personal)	Erm ... yeah it's kind of difficult 'cause you you know, you want
Z122	Impact of clinical work on self	Erm ... yeah it's kind of difficult 'cause you you know, you want
Z129	Loss	what happened to the times when you're kind of everything was
Z129	Reminiscence	what happened to the times when you're kind of everything was
Z129	Change	what happened to the times when you're kind of everything was
Z136	Out of control	So erm yeah you can't really stop it. Sometimes you're in the ps
Z136	Wish to stop the psychology mode	So erm yeah you can't really stop it. Sometimes you're in the ps
Z148	Difficulty stopping reflective thinking	encouraged to reflect and think about what's happened and
Z153	Constant thinking identity	impact on erm on this person or this yeah so you're just think
Z157	Constant psychologist role	And all my friends say sometimes you know I ask I might ask th
Z163	Psychologist role as overpowering	sometimes you kind of yeah you give in to your role and you lea
Z163	New self concept	sometimes you kind of yeah you give in to your role and you lea
Z180	Dissonance in personal development	[laughs].
Z183	Demands	Erm you know it's all very serious, you have to be professional,
Z183	Wish for a change	Erm you know it's all very serious, you have to be professional,
		to be very careful and you're assessed all the time, so you
Z194	Need to be cautious	know you have to kind of really be wary of how you present
		to be very careful and you're assessed all the time, so you
Z194	Fear of evaluation	know you have to kind of really be wary of how you present
Z202	Wish for life	I spend so much time reflecting [laughs] that it kind of feels I ju
Z202	Loss	I spend so much time reflecting [laughs] that it kind of feels I ju
Z210	Social comparison	Yeah yeah yeah 'cause I feel like I compare with erm myself wi
Z216	Lack of personal time	So you know they they go home and then the time that they've g
Z225	Time investment	Erm yeah it just feels like so much time I suppose so you I want
Z225	Lack of life	Erm yeah it just feels like so much time I suppose so you I want
		almost finished now you know it's another another year,
		another semester [laughs]. And then and you kind of have to
		stop yourself and say no, don- don't think like that, don't like
Z239, Z243, Z250	Fear (of failure)	that. Anything could happen, you might fail you know, you see
Z254	Fear of failure	It's very, it's stressful, it's very ... erm it's difficult, it's very I d
Z263	Self-doubt	But before you actually submit it, it's like it's rubbish, it's really

Z278	Fear of failure
Z289	Constant demands
Z293	Reliance on others as problematic
Z297	Supervisor's evaluative role as impacting on self-disclosure
Z305	Type of supervisor influencing self-disclosure
Z309	Supervisor's evaluation as impacting on self-disclosure
Z314	Fear of the consequences of negative evaluation by supervisor
Z314	Uncertainty
Z321	Selective self-disclosure
Z321	Supervisor's evaluation as impacting on self-disclosure
Z339, Z345	Daydreaming
Z348	Constant demands (workload)
Z356	Never ending training
Z371	Envy
Z371	Unmet expectations
Z371	Disappointment
Z371	Training as long/ never ending
Z380	Uncertainty
Z384	Training as long
Z387	Uncertainty
Z387	Fear of failure
Z387	Daydreaming not allowed
Z394	Looking forward to life after training
Z395	Forgotten life
Z407	Stress regulation learned through experience
Z417	Acceptance
U417	Improvement in stress management

Erm and they failed and it kind of reminds you that you know it
 It will be, there's always something that you need to do.
 You rely on your supervisors kind of filling you in the forms. Er
 Erm supervision is kind of difficult sometimes as well 'cause yc
 Yeah I mean it does get it depends on the supervisor as well, so
 But with some some others you kind of feel like I need to be rea
 you're a bit worried that they might give you low marks and wh
 you're a bit worried that they might give you low marks and wh
 I think we find ourselves being a bit selective about what we dis
 I think we find ourselves being a bit selective about what we dis
 after we finish, I wanna go travelling or I want to do this. I
 wanna you know if I get a full-time job and then I can get the
 we've got to study now, we've got to do that, do that, do that. A
 Erm but it kind of feels like well, it's not over yet, I still I'm stil
 Erm ... it's funny 'cause when I was erm in the early years of my
 Erm ... it's funny 'cause when I was erm in the early years of my
 Erm ... it's funny 'cause when I was erm in the early years of my
 Erm ... it's funny 'cause when I was erm in the early years of my
 Yeah and you get people asking you I suppose you know when
 of still feels ...yeah it feels so long.
 you don't know exactly when you're gonna finish. Erm so
 yeah yeah and as I said you've seen so many people fail and
 you don't know exactly when you're gonna finish. Erm so
 yeah yeah and as I said you've seen so many people fail and
 you don't know exactly when you're gonna finish. Erm so
 yeah yeah and as I said you've seen so many people fail and
 But you know you get little moments when you think it yeah it's
 I kind of feel like I've forgotten how it is like to we were joking
 Erm I wanna say that you learn how to kind of regulate it a little
 Erm so you just learn to kind of accept that that's what I can do
 Erm so you just learn to kind of accept that that's what I can do

Z419	Deadlines as a trigger for anxiety
Z428	Lack of time
Z428	Underestimation of coping resources
Z428	Feeling overwhelmed
Z435	Stress management learning
Z441	Cognitive preoccupation
Z448	Diversity in stress experience
Z449	Acceptance
Z461	Recognition of signs of stress
Z464, Z468	Signs of stress
Z464, Z468	Cognitive preoccupation
Z471	Shift from thinking to doing as a coping strategy
Z477, Z480, Z485	Distraction as a coping strategy
Z488, Z492	Unhelpful coping strategies
Z490	Change in coping strategies
Z518	Constant and unchangeable stressors
Z523	Strong desire to end the training
Z541	Collecting hours
Z546	Uncertainty
Z546	Out of control
Z546	Worry process
Z559	Dependence on others
Z562	One's presence as unimportant

however good you get at it, you still kind of get panicked [laughs]. Erm yeah you start kind of feeling like yeah, so much Erm so normally it's you know you know you're aware that you Erm so normally it's you know you know you're aware that you Erm so normally it's you know you know you're aware that you Erm and then obviously you learn techniques, I suppose that's o erm so I would think about it quite a lot ... yeah sometimes it gets to a point where you, where I I can't sleep maybe or I find So how do I experience, I suppose ... it kind of varies depending Sometimes I kind of a- accept that you know I've done everything Erm you start recognising recognising the signs to start with. Which are kind of thinking about it all the time, feeling like I sh Which are kind of thinking about it all the time, feeling like I sh how I learned to kind of deal with that I suppose is kind of [cou with people that are not psychology-related. Erm so I meet friends and do something nice. Go cycling sometimes and stuff like that, just to kind of think about something else and Yeah, it used to be smoking [laughs], lots of coffees [laughs], as So that's kind of changed a little bit I have to say, thinking about I suppose the stressors have remained the same or similar. So it's of you really want you really want to finish as well. So it's kind of ... I suppose the same stressors and more intense now. Erm I'd say erm meeting deadlines erm ... and specifically kind placement, you still you can't predict really. And that's you know you're approaching the deadline kind of think well what placement, you still you can't predict really. And that's you know you're approaching the deadline kind of think well what placement, you still you can't predict really. And that's you know you're approaching the deadline kind of think well what You you have to rely on people coming And it's a shame 'cause we you know even though you're there,

Z572	Constant presence of collecting hours
Z577, Z580	Enormity of the dissertation
Z603, Z608	Feeling exposed
Z603, Z608	Feeling vulnerable
Z603, Z608	Power differential
Z603, Z608	Worry process
Z603, Z608	Anxiety
Z613	Novelty
Z613	Uncertainty
Z617	Fear of being assessed and criticised
Z626	Management
Z633	Worry process
Z633	Management
Z633	Management of finances
Z649	Loss of financial resources
Z662	Constant need for management
Z671	Adjustment
Z671	Expectation of a change in the future
Z671	Acceptance
Z671	Constant worry process
Z685, Z687	Adjustment
Z685, Z687	Dissatisfaction
Z685, Z687	Poor quality of life
Z685, Z687	Lack of time
Z693	Wish for change
Z698	Hatred
Z698	Questioning the worth of the training

So that's that's the first major thing 'cause it's throughout the course. Maybe I'm saying it 'cause I'm in my last year [laughs] and so it's very exposing and you kind of yeah ... you're gonna be there. It's very exposing and you kind of yeah ... you're gonna be there. It's very exposing and you kind of yeah ... you're gonna be there. It's very exposing and you kind of yeah ... you're gonna be there. It's very exposing and you kind of yeah ... you're gonna be there. It's very exposing and you kind of yeah ... you're gonna be there. really, 'cause you haven't yeah I haven't done it before. really, 'cause you haven't yeah I haven't done it before. assessed, scrutinised probably [laughs] there, it kind of feels I'd say generally trying to manage ... erm everything that I'm doing. But there's always a fear what if they say no, then what do I do! But there's always a fear what if they say no, then what do I do! But there's always a fear what if they say no, then what do I do! But yeah that's kind of important 'cause you have to yeah you have to every week, every day sometimes. So you have to kind of learn to you get used to probably, you don't really think about it as much as you did, or you kind of accept that that that's learn to you get used to probably, you don't really think about it as much as you did, or you kind of accept that that that's learn to you get used to probably, you don't really think about it as much as you did, or you kind of accept that that that's learn to you get used to probably, you don't really think about it as much as you did, or you kind of accept that that that's learn to you get used to probably, you don't really think about it as much as you did, or you kind of accept that that that's That's eh ... you do get used to it a little bit. there was definitely That's eh ... you do get used to it a little bit. there was definitely That's eh ... you do get used to it a little bit. there was definitely That's eh ... you do get used to it a little bit. there was definitely you kind of feel like if this is ever over, you know I don't want to you hate you know you kind of feel wh- what for?! Is it really you hate you know you kind of feel wh- what for?! Is it really

Appendix L: A Documentation of How Themes Were Arranged to Lead to Subthemes and Superordinate Themes for Zoe



Figure P1. A photograph of how emergent themes were manually arranged to lead to subthemes for Zoe.

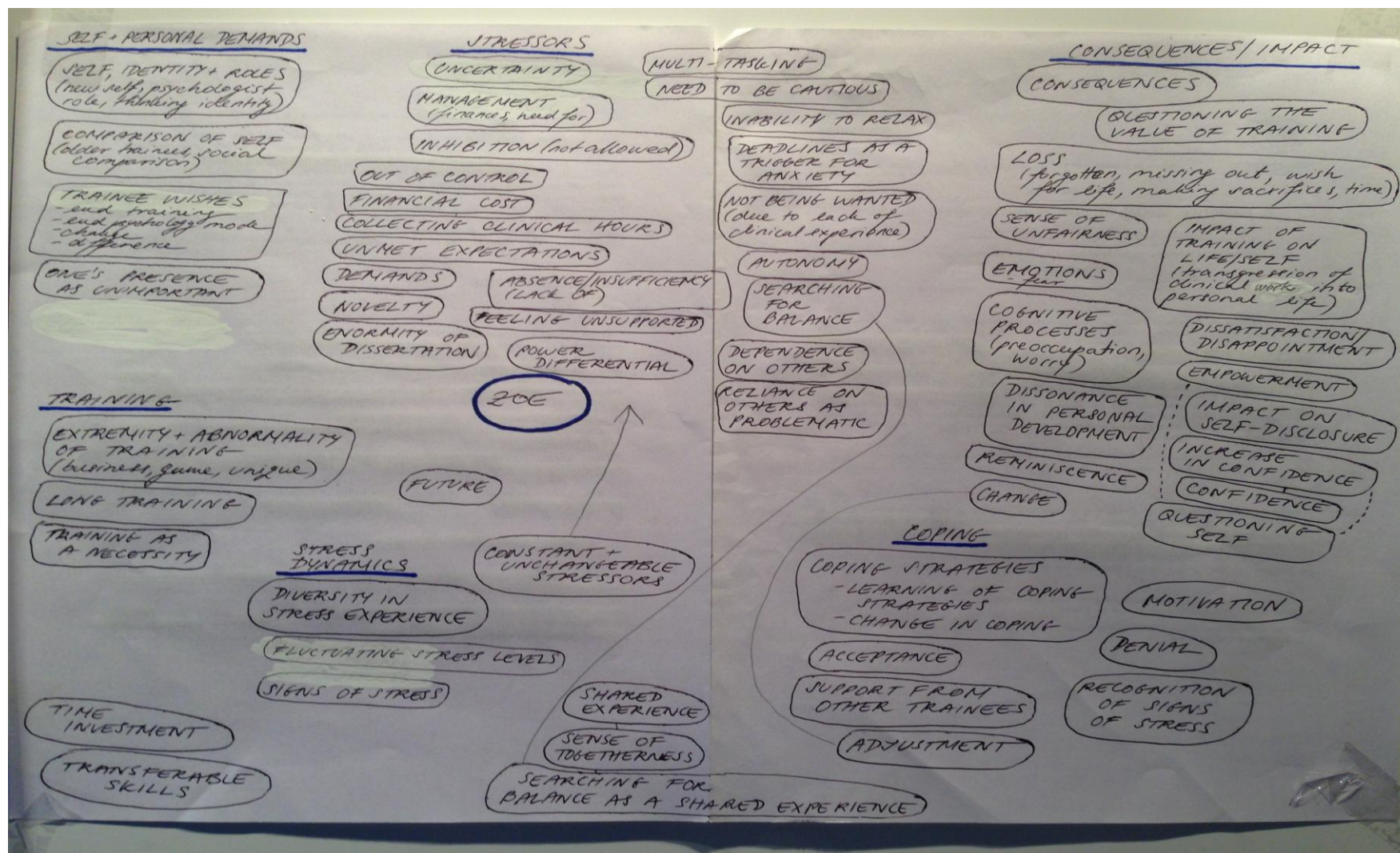


Figure P2. A Photograph of a theme map for Zoe.

A detailed list of subthemes, superordinate themes and corresponding key quotation for Zoe:

Self and personal demands

Self, identity, roles (new self, psychologist role, thinking identity)

“Sometimes you kind of yeah you give in to your role and you learn to do it so well () you know ((laughs)). It just becomes you after a while, doesn’t it?” (Z163)

Comparison of self (older trainees, social comparison)

Trainee wishes (end of training, end psychology mode, change, difference)

One’s presence as unimportant

Consequences/impact

Consequences

“Erm ... yeah it’s kind of difficult ‘cause you you know, you want to have a balance, you want to leave work at work. Erm so it’s kind of difficult ‘cause it feels like you’re carrying something that’s not really yours in a way sometimes.” (Z122)

Questioning the value of training

“It makes you hate the course sometimes. It makes you hate you know you kind of feel what for?! Is it really worth it what I’m doing? [...] I’m just not quite sure it’s worth it at the moment I have to say.” (Z698, Z715)

Questioning self

Sense of unfairness

Emotions (fear)

Inability to relax

Impact of training on life/ self (transgression of clinical work into personal life)

Cognitive processes (preoccupation, worry)

Increase in confidence

Confidence

Change

Dissatisfaction/ disappointment

“That’s eh ... you do get used to it a little bit. there was definitely times where I was ... yeah you just got so you know you feel like what kind of life is that. If you look at my diary it’s like there’s no space for anything.” (Z685, Z687)

Empowerment

Impact on self-disclosure

Loss

Inhibition (not allowed)

Reminiscence

Dissonance in personal development

Loss (forgotten, missing out, wish for life, making sacrifices, time)

“You’re missing out and you’re erm ... you can’t be young, you’re not allowed to be young, you have to be serious and mature ((laughs)) and you have to. You’re not allowed to be young.” (Zoe, line 801)

“I feel more more mature than perhaps I should at my age ((laughs)).” (Zoe, line 180)

"I spend so much time reflecting ((laughs)) that it kind of feels I just want to live, I want to be in in erm don't know, in a place where you can actually just do something, not think about it and be in the moment and enjoy it. Erm yeah and that's quite difficult when you don't you don't get that." (Z202)

Stressors

Uncertainty

Management (finances, need for)

Inhibition (not allowed)

"But now thinking about it, it kind of does make sense 'cause when you're when you're young you wanna experience life perhaps and you know be silly and do things, go out." (Z766)

Out of control

"So erm yeah you can't really stop it. Sometimes you're in the psychology mode all the time. Erm yeah that's kind of I suppose it gets better with practice I have to say. But there's definitely been times when I kind of I wished there was a switch and can turn it off." (Z136)

Financial cost

Collecting clinical hours

Unmet expectations

Demands

Novelty

Enormity of dissertation

Absence/ insufficiency (lack of)

Feeling unsupported

Power differential

Coping

Coping strategies (learning of coping strategies, change in coping)

Acceptance

Shared experiences

Shared experience

Sense of togetherness

Searching for balance as a shared experience

Support from other trainees

"Other people going through the same thing as you makes it a bit you know, normalises it a bit as well I suppose. 'Cause in your normal life other people that you know wouldn't have this kind of stressful but other people on your course would. So it kind of makes it you're not alone, there's other another XXX, XXX people kind of going through the same thing." (Z846)

Training

Extremity and abnormality of training

"'Cause that's kind of I find it a bit extreme 'cause I don't I don't know any other people who are going through as much stress in their lives." (Z957)

"So that's kind of something a bit, it's a unique experience, if I can call it that ((laughs)). A bit unusual." (Z965, Z968)

Long training

Training as a necessity

"So that's kind of something a bit, it's a unique experience, if I can call it that ((laughs)). A bit unusual." (Z965, Z968)

Stress dynamics

Diversity in stress experience

Fluctuating stress levels

Signs of stress

"So how do I experience, I suppose ... it kind of varies depending on what it is." (Z448)

Appendix M: A Summary Table of Superordinate Themes and Contributing Participants

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Contributing participants
1. Identifying ambivalence in training	1A. Stress as a dynamic and destructive element	Six out of eight
	1B. Stress as positive and integral	All except for Zoe
	1C. The unknown in training	Five out of eight
	1D. Questioning the worth of training	Four out of eight
2. The impact of training on self and self-and-other	2A. Lack of life outside of the training	All except for Holly
	2B. Risk of failure	Four out of eight
3. Managing the lack of boundaries in training	3A. Merging with the training	All except for Genevieve
	3B. Forced maturity	Six out of eight

Appendix N: A detailed table of superordinate themes and key quotes from each contributing participant

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	Key quote (participant name and line number)
Identifying ambivalence in training	Stress as a dynamic and destructive element	<p>“I think it’s designed to break you down. I felt that there wasn’t a part of my life that wasn’t impacted by it and that wasn’t ravaged by it.” (Holly, line 12)</p> <p>"[Other trainees] that was one of the things that was keeping my head above water." (Genevieve, line791)</p> <p>"You’re in the mountain of work, you’re in the mountain of kind of worries and stresses." (Samantha, line53)</p> <p>"[I] felt the breeze of comfort you know and air. I can breathe again." (Alexandra, line 635)</p> <p>"There have been times where I thought this course is gonna kill me." (Pamela, line 629)</p> <p>"So all that stress came up and I was just I felt sick to my stomach." (Macy, line 271)</p>
	Stress as positive and integral	<p>“It’s inevitable that we’re gonna experience stress and like also it’s a Doctorate and you can’t if you no- if it’s not gonna be challenging and if it’s not gonna be new and er difficult, then you know then there’s no point doing it really.” (Ciara, line 1232)</p> <p>"I don’t think this course is er easy for anyone. I think stress is part of it, I don’t think you can avoid that. [...] I will look back and be sort of glad that I did it and hopefully proud of how I came through [laughs], rather than thinking oh that was a complete nightmare, I would I wish I never did it." (Pamela, lines 611, 620)</p> <p>"I didn't love it but like it’s not worst thing that’s ever happened to me because I’ve grown so much from it." (Genevieve, line 2075)</p> <p>"I also have a very different experience that balances it you know. Erm so yeah that’s that’s</p>

why I think it's it's not just one thing, it's always there's a lot of ambivalence ((laughs)) in training you know. Pretty much everything has a very positive side to it and a quite erm demanding or challenging side to it." (Alexandra, line 209)

"So I don't know I mean I kind of I swing between thinking it's too much and thinking it has to be this way." (Holly, line 1958)

"Whereas now I think it's it's kind of a be- I'm starting to manage the stress or accept that yeah it's stressful, it's anxious, it's anxiety-provoking but it's gonna be there." (Samantha, line 588)

"I mean what else like it's stressful but it's like okay you're doing a doctorate like it's kind of like it's normal it's gonna be hard. But it's manageable." (Macy, line 1057)

The unknown in training "I think the most kind of stressful thing about that experience was kind of feeling like you didn't really know the ground that you were standing on." (Macy, line 62)

"I think when you're trying to live up to something er that you don't really know what you're trying to live up to er so there's this kind of just uncertainty around erm what I was supposed to be doing." (Ciara, line 27)

"I was just kind of what the fuck do I do. Do I completely fall apart and try and help them or do I keep myself intact and like put those boundaries up there like what what do I what do I do?! ((laughs)) What do I do?!" (Genevieve, line 733)

"The deadline is so close and we just we wanna get there but it's will we will we get there?" (Samantha, line 131)

"And you you you know you can't really plan anything 'cause you don't know exactly when you're gonna finish. Erm so yeah yeah and as I said you've seen so many people fail and you're aware that you might fail at any point. Erm yeah it's you just get on with it really and you can't really allow yourself to dream too much." (Zoe, line 387)

Questioning the worth of training

"It makes you hate the course sometimes. It makes you hate you know you kind of feel what for?! Is it really worth it what I'm doing? [...] yeah I'm just not quite sure it's worth it at the moment I have to say." (Zoe, lines 698, 715)

"As I'm approaching the end of the training. I'm thinking you know is this gonna pay back somehow like and you know not as blatantly as that but kind of I would like to get something out of this." (Alexandra, line 32)

"Like I was kind of questioning like like if this is what working life is gonna be like as a psychologist I don't want this, this is crap, I hate this ((laughs))." (Genevieve, line 381)

"Then you think oh you know I wish I could be working now why why did I put myself through this." (Samantha, line 56)

The impact of training on self and self-and-other
Lack of life outside of the training

"Like I was just in this bubble of the course disconnected from everything else." (Ciara, line 1191)

"I feel like er this is my life at the moment I feel like I don't have a life outside of my training ... it feels like it's my life. Erm it's it's like it's taken over taken over so psychology is everything. ... I don't feel like I have much of a life outside of my training." (Pamela, line 78)

"Actually you know that's a common joke that we that we have like with other trainees that erm we don't have a normal life. Like training is like an altered state of consciousness that you're in." (Alexandra, line 284)

"I want to do this course because I enjoy it, I'm not gonna put my o- the rest of my life on hold because of this. I need I've got things to do in my life and you know this is just one of them." (Samantha, line 986)

"Erm yeah it just feels like so much time I suppose so you I want to use the term invest I

suppose in this course where you kind of you don't really live, you don't really have a social life, you don't really." (Zoe, line 225)

"Erm ... but yeah I definitely don't want that stress anymore. I want my weekends back like I want to have a normal life." (Macy, line 1095)

"I guess it's about like erm for me what I really have to do to be careful is to make my life because the doctorate is such a big part of my life and academia and my career are such a big part of my life to make my life made up of lots of things." (Genevieve, line 1816)

Risk of failure

“So there isn't any leeway so if you make the smallest amount of mistakes, smallest mistake, that's it. [...] I just feel like you're kind of walking on a tightrope, I guess that's how I could say it. So if you make the wrong step, then you fall. [...] There's no step or you can't even catch yourself. Oh you just fall like to the gutter to the pits of hell.” (Macy, lines 417, 432, 1970)

"You know like kind of like erm actually my course is too important for me to for somebody like 'cause I could just so easily fuck that up. You know like I it's so easy like I could be I could walking on eggshells and I could trip." (Genevieve, line 1034)

"I think it it's this whole balancing balancing act balancing your thoughts, balancing you know what you do." (Samantha, line 788)

“Erm ... 'cause you have to at some point you have to show incompetency and then you don't really know how it's gonna be taken or whether you know they're they're gonna think that's okay that you're incompetent in that or are they gonna think wow, she's still incompetent in that.” (Ciara, line 186)

Managing the lack of Merging with the training
boundaries in training

"That's what's that's made me defence mechanism." (Macy, line 764)

"You have to write these lists because otherwise you're gonna forget things. 'Cause there's

so much to to to keep in your head about what you have to do and when you have to have done by. Erm and we're the research now it's like I just feel like everything that I'm it's just it's just like this whole new thing." (Ciara, line 481)

"It was like I've I wasn't even a real person anymore you know. I was just this thesis machine. Erm so yeah so that was tough." (Holly, line 1096)

"Sometimes you kind of yeah you give in to your role and you learn to do it so well () you know ((laughs)). It just becomes you after a while, doesn't it?" (Zoe, line 163)

"Erm I don't know if it will be different if if I had like a family or a partner or I had more hobbies, maybe I would feel less like it's all me you know, this training is all me. But erm I guess I just feel over time it's kind of taken over and it's been all about the training. [...] Erm and I think the only way I can do that is by letting it consume me ((laughs))." (Pamela, lines 556, 586)

"Erm I just know that I you know in ours training proceeds I sort of see myself more as a same person in all these different roles if that makes sense. Erm so I'm not you know student-me, trainee-me, therapist-me ((laughs)). It's more of like you know Alexandra doing this and doing that and doing that. Whereas it used to be a bit more fragmented earlier in the training." (Alexandra, line 228)

"I think now again I keep referring back to this learning process. I've learned that you know I'm I'm not just a trainee, I'm not just me as a trainee and that's all my life. I think I've learned that I do have other parts of my life, I am you know a daughter, a sister, an auntie you know, a partner erm and I am I'm all of these things but I think when I first came on the course, eve- everything was just I'm just a trainee, this is me, this is what I do and I think I think that increases the stress as well." (Samantha, line 346)

Forced maturity

"At first yeah I was a bit like oh shit like and it would kind of effect the way that I dressed for placement, I'd try to dress to make myself look a bit older and I think I probably still do that actually." (Genevieve, line 1202)

"You're missing out and you're erm ... you can't be young, you're not allowed to be young, you have to be serious and mature ((laughs)) and you have to. You're not allowed to be young." (Zoe, line 801)

"Yeah I mean maybe I'm reading too much into it but I do feel like there's definitely a gang initiation type of vibe to it. [...]I mean I think there is a trial by fire that we all counselling psychologists have to go through." (Holly, lines 1879, 1933)

"I'm still you know kind of living as the erm you know not the kid but you know I I get money from my parents, I get support from my parents and at the same time I don't have anyone who's dependent on me." (Alexandra, line 729)

"So I guess erm ... I've changed in the sense that I I feel more confident, I feel a little bit more grown up. Erm because I'm sort of spending a lot of time with professionals erm and you know psychologists, erm I feel more able to speak in meeting, which I couldn't do in the first year." (Pamela, line 493)

"You have this is your responsibility, this is your baby, you need to do it." (Samantha, line 628)

Appendix O: Ethical clearance certificate from the research ethics review panel, London

Metropolitan University



London Metropolitan University,
School of Psychology,
Research Ethics Review Panel

I can confirm that the following project has received ethical clearance to proceed:

Title: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of how young final year female trainees experience major stressors in counselling psychology doctoral training - How do these trainees experience academic demands, client work, organisational stressors and personal stressors?

*Student: **Eva Sykorova***

Supervisors: Dr Mark Donati and Dr Russel Ayling

Ethical clearance to proceed has been granted providing that the study follows the ethical guidelines used by the School of Psychology and British Psychological Society, and incorporates any relevant changes required by the Research Ethics Review Panel. All participating organisations should provide formal consent allowing the student to collect data from their staff.

The researcher is also responsible for conducting the research in an ethically acceptable way, and should inform the ethics panel if there are any substantive changes to the project that could affect its ethical dimensions, and re-submit the proposal if it is deemed necessary.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dr Chandler".

Date: 29/01/13

Dr Chris Chandler
(Chair - School of Psychology Research Ethics Review Panel)
chandler@staff.londonmet.ac.uk