A Portfolio of Academic, Therapeutic Practice and Research Work including an investigation into Living Apart Together: an alternative to remarriage in later life

Helen Nicholas
University of Surrey

Submitted for the degree of Doctorate in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Psychology.

Department of Psychology
Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences
University of Surrey

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Abstract

The process of becoming a counselling psychologist brings with it a deep sense of self-awareness and reflection. This portfolio endeavours to capture and reflect on my personal and professional development over my three years on the PsychD psychotherapeutic and counselling training course at the University of Surrey. The portfolio focuses on the academic, therapeutic practice and research work compiled during the training and a compilation of selected works are shown in this portfolio. Academically, it covers three essays, which focus on relationships – the relationship between couples and the therapeutic relationship between client and counselling psychologist. The first two papers focus on older adults and how counselling psychologists can work with this client group. The topics covered include lifespan development, transference and countertransference within the psychodynamic model and homework tasks in the cognitive behavioural therapy framework. The theoretical perspectives covered include humanistic models, psychodynamic approaches and cognitive-behaviour therapy approaches. These are set within specific placements, which illustrate how my interactions with clients have been informed and structured in the various therapeutic settings. Three research pieces were engaged with, including a literature review that examines 'Living Apart Together' (LAT) relationships as an alternative to remarriage or cohabitation after divorce or widowhood in later life. This was followed by an explorative study into five participants' experience of their LAT relationship and uses interpretative phenomenological analysis. The third research paper explores the experiences of business travellers in relation to finding a work/life balance. Thematic analysis was used to explore how the participants' experience the interface between work and family and how they experience their time apart and together with their family.

Statement of copyright

Statement of anonymity

Throughout this portfolio all names and places have been replaced with pseudonyms and identifying information has been significantly altered or omitted in order to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of clients and research participants.

Acknowledgements

I feel deeply appreciative of the myriad of relationships and influences that have directly and indirectly been part of my development and learning, including the course team, clients, research participants and my fellow trainees. They have all, in their own special way, influenced my development as a counselling psychologist. Further thanks go to Gwyneth Greene for her personal support and Welsh humour that often provided me with clarity when things seemed difficult.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this culmination of work to my family who have seen me develop personally and professionally. Furthermore, to those individuals who have been instrumental in my development throughout my life and to those I continue to learn from.

Contents

Research Dossier

Introduction to the portfolio

This portfolio contains a selection of the work that has been submitted during my training as a counselling psychologist over the last three years. It is structured into three dossiers: academic, therapeutic practice and research, which are linked by my professional and personal experiences and my own position in relation to counselling psychology. This portfolio is also a personal account of the process of becoming a counselling psychologist and endeavours to capture and reflect on my development throughout training. I will use self-reflection, where I reflect on my internal world, in order to offer the reader a more personal account and to highlight my self-as-therapist. My challenge has also been to outline my own 'reality' and the way I make meaning of my experiences whilst keeping in mind the limits of that 'reality'.

My interest and consequent pursuit of a career in psychology began many years ago when I enrolled onto the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree course with the University of South Africa. I therefore see his PsychD course as a culmination of a number of decisions I have made along the way based on my perception of the choices available to me at the time. Indeed, the two themes of 'choice' and 'decisions' seem to run throughout the portfolio, although this was not something that I was consciously aware of until I started to select the pieces for this portfolio. Although these themes have been done retrospectively, reflecting on my own journey they do resonate with me, which makes me believe that my own unconscious process were at play. I would like to start by highlighting some of the choices and decisions I have made that have been instrumental to my own process of becoming a counselling psychologist.

I imagine that my first 'real' decision was to complete a BA degree, where I majored in psychology and communication, followed by a separate Honours degree in psychology. My decision to complete this through correspondence, part-time possibly goes further to highlight my determination, independence and motivation to follow a career in psychology, whilst supporting myself

financially in full-time employment. These values are a core part of my personality and I believe that they have added to my sense of self. After immigrating to the UK, from South Africa some years ago, I took on a variety of volunteer and paid positions as a support worker, health care assistant and assistant psychologist. In these positions I worked with a diverse range of clients in a variety of therapeutic settings. My last role before beginning this course was as an assistant psychologist, where I worked clinically and therapeutically with older adults. My educational and work experiences have served to reinforce the choices and decision I made to pursue a career in psychology.

Academic dossier

The academic dossier contains three academic essays written during the course of my training. All the essays relate to personal relationships and include relationships between couples as well as the therapeutic relationship. Once again the themes of 'choice' and 'decisions' are also present throughout this dossier.

The first essay presented is the lifespan development essay from my first year of training and explores the choices and constraints that older adults may face when considering entering into a new relationship, following divorce or the death of a spouse in later adulthood. I believe I was drawn to this topic because of my previous knowledge and experience of working with older adults, together with my enjoyment of working with this client group. In my second essay, written from a psychodynamic perspective, I focused on the issues of transference and countertransference when working therapeutically with older adults. I was particularly struck by Freud's views that individuals over the age of 50 are no longer capable of being educated or taught and I felt a need to concentrate my efforts on portraying a more open and positive approach to working with older adults, thus taking a more critical stance.

These two papers are further linked in that they focus on a client group that I feel is often under-explored. I am very aware of being drawn to this client group and it was for this reason that I have chosen to include an essay that focuses on the therapeutic relationship that is not specific to older adults. In the third essay, I discuss whether homework tasks constrict the therapeutic relationship in CBT. I was drawn to this topic because of a few experiences in my therapeutic work with clients. Through writing this essay, I became more aware of the rationale of homework tasks within the CBT framework. It also enabled me to explore my own process of transition from working within the psychodynamic approach to immersing myself in the concepts of the CBT model.

Therapeutic practice dossier

In addition to the taught and research elements of my training I have also worked for two days a week as a trainee counselling psychologist in various therapeutic settings. This dossier includes a description of these three clinical placements and focuses on my therapeutic work in each setting over the past three years. I have also completed a log book for each placement and two client study/process reports have been submitted each year. In order to maintain client confidentially, these are not included in this portfolio but form part of the appendix to the portfolio and the reader may choose to read these.

The dossier also contains my final clinical paper which gives the reader a 'bird's eye view' of my journey and an opportunity to enter into my own 'reality' as a trainee counselling psychologist. It further explores my professional and personal development and aims to reflect on my understanding and recognition of factors that have influence my decision and choice to enter into a career in counselling psychology.

Research Dossier

The research dossier contains three research reports that were submitted over the three years. It comprises a literature review that I conducted in the first year and two pieces of qualitative research that I conducted in the second and third year respectively.

For my literature review I chose to examine a new concept called living apart together (LAT), where couples choose to be in a relationship and live separately. The review explored the idea of LAT as an alternate to remarriage in older adults and highlights LAT as a possible relationship choice available to individuals in later life. This is very much linked to my core value of my practice, which is related to client's autonomy and their ability to make choices and decisions for themselves.

My second paper arose as a consequence of observations made while conducting my literature review. I had been struck by the perceived lack of choice when it came to forming new relationships in later life, in particular following divorce or death of a spouse. As LAT was a relatively new concept, I believed that my research could potentially contribute to the understanding of the choices and decisions older adults go through when thinking about forming a new relationship. I felt that this was particularly relevant to counselling psychologists working with clients engaged in this decision-making process. This research was also my introduction into carrying out qualitative research and helped me to think about my stance as a researcher and practitioner.

In the third research paper, I remained true to my interest in couple relationships and chose to undertake a study into the impact of business travel on work and family from the business traveller's perspective. I used a qualitative research method to analyse the data as I hoped that it would provide me with the opportunity to gain a more comprehensive appreciation of

qualitative methodology, which could assist me in developing a more informed research perspective.

Conclusion

Compiling this portfolio has encouraged me to reflect on my three years of training and I am now more able to see the process that has been instrumental in defining me as the practitioner I am today. I have realised that I have some strong interests and inclinations that I was only partly aware of before. In selecting the various papers to include in this portfolio, I have chosen to edit some of the documents, based on the feedback obtained from markers. I have attempted to make the appropriate choices about the amount of editing in order to maintain my opinions and views. In doing so, I have decided that some papers required more editing than others but hope that I have been able to retain and convey my progress over the three years as well as compile a portfolio that is a true reflection of my development as a practitioner and researcher.

Academic Dossier

Introduction to the Academic Dossier

This academic dossier is a collection of three academic essays selected from the academic assignments submitted during the course of my training. I have chosen my lifespan development essay from the first year and the theoretical models of therapy essays from year 2 and year 3. The first essay explores the choices and constraints that older adults may face when considering entering into a new relationship, following divorce or the death of a spouse in later adulthood. This was written at an early stage of my training and drew upon my previous knowledge and experience of working with older adults. It reflects my own position on individual's autonomy and the decision-making processes individuals go through. It also highlights the options available to older adults, such as a new concept – Living Apart Together (LAT). It outlines the possibilities of new relationships following divorce or widowhood, which is not restricted to remarriage.

In my second essay, written in my second year, I considered the therapeutic relationship in relation to psychodynamic theory. It focuses on issues of transference and countertransference when working with older adults. The essay also highlights my own interest in working with this client group and provides an insight into the therapist's need for reflection on their own views of ageing and working with this client group.

The third essay considered whether homework tasks, a key feature of the CBT approach, constrict the therapeutic relationship between the client and the trainee counselling psychologist. It draws on clinical examples and is reflective of my own processes of recommending homework to clients. The first two essays are specific to, but not exclusively relevant to, older adults. The essays are also linked from a relational perspective, where I have considered the process of autonomy, perceived choices available to clients and their decision-making processes.

Discuss the choices and constraints relevant to decisions about new sexual and emotional relationships following divorce or the death of a spouse in late adulthood. Consider how these factors might influence psychological well-being among older adults who are engaged in this decision-making process.

Introduction

For some, the end of marriage means the loss of an intimate life partner, confidant, or friend. For others, it may represent the loss of a handyman, domestic help, mechanic, or financial advisor. The true nature of the loss depends on the history of the relationship with the spouse. When two people enter a marriage they begin to function as a team. Couples have certain responsibilities and may allocate daily tasks in order to capitalise on each spouse's strength. When marriage comes to an end, whether through death or divorce, the surviving spouse becomes responsible for all the tasks of daily life, including those that were previously managed by the late or former spouse. They must do this whilst also grieving the loss of an intimate personal relationship. The goal of a single older person is to rebuild their life so that it reflects their new reality as a single older person. The biggest challenge is therefore what Ginsburg (2005) terms 'uncoupling' where a person evolves from 'one half of a couple to a whole person'. The Dual process model of coping with bereavement (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) explains that bereaved persons alternate between loss orientated and restoration oriented coping tasks. The bereaved must address the social, psychological, financial and instrumental losses associated with the end of a marriage.

Studies have shown that married people live longer and have better health than unmarried people (Burman & Margolin, 1992; Ross et al., 1990). Divorcing or becoming a widow had more negative health effects on individuals than those who had never been married (Pienta et al., 2000). Older adult's level of well-being is crucially determined by their living arrangements. Living together as a couple is the living arrangement that provides older men

and women with the greatest possibilities for social integration (de Jong Gierveld, 2004). Living arrangements include living alone, moving in with their children, congregate living, remarrying or being in a relationship without remarriage. Remarriage may be one of the ways older adults can reduce economic and physical decline.

The death of a spouse represents more than the severing of an emotional attachment to one's partner and confidante (Bowlby, 1980) and the necessary adjustments remain a pressing concern for older bereaved. The bereaved must reconstruct their daily lives to reflect their new status as an unmarried person. This process typically involves modifying their daily decisions, household tasks and routine responsibilities that were once shared by both spouses. The personal strain is often considerable, and is most acute for those who were highly dependent on their spouses prior to death.

Theoretical explanation

According to the activity theory (Cavan et al., 1949) ageing brings individual unadjustment. Through activity, however, readjustment and life satisfaction can be achieved. The theory holds that, although ageing individuals face inevitable changes related to physiology, anatomy and health status, their psychological and social needs remain essentially the same. Living alone means that companionship, solidarity, assistance and care have to come from outside the household. It therefore increases the need to create and maintain a supportive network of family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues and others (de Jong Grieveld, 2003). Older widows tend to seek out male companionship in a variety of ways and to some extent their attendance at church and other social functions is related to this need (McKain, 1972).

The disengagement theory (Cumming & Henry, 1961) represents a transformation or new way of thinking about ageing that shifted the focus away from the individual to the social system as the source of explanation. Important disengagement includes the departure of children from families as

well as retirement and widowhood. The continuity theory holds that middle-aged and older adults make adaptive choices in an effort to preserve ties with their own past experiences. Pressures and attractions that move people toward internal continuity include the importance of cognitive continuity for maintaining mastery and competence, a sense of ego integrity, and self-esteem. Indeed, these theories were originated over four decade ago, but still add to our understanding of the process of ageing. More recent studies have shown that bereaved women report positive feelings, such as self-confidence, enhanced ability to cope with stress and a renewed sense of self-reliance (Davidson, 2001; Bennett, 1997) In addition, many widows enjoy a sense of freedom and independence once the most intense grieving period is passed (Lopata, 1996). External continuity involves memory of the physical and social environments of one's past, including role relationships and activities. Older people may be motivated toward external continuity by the expectations of others, the desire for predictable social support, or the need to cope with physical and mental health changes as well as changes in social roles involving the empty nest, widowhood, or retirement stage. Widowers experience psychological distress because of difficulty managing homemaking tasks, a lack of close confiding relationships (Peters & Liefbroer, 1997) and the absence of wives health-maintenance behaviour and practices that their wives previously handled. Older divorced men are also more likely than other older men to be socially isolated from family and friends and to engage in more risky health behaviours such as smoking and high alcohol consumption.

Choices and constraints of repartnering

Hatch (1995) developed an analytical framework for explaining choices and constraints for cohabitation in a population of people over the age of forty-five years in the United States. This framework was adapted from Dixon (1971) for explaining age at marriage and proportions never marrying. Dixon identified three conditions, which intervene between social structure and marriage patterns. They are the availability of mates, feasibility of marriage and the desirability of marriage.

The availability of partners is primarily a result of the sex ratio of eligible people available for new partnership formations. According to the 2001 UK Census (Office of population censuses and surveys, 2001) marriage was the norm for older men, whereas older women were more likely to be widowed than married. For those who were not in a partnership, the norm was to live alone. In 2001, 22% of older men and 44% of older women lived alone and the proportion increased with age. In addition, with advancing age, increasing proportions of older people lived without a partner but with their children (6.7% of women and 3.7% of men aged 85 and over). Similarly, the proportion living with others (not their children) increased with age, reaching 7.6% of women and 6.1% of men aged 85 and over. By 2005 (ONS, 2005) older adults aged 60 and over accounted for 5.7% (men) and 3.3% (women) of the total divorce rate. Older women were much more likely than older men to live in a communal establishment. For those aged 85 and over, the proportion of women living in such a setting in 2001 was double that of men of the same age (23% compared with 12%).

Feasibility is determined largely by variables such as age, health and financial assets, which influence selection of a partner. If a widower has poor health and poor finances, the feasibility of new partnership formation is reduced, however, poor health alone is not a significant barrier to repartnering (Davidson, 2004).

Desirability is the intensity of the motivation to form a new relationship, which in turn is frequently governed by societal and familial expectations. Older adults might be faced with opposition from family and friends when considering remarriage or a new relationship. Society tends to discount remarriage late in life as a viable option (McKain, 1972) and there is often direct and open opposition to a remarriage by family members. Remarriage between younger adults have the stress of relating to a new kin network, building a relationship with young stepchildren, and raising children. However, dealing with adult children in the situation of remarriage in later adulthood is

qualitatively different from the task of trying to establish and be accepted in a viable parental role with young stepchildren. Many adult children have trouble visualising their parents, especially their mother as being sexual adults outside the parental role (Brecher, 1984; McKain, 1972). Remarriage also represents a potential disruption to the financial and complex emotional interdependencies between the generations. Specifically, the children may fear their inheritance will be lost or the transfer complicated by the remarriage. Indeed, the acceptance of the remarriage by family and friends is a determinant factor in the success of the remarriage and the reassurance from friends and the support of children are needed to overcome social pressures, real and imagined, that threaten the marriage. At least 25% of McKain's (1972) sample reported they almost decided against remarriage because of the social pressure. However, the couples also reported that children who were initially against the marriage, approved later when the saw the resulting happiness. Furthermore, in western countries like the United States and the Netherlands there are financial disincentives for older people to remarry since social security and old-age pensions are negatively affected by remarriage. Davidson's (2004) research showed that contrary to the commonly held view that older widows do not have new partnerships primarily because of the lack of available mates, an important intervening condition is choice. The older widows in her study did not desire a new relationship.

Loneliness and the desire for companionship are the most common reasons for remarriage amongst older people. Loneliness is one of the long-term consequences of loss of a spouse (Dugan & Kivett, 1994). A study done by Lopata (1979) showed that younger widows and widowers were more likely to move after the loss, whereas older individuals were more likely to remain in the home they lived in at the time of the death. Living alone can lead to intense feelings of loneliness, particularly intensified by living alone in the same physical surroundings previously shared with the spouse. Some older adults cannot continue to live alone after the death of a spouse and may require institutional care. There is anecdotal evidence to support the fact that older people who are forced to move out of their homes after losing a spouse

may be at higher risk of mortality. A further study into loneliness in older adults (Dykstra, 1995) examined the importance of having a partner and the desirability of being single among formerly and never married older people. Widowers and divorced men, in this study, rated being single as least desirable and gave the highest desirability rating to being partnered. Widows rated being single more positively than widowers and the desirability of being partnered less highly. Widowed people often miss both the intimacy of the relationship with the partner and the social life that they lead as a couple and are thus vulnerable to both emotional loneliness and social isolation (Weiss, 1973).

Repartnering at older ages creates diverse new marital and extra-marital families and complicated household patterns. Stevens (2004) identified various issues that need to be resolved if a new partnership is to develop and continue. These include, agreeing on the form that the relationship will take, whether sexuality will be involved, whether or not to live together, where to live together (if this is the choice) and which activities the couple will share and which will be continued separately. Furthermore couples need to think about how to integrate the memories of and loyalty to the former partner in the new relationship without having them interfere with the relationship. This includes dealing with conflicting loyalties between children, friends, family (in law) on the one hand and the new partner on the other hand.

In addition to having to negotiate such issues with potential partners, many widows and widowers engage in a kind of internal dialogue involving different voices or selves; the self that is loyal to the original partner, the self that longs to be part of a couple, the sexual self, the independent self and the self as a parent (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

Indeed, remarriage is one of the choices available to older adults to combat loneliness, however, there are many factors that need to be taken into account. In Talbott's (1998) study she looked at older widows' interest in men and their attitude to remarriage. The widows' views of their previous marriage

were instrumental in their decision whether to remarry or not. Factors such as the merit of their deceased husband, scarcity of older men, health, mobility, finances and the absence of incentives common to younger people (e.g. conforming to life-cycle timing) influenced the older persons decision to remarry or enter into a new relationship.

An increasing number of older adults choose either flexible partner relationships such as unmarried cohabitation or living apart together (LAT) as an alternative to remarriage. LAT is a lasting intimate relationship, which does not include a mutual household. Individuals retain their own separate homes and one-person households, but from time to time live together. This allows older adults to continue to maintain their independent decisions about their daily activities (de Jong Grieveld, 2003). LAT relationships can offer older divorcees, widows and widowers a fulfilling intimate relationship, but they can also ensure a significant degree of individual autonomy. Thus an awareness of alternatives to a traditional marital relationship such as LAT, may tip the balance in the process of weighing advantages and risks of engaging in new partnerships.

Conclusion

There is a broad range of adjustments that older adults face upon the dissolution of marriage or widowhood. In addition to psychological distress, older adults encounter social, economic, health and behavioural consequences after divorce or spousal loss. Certain health issues are much more prominent in later life marriages and financial issues will be different in later life than they are early in a marriage. Although both widowhood and divorce mark the end of a marital relationship, it is important to consider whether older widows or divorcees are subjected to the same types of stressors and adjustments. Comparative analysis would allow practitioners to address the variety of needs of the older single adult.

Clearly there is limited research in this area, which highlights the need to focus more attention on remarriages among older adults and other options available to older single people. Learning about the experience of divorce and remarriage for all members of the family can help practitioners to better meet the needs of older adults through prevention and intervention strategies. Single older adults do have several choices available to them, however, social and family pressures might hinder their decision. An awareness of our own values and thoughts of remarriage, cohabitation or LAT, enables the counselling psychologist to explore older adults' readjustment, choices, decision-making processes and possible constraints by helping them cope more effectively with their decision to repartner or not.

A further consideration for counselling psychologists is that just as spousal loss disrupts daily routine and activities, widowhood also alters the ways that older adults experience annual or periodic activities and celebrations. Mental health professionals base important professional decisions on the assumption that the bereaved are likely to experience heightened grief on special occasions such as wedding anniversaries, major holidays and their deceased spouse's birthday. Special events are believed to trigger memories of the deceased spouse and are accompanied by feelings of sadness, yearning and grief (Rosenblat, 1983). Psychological reactions may ebb and flow based on time and place and particular days and locations may elicit pleasant or painful memories of the deceased spouse. This needs to be taken into consideration within the therapeutic relationship.

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Working with older adults: Issues of transference and countertransference within the therapeutic relationship.

Introduction

The largest percentage growth in population in 2006 was at ages 85 and over (5.9%, ONS, 2008). In 2006, 16% of the UK population are aged 65 or over and the number of people over 85 now stands at 1.2 million (ONS, 2008). The term third age, third being after childhood and parenthood, has been used when describing older adults in later life. The third age is defined as the period between 50 and 74 years where there is increasing freedom from the structures of work and of family with dependent children and precedes what for some is a period of increasing disability after 75 in the fourth age. (Murphy, 2000).

Freud commented that "near or above the age of 50 the elasticity of mental processes, on which the treatment depends is, as a rule lacking – older people are no longer educable" (Freud, 1905). Freud did not consider that people in the second half of life could benefit from psychoanalysis, however, his colleague Abraham (1919) considered that the age at which onset of neurosis occurred was more important than the age at which the patient started treatment. Many psychotherapists have worked successfully with older patients and have considered the transference and countertransference issues which come with working with this patient group (Segal, 1958; Hildebrand, 1982 & 1995; Hunter, 1989). Hildebrand (1987) challenges any concept that older people are passive during psychotherapy and observes that "countertransferentially old people, with their vivid and often enormously strong sexual and aggressive fantasies, make enormous demands of us" (p.120). For Erikson (1959) late life is about putting one's life into perspective and negotiating between ego integrity and despair. Erikson believed that much of life is preparing for the middle adulthood stage and the eighth/last development stage involves much reflection. Older adults may be able to look back on their life and feel integrity, contentment and fulfilment, having led a

meaningful life and made a valuable contribution to society. Others may have a sense of despair during this stage, reflecting upon experiences and failures. Erikson's wife, Joan, felt a responsibility to rethink the eighth stage of human development. After her husband's death she continued their work, using his notes and her own ideas to add a ninth stage of development. She proposed that in the ninth stage the previously resolved crisis points are revisited (Erikson, 1998). Successful completion of the ninth stage would move an individual towards gerotranscendence. Gerotranscendence was coined in part to revive an interest in the disengagement theory of ageing (Tornstam, 1989) and is regarded as a natural developmental process which, when optimised, leads to a new perspective. Gerotranscendence is a shift in metaperspectives from a material and rational view of the world to a more cosmic and transcendental one, normally accompanied by an increase in life satisfaction (Wadensten, 2005).

The experiences of therapists working psychodynamically with older adults have been considered (Knight, 1996; Orbach, 1994; Semel, 1996 and Nordhus & Nielsen, 1999). One of the leading themes in working with people who are older is the weighing of external realities in old age such as illness, accumulation of loss, traumatic history and sheer life experience (Davenhill, 2007). This essay will explore the issues of transference and counter-transference within the therapeutic relationship when working with older adults.

Transference

Transference was the term Freud gave to the situation where a person treats another person as if they were someone else from their past. Transference occurs when the patient behaves towards the therapist as if the therapist were someone else previously familiar to them. The patient begins to transfer feelings, both positive and negative, to the therapist, although the patient is usually unaware of the specific manifestation of his transferred behaviour. Freud's article 'the dynamics of transference' in 1912 was devoted to the

transference (Strachey & Richards, 1991). He explains how the analyst must take into account the affective qualities inherent in the transference and distinguishes between the 'positive' transference, where affectionate feelings are dominant from the 'negative' transference where feelings are predominantly hostile. Freud wrote:

"... we find that the cause of the disturbance is that the patient has transferred on to the doctor intense feelings of affection which are justified neither by the doctors behaviour nor by the situation that has developed during the treatment. The form in which this affection is expressed and what its aims are, depend of course on the personal relation between two people involved."
(Freud, PG 492 lecture 27 – transference)

King (1980) describes older people as operating within various time-scales: chronological, psychological, biological and alongside these, the time-scale of unconscious processes, which are timeless. King states that such an understanding of the time-scale for an older person within a session is an important key to understanding the transference phenomena of the patient. Mann's model of time-limited therapy suggests that time-limited therapy requires patients to deal with the dread of time and its implications for losses. The age of the therapist may also need to be taken into consideration, including their own perception of the passage of time and its meaning (Critchley-Robbins, 2004).

The development of an attachment bond in patient relationships with therapists or counsellors has been characterised as transference of childhood feelings toward parent figures in a similar relational position. It seems likely that such transference would most often occur when individuals feel themselves inadequate to the challenges confronting them and seeks a strengthening alliance. The definition of the therapist or counsellor as wiser and more knowledgeable may also play a role. Attachment relationships appear to be of special importance for the maintenance of feelings of security,

just as relationships of community appear to be of special importance for goal attainment (Parkes et al., 1991).

When working with older adults, the transference may include the therapist as parent, child, grandchild, spouse / lover or an authority figure. The transference may be stronger if a person is experiencing an increasingly bleak life, where friends and family frequently die. The 'rule of anonymity' allows transference to develop. Patients can see an anonymous psychotherapist as a mother or father figure, as a sibling or any other significant person in their life (Dryden & Mytton, 1999). The therapist is treated as the repository of hopes and fears, shame and delights, aspirations or guilt in terms of the past and also of the future. As Hildebrand (1986) states, "this is a future that may or may not include the older patient, for whom personal death is a far more concrete reality than for the younger patient".

The therapist as the parent. This type of transference is more likely to occur if the patient is ill or disabled and is regressing emotionally in response to increased physical dependency or when the patient's relationship to the parent was extremely difficult and is still unresolved, for example in child abuse or incest.

The therapist as the child. This transference is unique to the specific parent-child relationship with which the patient is working. When working with older adults, being seen as a child does not imply being immature. The child transference is more likely to come between a middle-aged therapist and an older patient or between an older therapist and an even older patient (Knight, 1986). Often with older adults this type of transference comes from unresolved conflicts dating back to the child's struggle for independence as a teenager or younger adult. A healthier older adult who sees the therapist as a parent or an educator may sell his own abilities short. Given that the therapist recognises the child transference, exploration of relationships with the child's children and interpretation of the transference in the usual manner can be of great benefit to the patient.

The therapist as the grandchild. A frequent transference is to perceive the therapist as a grandchild. Research suggests that the grandchild may be idealised. Negative transference may occur when the grandchild is perceived as emotionally distant, threateningly different or competing for the middle generation's time and love.

The therapist as the spouse, at a younger age. When the patient is the caregiver to a very disabled spouse, the transference takes the form of the therapist being seen as being like the spouse early in life, at a time roughly corresponding to the therapist's perceived age. I first met Mr P, a 65-year-old man, who cared for his wife who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease whilst working in an NHS service for older adults. During our therapy sessions, he would often describe his situation as "caring for a small child again". The lack of social support and his need to be supported by me was evident throughout our therapy session and the transference was strong in terms of his emotional dependency on me.

Erotic transference.

You think it horrible that lust and rage
Should dance attention upon my old age
                              ('The Spur', W.B. Yeats)

This type of transference can be part of therapy with patients at any age. It is however, rarely mentioned in discussion of therapy with older people. The omission is likely due to the general difficulty that younger adults have in thinking of the older person as sexual human beings. Romantic transference can also be a source of humiliation for the patient. A common myth about old age is that older people are sexually inactive, and are to all intents and purposes, 'sexless' or asexual. Studies in several countries show that the main constraints on sexual activity among elderly people are social not biological (Gibson, 1984). Sex researchers have found that the most important

determinant of sexual activity is not age, but having access to a regular partner. Medical research has also begun to comment on the positive and life-enhancing aspects of sexuality, hugging, touching and orgasm (Fennell, 2002; Smith et al., 1997) and having an intimate, confiding relationship is an acknowledged antidote to the risk of depression when life events are adverse (Brown & Harris, 1978). Actually there is no interruption in sexual needs, interest and capacity even in very advanced age.

The therapist as the social authority figure. The patient may expect the therapist to make major decisions, to intervene on his/her behalf to others and to provide answers and direction rather than exploration and growth. The therapist needs to be clear about the boundaries of appropriate and inappropriate use of status and communicate clearly to the patient the boundaries of his/her role in that relationship. Some frail older adults may see the therapist as a rescuer, whereas others may feel as though therapists represents an envied competitor with whom they can no longer compete, thereby leading them to view therapy as a demeaning circumstance (Morgan, 2003).

Countertransference

As a result of the therapy session, the therapist begins to transfer the therapist's own unconscious feelings to the patient. The emphasis on the unconscious is linked to the belief that everything that occurs in therapy is significant and thus nothing is accidental or too small for attention. If patients can be influenced by unconscious feelings and attitudes from their past relationships, so too can therapists. In Freudian theory, countertransference refers to those times when therapists treat their patients as if they were someone else. It also refers to the feelings experienced by therapists towards their patient, which may enhance understanding.

The therapist must also consider countertransference issues such as distaste for the physical and cognitive losses of the older person and pessimism about

the opportunities for change. The therapist may feel helpless, frustrated, angry, resentful or depressed in response to the older frailer person's dependency needs. Martindale (1989) believes that if the therapist is currently experiencing demands from their own ageing parents, demands for the therapist's time and attention from the patient may feel more burdensome. This can lead to guilt over termination, especially when the patient has little other emotional or social contact.

Due to the particular countertransferential feelings evoked by this type of work, the therapist requires good support and supervision. The patient will almost inevitably be older, maybe much older, and may represent a close older relative or the therapist's imagined self in old age while at the same time expressing infantile needs and dependency on the therapist. Identification may be painful, not only in terms of personal history but also personality and affective style. Working with someone with an irreversible illness may stimulate hostility, helplessness, frustration and therapeutic nihilism (Garner, 2004).

Butler and Lewis (1977) describe six countertransference issues as being responsible for much of the professional nihilism regarding the treatment of older patients. These are the therapist's recognition of his or her own ageing and anxieties about death; unresolved conflicts about the therapist's own parents; a feeling of therapeutic impotence to deal with organic problems; a wish to avoid a wasteful utilization of therapeutic skills; fears that the patient will die during treatment and fear of a negative response from colleagues toward one's efforts at treating such patients.

Grotjahn (1955) described the reversed Oedipal transference with the older patient and younger therapist. He noted how the therapist's unresolved hostility toward his parents, because of prolonged submission to them in childhood, might result in a countertransference need to avenge oneself on the older patient. The therapist's inability to deal with his or her own personal conflicts and feelings regarding older patients may result in

countertransference centred around unresolved parental conflicts (Wellman & McCormack, 1984) Some therapists may have difficulty in accepting their own mortality and the ageing process (Wellman & McCormack, 1984) and others may need to deny the idea of sexual pleasure in older adults (Meerloo, 1953).

In his work with older patients Myers (1984 & 1986) observed potent transference and countertransference responses. He noted that countertransference responses might be a function of unresolved conflicts about one's own prior analyst(s) in addition to one's unresolved feelings for one's parents. Myers (1986) identified a number of different unconscious meanings that were attached to him being younger than his patients. Some of his patients perceived his relative youth as a means of defending them against anxieties aroused by the idea of their own death. Myers worked through the patient's need to deny their own mortality in the analysis, however, to a certain extent this fantasy is a normal one found in most older adults, such as the wish to have children in order to maintain one's own sense of immortality. Other patients wished to borrow his "youthful masculinity" in order to bolster their own sense of potency. This borrowing of youth may modify the patient's own sense of manliness, whereupon the youth could be returned to the therapist intact. It became clear to Myers that being younger represented a certain phallic, masculine quality for the patient in the transference. He also recalls a case where his being younger than the patient had an adverse effect on the transference and upon the ultimate outcome of the treatment. He stated that the patient perceived his youth instead of 'a font of strength from which he might drink', it seemed instead a 'poisoned potion, which appeared to him a threat to obliterate his very existence'. This was played out in the patient's need to devalue the therapist and to highlight the therapist's own flaws and defects. For individuals with a significant degree of envy of those younger than they are, the wish to "steal" the therapist's youth may be greater.

Therapeutic considerations

The differences lie not in the process of therapy with older adults versus younger patients but in the content. For example, similarities exist in working with defences, resistance, transference and so on, however, with older adults unique issues often come up such as accepting the physical changes of ageing, concerns about diminished energy, loss of memory, fear of incontinence and sadness over not living forever. These are not usual preoccupations of younger patients in analysis. A further difference in the analysis of older patients is the therapist's own feelings towards ageing and the aged (Lipson, 2002).

From a review of the literature conducted by Wellman and McCormack (1984) the goals of counselling with older patients are to decrease anxiety and depression; to reduce confusion and loss of contact with reality; to increase socialization and improve interpersonal relationships; to improve behaviour within institutions; to cope with crisis and transitional stress, and to become more accepting of self and the ageing process.

Transference and countertransference may, for instance, reveal a patient's desire to nurture or compete with the therapist, or an idealisation by the therapist of the older person as sage or grandparent. Issues of difference, culture, and power in an ageist society also require explicit but tender exploration. Supervision is essential for helping the therapist understand and manage powerful feelings, such as pity, sadism and guilt that can be evoked in therapy with older people (Petford, 2006).

Psychodynamic therapists need to pay attention to inner feelings and conflicts in order to differentiate between those that are evoked by the patients' problems and those evoked by their own unresolved emotional difficulties. One useful way in recognising one's own countertransference feelings is through the analysis of the therapist's dreams and fantasies about their patients (Myers, 1986; Tower, 1956; Angel, 1979). Whatever method used,

the aim is to increase one's awareness of countertransference responses, which might interfere with one's therapeutic efficacy with patients.

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Do homework tasks in CBT constrict the therapeutic relationship between the client and trainee counselling psychologist?

Introduction

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is the field of applied psychology that focuses on the role played by thinking processes (cognitions) in explaining and changing human behaviour (Blackburn & Twaddle, 1996). Beck (1995) states that the cognitive model proposes that "distorted or dysfunctional thinking (which influences clients' mood and behaviour) is common to all psychological disturbance". Through realistic evaluation and modification of these thinking processes, the client's mood and behaviour will improve. CBT is evidence-based psychotherapy and has been extensively tested since its first inception. It has the most substantial evidence base supporting its effectiveness in the treatment of a variety of disorders. The general aim of CBT therapists is to assist clients to identify and reality-test unhelpful cognitions, which underlie repeated negative patterns of emotions and behaviour. Clients learn to develop and test new, more adaptive cognitions that can give rise to a more positive experience of the self, others and the world.

In order to learn the various aspects of CBT, counselling psychologists need to immerse themselves in not only the theory but also actively using the methods and techniques advocated (Trinidad, 2007). This avoids some common pitfalls that trainees and psychologists may face when working within this model. Homework is a central feature of the CBT approach, however, I have experienced my own and client's resistance to homework setting and carrying out homework tasks. Haarhof and Kazantzis (2007) found that some CBT trainees held the belief that the structure of CBT, of which homework assignments is an important component, inhibits spontaneity, which may result in a constriction of the therapeutic relationship. These beliefs were closely linked to my own difficulties and were evident in my early work with CBT clients. Therapists may avoid assigning homework task or assign them in

such a way that it perpetuates this mindset. By failing to provide a convincing rationale for homework this may feed into the trainees belief. Viewing homework as therapy, and as such an integral part of the therapeutic process, helps to challenge these thoughts.

This essay sets out to address whether homework tasks impact upon the therapeutic relationship. By drawing from and reflecting on clinical experience, I will challenge my own concerns about how a directive approach could impact upon the therapeutic relationship. This will be linked to practice by looking at clients who were reluctant to complete homework assignments and those who took easily to the concept.

Homework as a central feature of CBT

CBT is an active, directive, time-limited and structured therapy model. It is guided by a number of principles, which serve to guide the therapist in the treatment of the client. Homework assignments are a core feature of the CBT model and represent the opportunity for clients to transfer the skills and ideas learnt in therapy sessions to their everyday lives. Research has demonstrated that therapy involving homework tasks produces significantly better outcomes than therapy consisting of in-session work alone (Persons et al., 1985; Primakoff et al., 1989). Homework activities have also been linked to levels of improvement in clients (Burns & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991; Burns & Spangler, 2000).

Safran et al. (1993) & Safran and Segal (1990) outline several factors that CBT therapists need to consider when assessing client suitability for CBT. Amongst them is the motivation of the client to engage with homework tasks. If a client seems reluctant, this does not deem them unsuitable, however it may be a key factor in the therapeutic relationship and the degree to which therapists may be able to work with the client within the CBT model. CBT requires a certain amount of activity on the part of the therapist (such as case conceptualisation and formulation), setting homework tasks for clients (such

as integrating behavioural strategies) and reviewing / providing feedback on homework assignments. Therapist competence has been directly related to CBT client outcome (Shaw et al., 1999). It is the task of the therapist to employ specialist knowledge in order to impart knowledge which is deemed necessary & relevant to clients and to set out particular homework tasks which is seen to remove the disturbances the client is experiencing at that time (Spinelli, 2006).

A sound therapeutic relationship

Some forms of therapy assume that the main reason clients improve is because of the positive relationship between the therapist and client. Counselling psychology trainees may find that the transition from humanistic or psychodynamic models to CBT takes time and effort to engage with. Trainees' level of competence and knowledge may be perceived to affect the therapeutic relationship. However, linking CBT theory with clinical practice is the best way to immerse and gain experience of working within this model. White (2001) argues that CBT is not counselling and referring to it as such immediately changes the central emphasis. Counselling has generally been regarded as an unstructured and non-directive form of psychological support or intervention, whilst CBT places greater emphasis on the learning of skills and techniques that clients can adopt. However, one of the principles that underlie CBT is that it requires a sound therapeutic alliance. Although it is important to have a good, trusting relationship, CBT therapists believe that clients change because they learn how to think differently and act on that learning. Therefore, CBT therapists focus on teaching self-counselling skills.

Therapists do need to display the basic ingredients necessary in a counselling situation such as warmth, empathy, caring, genuine regard and competence (Beck, 1995). This was evident in the study by Burns and Auerbach (1996), who found that clients of therapists who were the warmest and most empathic improved significantly and substantially more than clients of therapists with the lowest empathy ratings.

CBT emphasises collaboration and active participation of the therapist and the client. Therapists encourage clients to view therapy as teamwork. They work together to define goals for therapy, setting the agenda in sessions, homework assignments and summarising what they have discussed in sessions. In this regard, the therapeutic relationship between the client and the therapist is being established. Clients are active agents in their own recovery and may feel more empowered if they contribute to the design of homework assignments (Freeman, 2007). Beck argues that the therapeutic relationship that exists between the client and the therapist in CBT may not be sufficient to achieve a health or wholesome outcome (Beck et al., 1979). Primarily, the therapist can use the process of collaboration to teach skills, specialist knowledge and techniques that would help the client.

The CBT formulation is unique in that it maps out the client's presenting issues, precipitating factors, perpetuating factors, predisposing factors and protective factors (Newman, 2007), which leads to the use of appropriate intervention techniques. The therapist can assign homework to the client to allow them to try things out in between therapy sessions, thus, putting into practice what the client has learned in the therapy sessions. The case formulation approach also assumes that the client's behaviour with the therapist is similar to their behaviour with others and that interactions with both the therapist and with others is driven by the client's underlying problem (Persons, 1989). This is closely linked to the therapeutic relationship.

There has been an increased interest in the nature of the therapeutic relationship in CBT (Leahy, 2001; Bennett-Levy & Thwaites, 2007; Gilbert & Leahy, 2007). The therapeutic relationship reflects interpersonal schemas, earlier attachment problems, emotional processing, failures in validation and compassion, and a variety of processes underlying non-compliance or resistance (Leahy, 2001 & 2009). Client's interpersonal difficulties often manifest in the therapeutic relationship and therapists work with clients to examine beliefs and behaviours that underpin the relationship difficulties

through collaborative formulation. Ideally, the therapist sets up a relationship that contributes to the more explicit teaching and change that goes on via the intervention of the model (Persons, 1989). A good therapeutic relationship is crucial to the success of CBT, as the therapist needs to carefully nurture the therapeutic relationship and pay close attention to any 'drift' within the relationship (Waller, 2009).

The process of recommending homework to clients in CBT sessions

The purpose of homework in CBT. CBT aims to increase the client's awareness of self and to facilitate the client's sense of autonomy (Gilbert & Leahy, 2007). Homework is an integral, not optional part of CBT (Beck et al., 1979; Kazantzis et al., 2005). Effective homework tasks provide clients with the opportunity to educate themselves (through bibliographies); to collect data about their thoughts, feelings and beliefs (through thought records, worry lists etc); to modify their thinking; to practice skills and techniques and to experiment with new behaviours (Bennett-Levy et al., 2004). Clients will not make significant changes in their underlying irrational beliefs unless they make behavioural and cognitive changes outside the session (Persons, 1989). Burns & Nolen-Hoeksema (1991) found that clients who more frequently used active strategies for coping with negative moods were significantly less depressed than those who did not.

An important aspect of homework is that it facilitates the 'outward focus' of the therapeutic approach (Beck, 1976; Blackburn & Twaddle, 1996). This facilitates the generalisation of in-session therapeutic change and provides a structure in which clients can practice skills learnt in therapy, outside of sessions. Homework promotes continued practice of new ideas, new views of the self and the world and new behaviours and plans of action. Applying skills enables clients to take ownership of their improvement in therapy, to test out the truth of the interpretations and to gather more information. Behavioural experiments are amongst the most popular methods for bringing about

change in CBT and can involve generating experiments that can treat thoughts as experimental predictions.

Integrating homework into therapy. The process of integrating homework into therapy includes designing (or selecting) the appropriate tasks, discussing the specifics of how the homework will be carried out and reviewing the homework in preceding sessions (Kazantzis & Daniel, 2009). Beck et al. (1979) outlined recommendations for integrating homework into therapy, such as encouraging therapists to provide a detailed rationale for the assignment and problem solving potential obstacles with clients about carrying out assignments. Therapists need to consider the client's ability, the difficulty of the task and the client's attitudes and beliefs towards the homework. This will provide an insight into the client's willingness to engage in future tasks.

A homework assignment is only useful to clients if they perceive it as relevant to their difficulties. They will be more likely to engage with the homework assignments and hence gain greater benefit from it. Personally, homework reminds me of school life, where homework was considered a chore and something that had to be done to avoid punishment. This was a factor in my reluctance to assigning homework tasks in my earlier clinical practice. This was evident in working with Joan, a 43-year-old woman, referred for depression. The first homework task she completed was an activity schedule, which seemed to outline her busy schedule and limited time for herself. My own feeling of not wanting to add more pressure onto her resulted in my reluctance to design homework tasks. Through supervision, I was more aware of my own feelings and reluctance. The client and I then worked collaboratively to rearrange some of her activities and to designing homework tasks that she was able to carry out.

When therapists persist in recommending homework to clients, it may put a strain on the therapeutic relationship. However, if the therapist abandons homework altogether, this represents the opposite extreme. Finding a balance

is therefore an important aspect to consider and working collaboratively with the client may bring about positive change.

Homework compliance and client's difficulties with homework tasks. Clients vary in their compliance with homework tasks and these differences affect recovery (Burns & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). Burns and Spangler (2000) found that homework compliance was significantly correlated with reductions in depression during treatment. A skilled therapist will be able to tailor the homework assignments to the clients needs, provide a rationale for carrying out the assignments, uncover potential obstacles and modify certain beliefs to enhance the probability that clients will comply with the homework tasks (Beck, 1995). Trainees may not view themselves as 'skilled' enough, in view of their level of training in the CBT model. However, Shaw et al. (1999) have reported that a therapist's ability to structure therapy relates to treatment outcome.

Persistent homework difficulties are likely to be related to the client's other difficulties in life and this may provide the therapist with a focus in therapy for problem-solving approaches and strategies to understand the client's perspective and to tailor the therapy to meet their needs. The therapist needs to identify the client's cognitions regarding the homework task and the consequences of change. Kazantis et al. (2004) constructed a homework rating scale (HRS) as a tool for clinicians to use. This scale consists of a 12-item client self-report designed to measure a range of aspects in the process of designing homework, engaging in homework and reviewing the experience of having engaged in the homework.

Resistance may be due to several factors involving the client, the therapist or the therapeutic relationship (Beck et al., 1979). Client factors may include not completing the homework tasks and not accepting personal responsibility for the homework tasks. This may serve to undervalue the treatment outcome. Homework non-compliance may reflect perfectionism, shame or simply show

a failure to understand the instructions given. A cost-benefit analysis may be useful to look at the pros and cons of completing the homework assignment.

It is important that therapists teach and facilitate clients to 'become their own therapist' (Waller, 2009). In this way when clients find difficulties with homework tasks, therapists are able to work collaboratively to outline the difficulties in a non-judgemental way. Waller (2009) suggests that the patient needs to be made aware from the assessment and formulation onwards that getting to a more adaptive mode of functioning is inevitably going to be stressful in the short-term.

Clients may have difficulties with the work aspect of CBT. When I worked with Harry, a 30-year-old client, he stated that he had been in therapy before. In his previous therapy he was asked to complete homework assignments and he "did not see the point". He made it very clear during the assessment that he was not willing to carry out homework assignments. This put me in a difficult situation, however after talking through the potential difficulties and providing a rationale for each homework task, Harry was able to understand the importance of the homework and how it related to his life. He was able to engage with the skills learnt in therapy and continued to complete thought records throughout our sessions, stating that he benefited greatly from this.

Some clients may hold perfectionist views, which may initially be an obstacle to change. If their underlying belief is that homework assignments need to be carried out perfectly, this may be discussed in session in relation to realistic goals for change. A client with a fear of failure or rejection may believe that that the therapist will reject them if the homework has not been done to their high standards (Leahy, 2001). This was evident in one of my early CBT clients. Gemma, a 36-year-old was referred for her recurrent depression. She continued to find it difficult to complete homework assignments and we looked at this in relation to her thoughts around the homework tasks. She discussed how she was worried about what I might think about the quality of the homework completed, resulting in her avoiding the tasks altogether. This also

led to her worrying that I might think she wasn't trying hard enough and that she was "wasting my time". We were able to discuss this and Gemma started to challenge these thoughts. She was then able to engage with and carry out homework tasks.

Conclusion

Counselling psychologists need to immersion themselves in the theory and practice of the principles that guide therapists in the treatment of CBT clients. Learning opportunities present themselves in the process of acquiring knowledge about the model, implementing this knowledge, making use of external evaluation (such as individual, peer and group supervision) and experience with CBT clients. Fluctuations in levels of self-confidence are normal for this stage of trainees training (Bennett-Levy & Beedie, 2007). An improvement of trainees' competence comes with training, clinical practice, an awareness of the standards required to effectively use the CBT model and self-reflection. Therapeutic practice and self-reflection has enabled me to develop self-awareness in relation to the theory and an understanding of applying self-awareness to real-life clinical situations. I am more aware of my fluctuations in levels of self-confidence and feeling deskilled when a new approach is learnt. I have also been able to foster an awareness of my beliefs and reactions to non-compliance in the context of the CBT case conceptualisation framework.

Homework is a core feature of CBT and is an integral part of the therapy model. By addressing the theoretical implications of homework assignments and the therapeutic relationship in CBT, I feel that many of my difficulties with recommending homework tasks reflect my stage of training, clinical experience and the process of learning a new therapeutic model. Through the process of writing this essay and gaining further clinical experience, I have a better understanding of the evidence that homework is an important part of the therapeutic work in CBT with clients. It has enabled me to conceptualise the benefits clients derive from completing homework assignments based on

evidence and clinical experience. I am more comfortable with providing clients with a clear rationale about the use of homework and encouraging clients to also take responsibility for designing / carrying out homework tasks.

In summary, there is a similarity in the way clients integrate skills learnt in sessions to their everyday life with counselling psychologists linking theory to practice. Clients who realise that "the more they put in the more they get out" will receive the greatest benefit from therapy. In my view, homework does not necessary affect a sound therapeutic relationship but lends itself to clients making and maintaining change in their lives. I would therefore, disagree with White (2001) and state that CBT and counselling are closely linked in that the therapeutic relationship is a necessary starting point for change to happen.

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Therapeutic practice dossier

Introduction to the Therapeutic Practice Dossier[1]

This dossier provides an overview of my experience as a therapeutic practitioner. It contains descriptions of the clinical placements I have undertaken over the past three years, covering details such as context, orientation of the work, the client groups I have worked with and supervision received. This dossier also includes my final clinical paper, which is a personal account of my professional and personal development as a counselling psychologist. In this paper, I outline some of the defining moments on my journey throughout the training that I believe have shaped me as the practitioner I am today and nurtured the development of my identity as well as sparking new interests that I wish to explore in the future.

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[1] Process reports and client studies were written at regular intervals in each of the three clinical placements and logbooks were kept as a record of completed client work.

Description of clinical placements

First year placement: Non-profit organisation/ therapeutic practice
November 2007 – November 2008

This placement was in a large well-established therapeutic practice, which offered a wide range of therapies to a diverse range of clients. The practice had a number of structured contracts with the National Health Service (NHS), Primary Care Trust (PCT) and drug services in the area. Referrals were received from general practitioners, professionals working in the community mental health team (CMHT) and self-referrals. Fifty percent of the referrals were from the NHS / PCT and thirty percent were from individual private referrals. Foster care and social services made up the rest of the referrals. The placement also specialised in the treatment and recovery of sexual abuse and had become a leading authority in this specialised area. The practice offered a wide range of therapeutic approaches, including EMDR, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Gestalt Therapy, Parks Inner Child Therapy, Transactional Analysis, Client Centred Counselling, Cognitive Analytical Therapy (CAT) and Solution Focused Therapy.

Following an assessment by the clinical director, clients were allocated to a suitable counsellor/therapist depending on their orientation. I offered individual person-centred therapy for between 6 and 40 sessions. My clinical work was supervised by an internal and external, BACP-accredited supervisor. The clinical director of the service also monitored my clinical practice. The clients I worked with varied in terms of age (21- 67), gender and cultural background and presented with a wide range of psychological difficulties (anxiety, depression, relationship break-up, stress, panic attacks etc). I also carried out initial assessments, wrote a psychological report for the service, kept brief accounts of the session outline for each client and managed the payment of sessions.

Second year placement: Women's therapy centre

August 2008 – August 2009

In my second year placement I worked in a well-established, charitable women's therapy centre, offering psychodynamic counselling to female clients. Their aim was to help women improve their mental health and well-being by providing confidential and specialist services to women. The service offered short-term psychodynamic therapy groups, individual counselling, a befriending service and a help line was available to women callers. The centre also offered psychodynamic groups to refugees and asylum seekers, making use of external translators. The charity received funding from the local PCT, council, the home office, comic relief, charitable trust and from client donations.

The counselling service manager carried out the initial assessment with clients over two weekly sessions. Clients needed to attend both sessions in order to be offered a place either in the group or for individual counselling. If the client did not attend these two assessment sessions they were placed back on the waiting list. During the assessment, the manager determined whether psychodynamic therapy was suitable for the client, prepared the client for psychotherapy and then allocated the client to a suitable counsellor/therapist. All counsellors/therapists worked psychodynamically and clients were offered between 20 – 24 weekly sessions, depending on set breaks. Therapists were encouraged to take breaks over the Christmas, Easter and summer periods. Clients were asked to make a donation based on their financial means and this ranged from £1 to £15, which was managed by the counsellor/therapist. Counselling sessions last fifty minutes, beginning and ending at the same agreed time each week. I had weekly individual and group supervision in which I presented verbatim transcripts of client sessions for exploration and review with both supervisors. These sessions provided a rich and intense learning opportunity in which I felt both supported and challenged.

Third year placement: NHS CMHT – secondary and tertiary care
August 2009 – September 2010

The setting for my third year placement was a secondary/tertiary care CMHT within the NHS. The CMHT was an integrated health and social care team providing specialist mental health care services for adults. Clients ranged from 16 –65, although older adults were also seen by the service. It was divided in three sections, an assessment team, a recovery team and an assertive outreach team. The psychological service was set within the recovery team and consisted of multidisciplinary mental health specialists such as psychiatrists, social workers, psychologists, nurses, support and recovery workers. The 'treatment' options within the CMHT included a consultation with a psychiatrist or an assessment with an assessment team member. Clients were then referred to either the recovery team or the psychological service. The team also provided a duty system during office hours for individuals who required urgent assessment and 'treatment'. Short-term CBT was also delivered by improving access to psychological therapy (IAPT) trained CBT therapists. However, more complex cases tended to be referred to the psychologists who worked as an integrated part of the CMHT. A consultant clinical psychologist, who was also the head of psychological service, supervised my clinical work. Although CBT was the main therapeutic approach offered, my supervisor also specialised in eye movement desensitisation reprocessing (EMDR). There was also an integrative clinical psychologist who offered psychodynamic therapy and ran a psychodynamic group. Following the assessment, clients were offered individual therapy between 6 and 13 sessions.

In addition to managing a client caseload, I regularly attended departmental meetings, 'lunch-time' talks, and completed several mandatory training courses. Working as part of a multidisciplinary team, one of my responsibilities was to provide psychological advice, guidance and consultation to other professionals. This was done through informal meetings and discussions,

written reports, assessments and case conceptualisations/formulations in order to contribute to client's care plans. I conducted psychological assessments and formulations and carried out psychometric testing at the beginning and end of each therapy contract. The mandatory assessment tools, in line with IAPT, included the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ -9), General Anxiety Disorder assessment (GAD-7) and the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE). Further psychometric testing were conducted with certain client, if deemed a useful assessment and monitoring tool, such as the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), Clark-Beck Obsessive-Compulsive Inventory and Young's Schema Questionnaire (YSQ-S2). Following the assessment process, I wrote assessment letters, which outlined the client's current difficulties and provided some insight into the formulation and case conceptualisation. This was followed up with an end of therapy letter, which outlined the agreed goal, the process of therapy and the therapy outcome. Both letters were presented to the clients during session before posting to their care co-ordinator and GP. This allowed clients to amend any details or to express their opinion as to whether the letters captured the essence of the assessment and our therapeutic plan / process.

Final Clinical paper

A bird's eye view

This paper explores my professional and personal development as a counselling psychologist. In writing this paper, I have needed to make my own choices and decisions about what to include and exclude. Throughout the training I have written work that included self-reflection, such as in process reports, research reports and other essays. I will not focus on these here but aim to reflect on my understanding and recognition of factors that have influence my decision and choice to enter into a career in counselling psychology, to provide a bird's eye view of my own processes and how I have linked theory to practice. The choices I have made in writing this paper have been particularly challenging for me, as I want to ease the reader across the various parts of my journey, without losing sight of the intended purpose.

Life does not exist in a bubble and as with clients who experience other issues whilst undergoing therapy, I too have broadened my horizons whilst undertaking this course. Whilst reflecting on the last three years, I have been reminded of when I started my national private pilot's licence (NPPL) in my first year on the course and how this learning experience often ran alongside my personal and professional development and immersing myself in the various theories and approaches. I have found myself reminiscing on my experiences of some of the dual and solo flights, the planning that went into each flight, checking the weather conditions and asking for advice and guidance from more experienced pilots and my instructor. I am reminded of the variety of flights I have made as well as dreaming about the flights that are still to come. I hope that the reader will indulge me in my use of flying analogies as I use creative play, something that has become more comfortable for me to do with clients in sessions. I believe that therapy is a creative process between the client and therapist as they set out on a flight together, each with their own experiences and perceptions, personality and developmental stage.

This paper will further illustrate how I have navigated my way through the various theoretical models and theory, how I have developed my map reading skills and how I have come to choose certain places to revisit or being drawn to certain theories. Throughout my placements, I have experienced a sense of being in different aircraft, my instructor's voice in my head as I think through manoeuvres, being aware of weather and wind conditions and the feeling of elation when I arrive safely at my destination. I am also reminded of times when I have needed to alter my navigation plans due to being blown off course and how I have learnt to read the map en route in order to make certain decisions along the way.

Pre-flight check

The process of checking instruments, adjusting them if necessary before take off and planning the flight based on a variety of conditions needs to be considered. I believe that my journey into applied psychology started long before I was accepted onto the counselling psychology course. After completing my honours degree in psychology, I took on a variety of support worker and health care assistant roles before I got my 'lucky break' as an assistant psychologist. It was only at this point that I realised that psychology was both a challenging and rewarding career and I spend some very memorable years applying my psychological knowledge. It was at this time that I became particularly interested in the relationship between the psychologist and client. Clients were willing to talk about some very personal issues and reflecting back I think it had a lot to do with the relationship. My natural curiosity and engagement with clients reinforced my enjoyment of listening to people's stories and life experiences. I had spent too long channelling my energies into gaining a place on the clinical psychology course, accepting the 'right' jobs that I thought would provide me with the golden ticket onto the course and probably for the wrong reasons. Whilst completing the foundation course in systemic therapy I looked into applying to the counselling psychology course. When I was offered a place, I was curious

about what the interview panel had seen in me, whether it was potential, passion or something I had yet to discover. I was also concerned that I needed to live up to that perceived expectation, which seems to be linked to the people pleaser part in me. I therefore started this training with a specific mindset informed by my pre-existing training and therapeutic experience.

My previous roles enabled me to work therapeutically with clients and to carry out a variety of interventions. I also carried out a wide range of psychometric tests and felt that I had developed proficiency at administering a broad range of measures. The roles provided me with many opportunities from managing a clinical caseload to conducting a variety of research projects and I was fortunate to publish several research articles. During this time, I had my first taste of adapting my working style to meeting the challenge of being both therapist and researcher. The experience also opened up an interest into relationships and I became intrigued by how the relationships between carers and individuals with dementia evolved and changed. In 2006 I completed a foundation course in systemic family therapy and this has allowed me to develop a balance between focusing on the client's difficulties but able to think broadly about their personal relationships and the possible influences of these on their difficulties, whether it is part of a maintaining factor, their perception of reality or a way of bringing out certain schemas or traits.

Before beginning the first year, my family moved to Somerset and although this then entailed a long drive to the university, I viewed the travelling time as a test of my motivation and dedication. I learnt to use the time as a space where I could prepare myself for the day ahead and to reflect on the day at university. I found myself arriving at the University of Surrey and home more centred and more able to separate work and family life.

Having begun my therapeutic training, I also embarked on my own personal therapy. For me personal therapy was a safe, containing and nurturing space from which I could explore my internal world and become more attuned to the intuitions of my own self. Through this process, I have become more aware of

my internal workings, which has helped me in sessions with clients. I am more in touch with my own self and this has helped me with issues of transference and countertransference. I pay attention to the transference / counter-transference phenomena and often ask myself 'what might be causing it, is it entirely my own? It seems essential to me that I take account of it, regardless of what therapeutic framework I am working in. Overall, the course has provided me with new experiences and I feel that it has opened up the idea of possibilities of flights to come. It confirmed my own ideas around the importance of the therapeutic relationship and I have realised that the research has guided me in a direction that I was at the time unaware of.

Flying Solo

Each flight is unique in its own way, like each therapeutic relationship with a client. During my years in employment I had become practised in developing relationships with clients and this is something that I have developed throughout the training. I regard the core conditions as the foundation of my work in relating therapeutically with clients (Merry, 2002). However, from my experience and understanding these conditions are not under all circumstances sufficient to address the processes I have experienced with clients and their unique developmental needs. To this extent, 'relational' to me also entails an attendance to the parallel processes when relevant, between the therapeutic relationship and the clients' early relational experiences as described within the psychodynamic approach in terms of the 'transferential' relationship.

During my early solo flights the weather had to be near perfect and any crosswind very light. As I progressed the suitable weather window expanded with increased experience and competence. I gained most of my client hours within the first year of training and it is only by reflecting back that I have realised that my work ethic was taken to the extreme. I was so eager to be with clients and to help that I was almost unaware of my own needs. Personal therapy helped me to identify a part of me that seeks to work extra hard, to

always do the right thing and to strive for something that is almost impossible to achieve. This insight has helped me to identify my self-critical side and I am now sensitive to this in clients, especially when it comes to unrealistic expectation and conditional factors. My own reflections were reinforced when working with Mrs L, a 49 year-old women who was experiencing difficulties with a work colleague. She spent most of her schooling in a boarding school and had felt that she was unwanted, resulting in attachment issues (Bowlby, 1969). She described her mother as "unaffectionate and cold" and believed that her mother's love was conditional. The client identified needing unconditional love from her friends, colleagues and me. She felt that she never lived up to her mother's expectations and through the process of therapy she came to realise that she was trying to achieve something that was unlikely to happen. Her insight was that her mother continuously raised the bar and would continue to do so. This is also something I am guilty of with myself in that I tend to continually raise the bar on my sense of achievement. I have had to learn to cope with what I perceived as failure, what is 'worth' fighting for and choosing to step back at times, giving myself the time to reflect.

It was only in my 2nd year placement that I started to enjoy the additional time between clients to reflect on the sessions and to prepare myself for the next client. Allowing myself the space to think and to prepare mentally and emotionally has become something that I have found to be valuable in maintaining my resilience. Psychodynamic theory and practice has expanded my understanding of the potential richness and productivity of the therapeutic relationship and I found that my role was to contain the clients' and my own frame of reference in a more reflective manner. My reflections of the therapeutic process started to take the form of interpretations, linking the clients' early relational experiences with their experiences and /or fantasies of the therapeutic relationship in the room.

Co-piloting

Working together with clients, I have been moved by their resilience and strength and I feel that I have learnt a lot about myself through this process. I was particularly moved by how even the smallest gesture or playfulness is helpful to clients, like with Mrs I. Mrs I, a 48 year-old woman referred for recurrent depression, seemed to have an inflated sense of responsibility for each member of her family. She highlighted a wish to move out in order to be alone for a while. We creatively explored this in our session. This playfulness helped her to reassess her life and familial demands placed on her and she started to question her beliefs around needing to be responsible for others. I feel that I was only able to engage in this creative play because I was aware of my own feelings of responsibility. It was both an enlightening and enjoyable experience. I began to listen to myself, to see counselling as a creative process rather than a clear set of techniques that can be learnt and applied. I have also noticed how client's attachment styles (Bowlby, 1969) and dynamics get played out in the therapeutic relationship.

Just as a pilot makes choices and decisions about whether to fly, given the weather conditions, their planned route, restrictions in terms of no-fly zones, clients also make certain decisions in their lives and in therapy. I seek to understand a client's perspective, what has led them to their situation and what they want to change about it. The core value of my practice has been primarily the client's autonomy and their ability to make choices and decisions for themselves. This has been one of the developments in my own practice as I had a tendency to take on their responsibility and immersing into the client's frame of reference often left me feeling paralysed without knowing how I could facilitate change within limited sessions. However, I am more aware of working within such limitations by focusing on personality, coping strategies and resources that clients have. I am now more comfortable with relinquishing that responsibility, nurturing clients through their difficulties and supporting clients and their ability to make appropriate decisions. I do this by providing

the core conditions, such as empathy and feel I am able "to sense the client's world, without losing the 'as if' quality" (Sanders, 2004 pp146). For me, being empathic involves being the co-pilot to the client who is flying their own plane, whilst remaining within the boundaries of a therapeutic relationship. In this way I respect and accept their subjective accounts as valid in their own terms and practice within a phenomenological model. Mearns (1994) points out that acceptance in person-centred therapy lays in a deeply rooted belief that every person is worthy as an individual.

I have also co-piloted with supervisors who have impacted me and have come to realise that I too have had an impact on them. I will illustrate this with an incident that deeply affected and moved me. During winter (2nd year), we had deep snow and I struggled to get out of our village. On my way to work, feeling proud that I had made it that far in the snow, I received a call from my supervisor to say that I should not come in, as the roads were bad. She suggested that she cancel my appointments for the day and that I make my way back home. Despite my protest, she mentioned that even if I was able to continue my journey in, there was no telling what the weather conditions would be like when it was time to leave work. Her genuine concern touched me deeply and her message was heartfelt. This was in strong opposition to my own voice of 'must', 'should' and 'ought to'. Subsequently to that I made the journey into university only to find that it was closed due to the snow. These experiences highlighted my own internal world of rules and doing the right thing without much consideration for my own well-being and has been a lesson learnt in that I am now more able to balance my desire to please others and my need to please myself. It further highlighted my own value of commitment but made me realise that I need to show commitment, not only to the client but also to myself - my own self-development and the therapeutic use of self (Mearns & Thorne, 1999).

This seems to have been a theme in my life, such as when I was completing a solo navigation flight and landed safely at my destination airfield. While I planned my return trip, the weather started to turn and I could see the rain

clouds slowly making their way towards me. I made a decision to take off and try to make it back before the rain became too much. En route, I was blown off course, lost my bearings and I started to question my ability as a trainee pilot. At first, I told myself to remain logical and methodical, looking on the map to identify my location at the same time bombarding myself with questions about where I had gone wrong. I felt an added pressure to get back as the weather was getting worse. I found myself thinking about having made the wrong decision to take-off, worrying about the possible consequences of my actions and how I had let my instructor and myself down. This thought process confirmed my self-critical tendency and I became emotional, as I knew that I was being particularly harsh with myself at that moment. I did manage to get back to the airfield, a bit wet, tired and mentally drained but overall the trip had challenged my ability to control the aircraft and had made me think about my decisions and thoughts along the way. The most significant parts of the experience for me was becoming aware of the way I treated myself and that the other pilots were genuinely concerned about my safety. When I landed I found this endearing and I enjoyed being thought about in that way. I was not particularly aware of my impact upon others and this is something that continues to touch me deeply.

The enjoyment of flying and freedom, together with knowing that both the plane and I am prepared and are 'good enough' for the flight serves to reinforce my need to care for myself, to check my endurance and to find the space to reflect on my own process. Clients also enjoy being thought about and even the smallest gesture, such as them knowing that I thought about what they said or that I seek to fully understand their experience can be therapeutic in itself. I understand that with freedom of choice, comes responsibility (Yalom, 1980) for clients and that ultimately they are in charge of their own aircraft. This can be a frightening yet empowering experience, as in the case of Miss S, a 20 year old referred for depression. Miss S had raised concerns that her mother had always told her what she should do, including 'persuading' her to have an abortion at the age of 17. During our early sessions she became frustrated and angry that I was not 'giving her the

answers' or 'telling her what to do'. Her familiar pattern was of being 'told' and she struggled with the concept of being autonomous and responsible for her own life. Her struggles reinforced my tendency to mother and I became aware of my own feelings of not wanting to come across as harsh or cruel by not answering her concerns. I felt that my responsibility was to provide her with the space to explore her options without 'telling' her what to do and to help her make even the smallest of decisions.

Self development has been a combination of being blown off course, sometimes referring to the map or original plan and sometimes quite enjoying the new scenery and being comfortable about the possibility of going a different route. Personal reflection has become a central part of my training, facilitating further self-awareness. This is something that has developed through personal therapy and supervision. During my psychodynamic placement I learnt the importance of breaks, such as at Christmas. I do not routinely take time off or holidays and my first 'break' was in this placement, so I had not experienced the effect that it had on clients or thought about the potential impact or significance for clients. When a client did not return after the break, I focused my effort on attempting to re-engage with her through writing two letters, however, she did not return. This experience has taught me the significance of breaks on clients and myself. Together with the support from my supervisor and personal therapy, I was able to acknowledge my own part played in clients' anger at me over the breaks. It also highlighted the importance of endings with clients and I now treat endings as part of the therapeutic process and leave space for the client to talk about the perceived impact of the ending. I am more sensitive to the possibilities of feelings being brought up by the ending, even within short-term work with clients. I also try to provide clients with high levels of continuous containment and stability (Winnicott, 1956; 1962), which I feel is needed for continued engagement, through environmental / contextual factors, such as being in the same room at the same agreed time each week.

Flying straight and level

I practised different types of take-offs and landing (with and without crosswind) and powered and glide approaches. As I gained more confidence in handling the aircraft flying started to become more natural and I was able to maintain a more constant altitude. I have become more proficient in finding a balance within my practice. An example of this is my previous difficulty with silence during therapy. During my first year of training I was apprehensive when a client chose to be silent as for me it meant being ignored. Once I became less uncomfortable with silence I would swing from one extreme to the other, from no silences to too long a silence (feedback from the 1st year viva). This feedback, together with supervision and personal therapy, helped me to reflect on the function of silence for me. I have managed to find a more comfortable and effective balance by realising that even when clients don't communicate, they are communicating (Satir, 1967). It was only through a process of becoming self-aware that I gained this insight. As a child I was well skilled in breaking silences through my use of humour to lighten the mood, or to occupying myself to avoid the silence. It was only when I felt a deep sense of hopelessness and helplessness with Mr H that I realised how hard it was for me to sit with the unknowing. Mr H, a 21 year old, was referred after his relationship break-up. He had undergone a kidney transplant, was diagnosed with cancer and had a difficult childhood. I felt the urge to mother him but could not find the 'right' words so we sat in silence and I was left with my own feelings of helplessness, wondering whether to break the silence or not. A year later my reaction to silence had become more comfortable and I used the space to think, not to occupy myself but to reflect on my thoughts and feelings, feeling more comfortable with silence, the space and diverting my gaze. This allowed me to also think about communication expressed by their / my body position as well as non-verbal processes which at times provided a different interpretation of the same message.

One of the greatest challenges I faced at the start of my training was shifting my focus away from 'doing' (with or to) towards 'being' with a client. My previous roles as an assistant psychologist had revolved around engaging clients in looking for practical solutions or conducting psychometric tests 'on' them. I have a tendency to try to do too much and work too hard in sessions (an insight gained from personal tutors, supervisors and personal therapy) and at times it can be tiring managing my enthusiasm whilst allowing the process of therapy to take place. I have realised that being with is essential while doing aspects of therapy is a function of client need and I focus more on building the therapeutic relationship and engaging the client (Roger's, 1951; 1957). Whilst working within a CBT framework, it felt to me that I had regressed to a type of therapy of 'doing to' clients, which was similar to the type of work I did before starting this training when I knew little about the therapeutic relationship and the unconscious processes. This insight helped me to reflect on my development over the previous two years and on my role as an integrative therapist.

Although the core conditions are a central feature of my approach, I also enjoy linking to the past and exploring possibilities. I try to remain open to the possibility of integrating theories that emphasis background (psychodynamic approaches); emotions and sensations (person-centred, existential approaches); thoughts (cognitive therapy) and actions (cognitive behaviour therapy, solution-based therapy).

Theoretical models: The pilot's handbook

The pilot's handbook focuses on the main aspects of flying and can be used as a framework for pilots, which helps with the learning process. It also guides pilots to becoming self-reliant and good decision makers and responsible for duty of care to passengers and other air users. I do not believe that any single theory can fully represent the complexity of the human experience for every person. Thus, my practice is informed not only by theoretical models but also by each client's frame of reference and my experience of being with the client.

I have been affected by the clients' ability to redirect their lives after achieving greater understanding of their real inner selves, which has helped me to become a strong advocate of the power of the person to move toward self-enhancement (Rogers, 1951). I think that I am more phenomenological in my thinking, believing that each client has his/her unique perception of the world, which determines his or her beliefs, behaviours, emotions and relationships. According to Rogers (1951), "the organism reacts to the field as it is experienced and perceived. This perceptual field is, for the individual, reality" (pp. 483-484). We can only fully appreciate others and the ways in which they direct and organise their lives if we understand the clients' perception of reality. Within CBT terms their view of themselves, others and the world.

I feel that as a developing and broad practitioner, I can respond to a broad variety of contexts and work within differing models. This training has provided me with a variety of maps ready for the flight. This allows me to find my way from A to B during flight, to study flight plans, weather, to make the necessary decisions along the way and continues the need to be proficient in a wide variety of counselling tasks. I am much broader in my use of counselling tasks than I used to be and much more receptive to my client's view of what will be of value to them in the counselling process. For example, Mr J (aged 34) was referred to the service for his OCD. During the assessment he stated that his paranoid thoughts had more of an impact on his life than his OCD and he wanted to work on these thoughts. In view of this, therapy focused on helping him to adopt a less threatening interpretation of the occurrence and content of his unwanted intrusive thoughts. This involved identifying, evaluating and challenging the negative thoughts in order to incorporate alternative explanations. Focusing on the client's needs was essential in building the relationship and promoting some of the changes that the client wanted to make. Generally, in practice I tend to use Dudley & Kuyken's (2006) five P's framework, which allows me to consider different levels of description of the client's current situation, including presenting, precipitating, perpetuating, predisposing and protective factors. I also harness client's resources and resourcefulness by strengthening their protective factors.

I feel that I have come with more navigational aids whilst working within the CBT framework and tend to miss 'being' with the client more. Moreover I am making use of psychodynamic theories to inform my practice, both in understanding the complexities within the therapeutic relationship and making sense of the possible impact of the client's early experiences. I place emphasis on the importance of early (or earlier) experience in the development of dysfunctional assumptions (Beck, 1995) or maladaptive schemas (Young et al., 2003 and Young & Klosko, 1993) for example. I have continued to conceptualise clients in terms of their early experiences, often thinking in psychodynamic terms, before translating these into more cognitive terms to share with the client. Increasingly I have found myself drawing together psychodynamic ways of thinking and cognitive ways of working.

Airmanship. The three fundamental principles of expert airmanship are skill, proficiency, and the discipline to apply them in a safe and efficient manner. It is also a measure of a pilot's awareness of the aircraft, the environment in which it operates, and of his/her own capabilities (DeMaria, 2006). Counselling psychologists have a responsibility to seek opportunities for self-development and personal growth through ongoing personal therapy, supervision and training, to work within an ethical framework and to support other professionals in the field. We need to develop ourselves in all aspects of our functioning, personal, professional, cognitive and affective so that we are more fully available to our clients (Lumbers, 1993).

I also believe that the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is vital for guidance, self-reflection and self-awareness. The emphasis on unconscious processes in supervision and personal therapy has also helped me to become more aware and address the different parts of myself activated in countertransference with clients related to my own early experiences, in particular trying to please, rescue or mother clients. This mothering tendency has made me more aware of who I may be for the client in relation to a 'good object' that they internalise (Gomez, 1997). Through supervision, I have been

able to explore different parts of my responses to clients. It has been very beneficial to gain different perspectives from my various supervisors and reading my verbatim transcripts in supervision was both a humbling and educational experience. I recognise that others do not have neat answers, even if I wished they had. I value the contributions of others, including clients, to my own development and knowledge and at the same time I have also learnt to value and trust myself by monitoring, questioning and challenging my ideas and responses.

Casement (1985) speaks of the external support being likened to that of how the baby experiences the mother's holding (Winnicott, 1965), from the outside, by the supervisor. I have been in sessions where I have used a supervisor's voice to guide my thinking often superimposing it on what is actually happening in the session. The 'voice' has become more non-intrusive and I have been able to allow myself more time to watch, wait and think. This helps me to gain insight and gradually become more responsible and confident with my own ways of thinking. I remember being particularly worried about forgetting my interpretations during my psychodynamic placement and felt almost unable to hold on to them before reflecting them back to clients. This affected both the process and the pace of sessions. I am now better able to gather my thoughts before offering them to the client and knowing that even if I forget my interpretation, that is meaningful in itself and something that I can consider. I am also more able to think holistically about the client, to notice unconscious wishes and fears, which has been a direct result of my own personal development and awareness of self.

Landing at my destination

Throughout this paper, it has been particularly challenging to articulate my flights in a structured and succinct manner as I feel that there will be many new flights and new destinations to come. I am also aware that I have a tendency to be self-critical and it has been a balancing act for me to be reflective and highlight my development without being overly critical. I hope

that I have been able to show compassion and acceptance to myself at the same time as outlining the need to continue to develop. There is a real risk of articulating such a complex and multidimensional journey in a concise and structured way, in that it may be perceived as the whole picture, which is far from the case. By definition my journey is still incomplete and continuous.

I hope to contain my excitement and anxiety about future choices and decisions that will be made as well as maintain my own personal development, self-awareness and challenges. I believe that the training has provided me with some sense of my navigational and map reading skills that will be with me long after I qualify. I also hope to maintain my enthusiasm and hope for the field by taking full advantage of continued professional development, such as further course, workshops and personal therapy to prevent items falling to the back of my mental sofa.

Overall, I feel that I am enjoying the landscape at the moment, excited about new destinations or making choices and decisions along the way that may take me to new landscapes. I will continue to make regular checks along the way to establish if adjustments need to be made. Having the freedom to choice, make decisions or change plans en route provides me with a sense of freedom and anticipation of things to come.

At times I may experience a 'bumpy' or a smooth landing. Sometimes I overshoot the runway and need to redo my approach by going around the circuit again. All these add to the diversity of the experience and are opportunities to learn from and reflect on, or as one of my research participants put it 'trial and learn' and not 'trial and error'.

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Research Dossier

Introduction to the Research Dossier

This Dossier consists of the three formal research studies that I have conducted over the three years of training. My choice of research topic was influenced by my interest in participants' relationships and began with a literature review conducted in the first year of training. I chose to examine a new concept called Living Apart Together (LAT), where couples choose to be in a relationship and live separately. The review explored the idea of LAT as an alternate to remarriage in older adults and highlights LAT as a possible relationship choice available to individuals in later life. This is very much linked to my core value of my practice, which is related to client's autonomy and their ability to make choices and decisions for themselves.

My second paper arose as a consequence of observations made while conducting my literature review. I had been struck by the perceived lack of choice when it came to forming new relationships in later life, in particular following divorce or death of a spouse. There seemed to be a stigma about LAT relationships or cohabiting in later life and I wondered what the experiences of individuals in a LAT relationship were. I therefore chose to interview participants and carry out qualitative research in this under researched and relatively new area.

For my final research paper I remained true to my interest in couple relationships and the idea of being apart from each other. I was curious about the relationship dynamics of commuter and long-distance relationships. As the psychological, emotional and physical impact of business travellers had relatively little research, I chose to undertake a study into the impact of business travel on work and family from the business traveller's perspective. Firstly, this research was of particular interest to me as I am married to a business traveller and have experienced the impact of business travel from a

spouse's perspective. Knowing little about the experience from the business traveller's point of view, I chose to explore their experience with a particular focus on their behaviour and work/family balance. Secondly, I was curious if the experience of business travellers was similar to my own perceptions and wanted to reflect on my own ideas of what it might be like for them. I feel that this research has been personally enriching and has been an enlightening and meaningful experience that has strengthened my own understanding of family dynamics and individuals' model of marriage.

Looking back across my three research papers, I feel that I have gained an appreciation for conducting qualitative research. I have been impressed with the richness of the data and the openness of research participants and feel that I have gained much personally and professionally from this aspect of my training.

Living Apart Together (LAT): an alternative to remarriage or cohabitation after divorce or widowhood in later life. A review of the literature

Abstract

This review explores the choices and constraints, which influence decisions about new romantic relationships after divorce or the loss of a spouse in later life. Alternatives to traditional marriage do exist and older adults can choose to arrange their lives as couples in a variety of ways. An increasing number of older adults choose either flexible partner relationships such as unmarried cohabitation or Living Apart Together (LAT) as an alternative to remarriage. LAT describes a couple who have a monogamous emotional / romantic relationship whilst maintaining their own separate homes and one-person households. The review focuses on the adjustments faced by single older adults, the effects of loneliness in later life and possible ways of overcoming this. It explores the importance and significance of the home, boundaries and autonomy, the motivation to form new intimate relationships, sexuality in later life and the impact of family on older adults' decision to repartner. These factors are linked to counselling psychology and the psychological well-being of older adults engaged in this decision making process. It concludes with some issues that counselling psychologist may want to consider when working with older adults engaged in this decision making process.

Introduction

Living Apart Together (LAT) describes a couple that have a monogamous, emotional and romantic relationship, but maintain their own separate homes and one-person households. They live together from time to time and define themselves as a couple. These relationships can be between people of the same or opposite gender (Trost, 1998). Despite increasing popularity of LAT relationships for older and previously married people, research has been very limited.

Census data can reveal couples that are co-resident, whether married or cohabiting, but there is virtually no statistical method of identifying individuals who are in a LAT relationship. Older people make up an increasing proportion of our population. According to the Office of National statistics (ONS, 2006) older adults aged 65 and over make up 16% of the UK population. The number of unmarried adults in the UK rose in 2006, but the number who chose to marry fell, producing the lowest rates on record. In 2006, there was a 4% fall in UK marriage and this is predicted to continue to decline (ONS, 2008). With the divorce rate on the increase in many western countries and the marriage rate decreasing, it could be taken to indicate a crisis for long-term romantic relationships. However, this does not seem to be the case. There are several living arrangements available to widows and widowers. Some might choose to live alone, move in with one of their children, move into some form of congregate living, remarry or be in a relationship without remarriage. Alternatives to the traditional marriage do exist and people can choose to arrange their lives as couples in a variety of ways. One of the latest studied phenomena in the field of relationships is LAT.

This review of the literature aims to stimulate an awareness of the choices and constraints relevant to decisions about new relationship formation in later life, following widowhood or divorce. Furthermore, it aims to consider how these factors might influence psychological well-being amongst older adults who are engaged in this decision-making process. The article outlines the historical

context and changes in norms that may have helped LAT become more acceptable nowadays. It highlights research on the adjustments that older people make following divorce or widowhood and looks at the factors that may influence older adults' decision to enter into new intimate relationships. The review explores the importance and significance of the home, boundaries and autonomy; the motivation to form new intimate relationships; sexuality in later life and the impact of family on older adults' decision to repartner. These factors are linked to counselling psychology and the psychological well-being of older adults engaged in this decision making process. It concludes with some issues that counselling psychologist may want to consider when working with older adults engaged in this decision making process.

LAT relationships

LAT is a relatively new concept and has been associated with couples who are termed 'commuting marriages'. That is, where a married couple live in one household but one partner is away from home due to work commitments and stays overnight in a separate apartment. The term commuting marriage/cohabitation has been used interchangeably with dual-household or dual-residence living (Winfield, 1985). Married couples that choose to live apart and maintain homes in separate geographical locations for the purpose of equal career advancement have been termed LAT or dual-career commuter couples. Living apart before marriage is often seen as a traditional transition from being single to cohabitation or marriage (King & Scott, 2005). LAT relationships in the western world could also be compared to the 'friending' system in the Caribbean, that is, the formation of a friendship followed by cohabitation and then marriage.

The distinction between commuting marriage/cohabitation and LAT relationships is closely connected to the household or domesticity issue. If a couple live in *one household* and one (or both of them) has an overnight or second apartment where he or she stays when away from home for usually work or studies reasons, we are talking about a commuting

marital/cohabitation relationship. In order to be a LAT relationship, an unmarried couple needs to have two households, meaning two residences.

LAT has been called a variety of terms in different countries. A Dutch journalist, Michiel Berkel, first wrote about LAT in the Netherlands. In an article in Haagse Post (1978), Berkel used the term LAT-relatie and LAT soon became a word in the Netherlands (Levin & Trost, 1999). In the Scandinavian countries the term *særbo* in Norwegian and *särbo* in Swedish has now become a known terms referring to couples who live apart but have a marriage-like relationship (Tomasson, 1998). In France, the term *Cohabitation intermittente* (intermittent cohabitation) describes a couple that live in separate households and are looked upon as a couple by others and by themselves. In Germany, the term 'partners with different households' or *Partnerschaften mit getrennten Haushalten,* is used. There is an absence of an established terminology in the USA (Karlsson & Borell, 2002) and discussions about LAT relationships in the UK are just beginning (Haskey, 2005).

Historical context

Marriage to some older people is still viewed as the sole socially acceptable institution for couples planning to live together. Until the latter decades of the 20th century, cohabitation was often stigmatised and frowned upon, in particular by a cohort socialised by Victorian parents (Trost, 1979; 1998; Levin, 2004). In Asian cultures, remarriage for the widowed is still a taboo subject. The sanctity of marriage and the notion that marriage is a lifetime commitment is largely prevalent and the dissolution of a marriage due to the death of a spouse does not mean the dissolution of the alliance of the families (Mehta, 2002). It is possible to view cohabitation alongside marriage as a social institution despite the lack of religious or civil rituals. After cohabitation becomes an acceptable norm it follows that LAT may become accepted as a social institute in society. Since the norms have changed there is no 'immorality' of cohabitation and LAT may be more socially acceptable. Trost

(2003) argues that there are three parallel social institutions - married couples living together, non-marital cohabitating couples and LAT relationships. He believes that these are simply three different options available to people in today's word. Davidson (2006) noted that 'flying solo' in later life might become a social norm, facilitated by better health, financial security and choice to live independently.

Sociologists have developed the idea of a structural lag (Riley & Riley, 1999), where they argue that social institutions—as habitualised, sanctioned and legitimised patterns of action—are resistant to change. When demographic, social or economics conditions change rapidly, such as the explosive increase in married women's labour force participation, the relatively entrenched nature of social institutions means that a mismatch develops between existing social structures and desired or socially optimal practices. There is a further mismatch between the strengths and capacities of the increasing numbers of older people, and the inadequate opportunities in society to utilise, reward and sustain these strengths. As people grow older in new ways, the surrounding social structures have lagged behind. The structures and attitudes of many sectors of society have not caught up with the reality of ageing (Riley & Riley, 1999).

Gerontologists who have focused on successful ageing in older adults have noted that the meaning of success is highly individualised in nature. A variety of definitions of successful ageing exist, such as that of Gibson who claims that ageing successfully means 'reaching one's potential and arriving at a level of physical, social and psychological well-being in old age that is pleasing to both self and others' (1995, p 279). Successful ageing is seen as a dynamic process, as the outcome of one's development over the life course and as the ability to grow and learn by using past experiences to cope with present circumstances while maintaining a realistic sense of self (Bowling & Dieppe, 2005). A study by Hsu (2007) in Taiwan explored the concepts of successful ageing held by older adults. It concluded that older adults in Taiwan valued health and independence, which affected their quality of life.

Rowe and Kahn (1999) conducted an extensive study on successful ageing as part of The MacArthur Foundation Study. They found that lifestyle was significantly more reliable than heredity as an indicator of longevity. The challenge in later life is to maintain a strong sense of self-identity. Maintaining a sense of continuity of self and of self-esteem is an important psychological factor in later life (Bond et al., 1993; 2007). Overall, successful ageing needs to be viewed multidimensionally and as an ideal state to be aimed for.

Single older adults

According to the UK Office of National statistics (ONS, 2004), older women are more likely than older men to live alone and the proportion increases with advancing age. Among women aged 75 and over, who live in private households in Great Britain, 60% lived alone in 2002 compared with 29% of men of the same age. For those who are not in a partnership, the norm is to live alone. In addition, with advancing age, increasing proportions of older people lived without a partner but with their children (6.7% of women and 3.7% of men aged 85 and over). Similarly, the proportion living with others (not their children) increased with age, reaching 7.6% of women and 6.1% of men aged 85 and over.

Life expectancy at age 65 in the UK has reached its highest level ever for both men and women. Men aged 65 could expect to live a further 16.9 years and women a further 19.7 years if mortality rates remained the same as they were in 2004-06. Gender differences in life expectancy, coupled with the fact that women tend to marry men older than they are, mean that women are more likely than men to experience late-life singlehood. In 2005 older adults aged 60 and over accounted for 5.7% (men) and 3.3% (women) of the total divorce rate. Older women are much more likely than older men to live in a communal establishment. For those aged 85 and over, the proportion of women living in such a setting in 2001 was double that of men of the same age (23% compared with 12%).

Older adult's level of well-being is crucially determined by their living arrangements. Living alone means that companionship, solidarity, assistance and care have to come from outside the household. This increases the need to create and maintain a supportive network of family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues and others (de Jong Gierveld, 2003). Older adults can overcome their sense of loneliness by increasing their friendship networks such as attending local clubs and church.

The effects of widowhood and divorce in later life

The death of a spouse represents more than the severing of an emotional attachment to one's partner and confidante (Bowlby, 1980). Widowhood also alters the routines, tasks and living arrangements that characterised the everyday life of the married couple. The bereaved must reconstruct their daily lives to reflect their new status as an unmarried person. This process typically involves modifying the daily decisions, household tasks and routine responsibilities that were once shared by both spouses. Many researchers have focused on the mental and physical health consequences of widowhood (Waite & Gallagher, 2000, for review), however relatively little is known about the social and behavioural adjustments made by older bereaved spouses. The lives of the widowed are also altered in terms of their activities within the home and the maintenance of their household remains a pressing concern for older bereaved. Consequently, when one spouse dies, the survivor is responsible for running the household and performing the tasks that were once performed by their spouse. The personal strain is often considerable and is most acute for those who were highly dependent on their spouse prior to death.

Widowed older adults need to come to terms with the loss of their spouse and accept a new social status and role. For many people, role and status change is an extremely difficult transition necessitating profound changes in daily living with the risk of possible social isolation. For others, this time is a long-hoped-for opportunity to take control of their own lives or to be relieved of the responsibility of caring. For both sexes the loss of a spouse means that part of

their partner's role has to be learnt. Widows may have to handle financial matters for the first time and widowers may have to learn to cook.

Older adults face a broad range of adjustments upon the dissolution of marriage or widowhood. In addition to psychological distress, older adults encounter social, economic, health and behavioural consequences after divorce or spousal loss. Although women may experience similar types of stressors after spousal loss, an important theme in bereavement research is that no women will experience the dissolution of marriage in exactly the same way as another women (Utz, 2005).

Many individuals in later life may experience divorce or be faced with the decision whether to cohabit or remarriage. Indeed, cohabitation is becoming more common among people in their fifties. In 2002, 5% of men and 4% of women aged 50-59 lived with a partner without being married to them. Marriage was the norm for older men, whereas older women were more likely to be widowed than married. Nearly half of older women were widows, and the proportion rose to four fifths for women aged 85 and over. Only 17 per cent of men aged 65 and over were widowers, and this reached 43 per cent among men in their late 80s. More men in their late 60s are divorced or separated (9%) than widowed (7%). Older divorced men are more likely than other older men to be socially isolated from family and friends, and engage in more risky health behaviours, such as smoking and high alcohol consumption.

For some, the end of marriage means the loss of an intimate life partner, confidant or friend. For others, it may represent the loss of a handyman, domestic help, mechanic or financial advisor (Utz, 2005). The true nature of the loss depends on the history of the relationship with the spouse. When two people enter a marriage they begin to function as a team, whereby couples have certain responsibilities and may allocate daily tasks in order to capitalise on each spouse's strength. When marriage comes to an end, whether through death or divorce, the surviving spouse becomes responsible for all the tasks of daily life, including those that were previously managed by the late (or former)

spouse. They do this whilst grieving the loss of an intimate personal relationship. The goal of a single older person is to rebuild their life so that it reflects their new reality as a single older person and the biggest challenge is what Ginsburg (2005) terms 'uncoupling', where a person evolves from 'one half of a couple to a whole person'. The Dual process model of coping (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) explains that bereaved persons alternate between loss orientated and restoration oriented coping tasks. Bereavement is seen as a multidimensional process of adjustment in which the bereaved must address the social, psychological, financial and instrumental losses associated with the end of a marriage.

Repartnering in later life

Repartnering in later life creates diverse new marital and extra-marital families and complicated household patterns. Recent studies have shown that widows and widowers express continued loyalty to the deceased partner (Stevens, 2002) and report their sentiment around removing their wedding ring after widowhood (Van Den Hoonaard, 2002). Stevens (2004) identified various issues that have to be resolved if a new partnership is to develop and continue, these include:

- Agreeing on the form that the relationship will take.
- Whether sexuality will be involved.
- Whether or not to live together.
- Where to live together (if this is the choice).
- Which activities the couple will share and which will be continued separately.
- How to integrate the memories of and loyalty to the former partner in the new relationship without having them interfere with the relationship.
- Dealing with conflicting loyalties between children, friends, family (in law) on the one hand and the new partner on the other hand.

In addition to having to negotiate such issues with potential partners, many widows and widowers engage in a kind of internal dialogue involving different voices or selves; the self that is loyal to the original partner, the self that longs to be part of a couple, the sexual self, the independent self and the self as a parent (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

Roseneil (2006) classified her interviewees into three groups: a small group who wished to live with their partner but who had decided not to (regretfully apart); a larger group who were clear that they did not want to live with their partner (the gladly apart); and the largest group who had not made an explicit decision about the issue (the undecidedly apart). Although her study was not specifically about older adults (the age range was 16-59), it challenges the assumption that not living with a partner means being single, and that entry into cohabitating coupledom is the expectation and aim of almost everyone.

Loneliness

Loneliness and the desire for companionship are the two most common reasons for remarriage or repartnering amongst older people. Loneliness is one of the long-term consequences of loss of a spouse (Dugan & Kivett, 1994). A study done by Lopata (1979) showed that younger widows and widowers were more likely to move after the loss, whereas older ones were more likely to remain in the home they lived in at the time of the death. Living alone can lead to intense feelings of loneliness, particularly intensified by living alone in the same physical surroundings shared with the spouse. Some older adults cannot continue to live alone after the death of a spouse and may require institutional care. There is anecdotal evidence to support the fact that elderly people who are forced to move out of their homes after losing a spouse may be at higher risk for mortality. In another study of loneliness, Dykstra (1995) examined the importance of having a partner and the desirability of being single among formerly and never married older people. Widowers and divorced men rated being single as least desirable and gave the highest desirability rating to being partnered. Widows rated being single

more positively than widowers and the desirability of being partnered less highly. Widowed people often miss both the intimacy of the relationship with the partner and the social life that they lead as a couple. Thus they are vulnerable to two forms of loneliness - emotional and social isolation (Weiss, 1973).

The social convoy model (Kahn & Antonucci, 1980) emphasises the role of social support from friends and family. The convoy of social support provides a protective layer of social relations to guide, socialise and encourage individuals as they move through life. This provides a theoretical framework within which to examine social relations in the lifespan. Carstensen (1987; 1991; 1992) proposed a theoretical model termed socioemotional selectivity theory, in which reduced rates of interaction in late life are viewed as the results of lifelong selection processes by which individuals strategically and adaptively cultivate their social networks to maximise social and emotional gains and minimise social and emotional risks. In the socioemotional selectivity model, social patterns observed in later life reflect the gradual changes that unfold over the life course. The theory is rooted in the functions of social contact and the idea that the basic functions of interaction remain consistent across the lifespan.

Once bitten twice shy

Whether or not individual women want to remarry or repartner, widows seem to agree that remarriage can be risky. There have been several accounts of cautionary tales and a general feeling of uncertainty surrounding taking a chance on remarriage and some individuals expressed concerns about practical problems should they wish to part (Van Den Hoonaard, 2002; Talbott, 1998). Remarriage is one of the choices available to older adults to combat loneliness, however, there are many factors that need to be taken into account. In Talbott's (1998) study she looked at older widows' interest in men and their attitude to remarriage. The widows' views of their previous marriage were instrumental in their decision whether to remarry or not. Factors such as

the merit of their deceased husband, scarcity of older men, health, mobility, finances and the absence of incentives common to younger people (e.g. conforming to life-cycle timing) influenced the older persons decision to remarry or enter into a new relationship. Several studies indicate that people who are married live longer, have better health than unmarried people (Burman & Margolin, 1992; Ross et al., 1990) and divorcing or becoming a widow has more negative health effects than never being married (Pienta et al., 2000).

Autonomy

An increasing number of older adults choose either flexible partner relationships such as unmarried cohabitation or LAT as an alternative to remarriage. LAT allows older adults to avoid remarriage whilst maintaining their independent decisions about their day-to-day activities (de Jong Grieveld, 2003). LAT relationships can offer older divorcees, widows and widowers a fulfilling intimate relationship and they can also ensure the individual a significant degree of autonomy. LAT can also protect women against the gendered duties implicit in marriage (Borell & Karlsson, 2003; Levin & Trost, 1999), freeing the individuals from the ties of wedlock on the one hand and avoiding societal disapprobation on the other.

Becoming a widow may improve the lives of older women to a certain extent, as they have more or less 'retired' from the often heavy domestic and other responsibilities associated with the conjugal role. In the period following the death of their spouse and after a period of intense bereavement and adjustment, older people may have found a new state of equilibrium, self-confidence and self-sufficiency (Bennett, 1997; Davidson, 2001; de Jong Gierveld, 2002). Widows may enjoy a certain degree of freedom and independence in organising their daily lives and this increase in self-confidence and self-sufficiency may be a factor in their increased power in the repartnering market, their reluctance to remarry and their power to negotiate alternative living arrangements (de Jong Gierveld, 2002; 2004).

Home and boundaries

Sixsmith (1986) argued that for older adults the importance of one's own home represents a continuity created in a lifelong marriage, as the home is a continuous context in which couples raise their children. A person's home therefore provides a familiar and secure place for retirement. After the death of a spouse the home may become a place of memories and can fulfil a wide range of social functions. The home may also be perceived as a way in which traditional gendered role can be challenged and boundaries established. In order to establish these boundaries, women in LAT relationships can fall back on the rules for access to a home that already exists in Western cultures (Karlsson & Borell, 2002; 2005). The boundaries are maintained through social rules governing the right of access to a home. Members residing permanently in the home have free access, whilst others need to be given 'permission' to enter the home. The home is therefore a place where older adults are able to either include or exclude individuals and this is an importance factor in a LAT relationship. Women can have independent relationships with their partners, friends and family whilst giving them the flexibility to alternate between meeting friends and family with their partner or separately, depending on the situation. The women studied by Karlsson & Borell (2002; 2005) valued their own homes as a means of protection against the gendered duties implicit in a marriage. Having one's own home also acts as a demarcation for the distribution of domestic labour.

Sixsmith (1990) identified three themes, which underlie the meanings that older people generally associate with home and which are central to an understanding of home and residential experience in later life. Firstly, the home is seen as a major focus in life for refuge. Secondly, it enables them to remain independent of others and thirdly, older adults have an attachment to their homes in terms of memories.

Financial

Having separate households means that couples also have separate finances. Married couples usually have a joint private economy and over the years acquire a number of shared resources. The LAT couples studied by Karlsson & Borell (2002) all had their own private household economies and very few had joint resources or shared possessions. In western countries like the United States and the Netherlands, there are financial disincentives for older people to remarry since social security and old-age pensions are negatively affected by remarriage.

Motivation to form a new relationship

A key factor in the decision to form a LAT relationship or repartner is the individual's motivation to form a new relationship and is frequently governed by societal and familial expectations. Older widows may not desire a new relationship (Davidson, 2004) whilst others may base their decision on their views of their previous marriage (Talbott, 1998). Carr (2004) studied the desire to date and remarry among older widowed adults and found that older adult widows who desired or had a romantic relationship reported significantly fewer depressive symptoms.

Hatch (1995) developed an analytical framework for explaining choices and constraints for cohabitation in a population of people over the age of forty-five years in the United States. This framework was adapted from Dixon (1971) for explaining age at marriage and proportions never marrying. Dixon identified three conditions, which intervene between social structure and marriage patterns. They are the availability of mates, feasibility of marriage and the desirability of marriage. The availability of partners is primarily a result of the sex ratio of eligible people available for new partnership formations. According to the ONS (2003) the sex ratio for over age 50 increased to 85 men per 100

women in 2003. Their projections indicate that by 2031 the sex ratio will be 90 men per 100 women over age 50.

Feasibility is determined largely by variables such as age, health and financial assets, which influence selection of a partner. If a widow or widower has poor health and poor finances, the feasibility of new partnership formation is reduced. Ill health alone is not a significant barrier to repartnering (Davidson, 2004). Desirability is the intensity of the motivation to form a new relationship, which in turn is frequently governed by societal and familial expectations.

Sexuality during late adulthood

Older adults who live alone are limited in their opportunities for sexual activity by social attitudes towards sexual behaviour. Although sexual activity outside marriage is widely acceptable nowadays, this was not the case when the current older adults population were adolescents (Arber & Ginn, 1991). Gibson (1993) noted that in the Victorian ethos the expression of sexuality was taboo and this was especially strong for women. The ethos also meant that when a person reached the age of 50, they wore distinctively sober clothes.

A common myth about old age is that old people are sexually inactive, and are to all intents and purposes, 'sexless'. Unmarried older adults may be influenced by this ageist belief, the attitudes of their peers towards sex between unmarried people or their own beliefs. Studies in several countries show that the main constraints on sexual activity among elderly people are social not biological (Gibson, 1984). The imbalance of the sexes means that lone older women have fewer opportunities for heterosexual relationships with unmarried men. This imbalance together with social attitudes, assuming that older adults wish to continue to have an active sexual life, deprives most unmarried older women of a choice.

Sex researchers have found that the most important determinant of sexual activity is not age, but having access to a regular partner. Medical research has also begun to comment on the positive and life-enhancing aspects of sexuality, hugging, touching and orgasm (Fennell, 2002 and Smith et al., 1997) and having an intimate, confiding relationship is an acknowledged antidote to the risk of depression when life events are adverse (Brown & Harris, 1978). Actually there is no interruption in sexual needs, interest and capacity even in very advanced age.

In most societies in Asia, remarriage for the widowed is still a taboo subject. Marriage is seen as a lifetime commitment, a joining of two people and their families. Therefore, the death of a spouse does not mean the dissolution of the extended families. According to Mehta (2002) if an older adult contemplates remarriage the relatives would speculate that their sexual needs are driving this desire. Many widowed people would not express their wish to form a new intimate relationship out of their fear of being misinterpreted.

Family

Many significant adjustments in family relationships take place during later life. Older adults and their adult children develop, ideally speaking, an adult relationship. In modern Western society this relationship is very complex and differs from community to community and from family to family. In a LAT relationship, one cannot demand that a partner provides care in later life, as the relationship is based more on voluntary commitments than on institutional commitments between partners. Care might therefore need to come from family members. However, LAT relationships should be acknowledged as an important resource for emotional and other support (Karlsson et al., 2007).

Repartnering at older ages creates diverse new marital and extra-marital families and complicated household patterns. In her study of widowed people in Singapore, Mehta (2002) showed that widowed individuals placed much weight on the views of their adult children towards the issue of remarriage.

Concerns such as losing the respect of their children, gossip and the idea that the children have failed in their care for their parent were evident.

McKain (1972) found that older adults were likely to be faced with opposition from family and friends when considering remarriage or a new relationship. Society tends to discount remarriage late in life as a viable option and his findings also showed that children are especially likely to resist the remarriage of a parent. Remarriage between younger adults have the stress of relating to a new family network, building a relationship with young stepchildren and raising children. However, dealing with adult children in the situation of remarriage in later adulthood is qualitatively different from the task of trying to establish and be accepted in a viable parental role with young stepchildren.

Many adult children have trouble visualising their parents, especially their mother as being sexual adults outside the parental role (Brecher, 1984; McKain, 1972) and there is direct and open opposition to a remarriage by family members. Remarriage represents a potential disruption to the financial and complex emotional interdependencies between the generations. Specifically, the children may fear their inheritance will be lost or the transfer complicated by the remarriage. The acceptance of the remarriage by family and friends is a determinant factor in the success of the remarriage. The reassurance from friends and the support of children are needed to overcome social pressures, real and imagined, that threaten the marriage. At least 25% of McKain's (1972) sample reported they almost decided against remarriage because of the social pressure. However, the couples also reported that children who were initially against the marriage, approved later when they saw the resulting happiness. In a study of older widows and widowers in Canada, Van Den Hoonard (2002) noted the inhibiting effects of adult children on the widows' ideas about remarriage. Wu (1995) has also noted that the incidence of remarriage among Canadian widows with children is 93% lower than for women without children.

Counselling older adults

The National Service Framework for Older People specifies the promotion of mental health and psychological care (Department of health, 2001), however many counsellors are not specifically trained to work with older adults. It can be argued that older adults have difficulties common to all age groups, yet lifespan psychologists have allocated specific tasks to old age. O'Leary (1996) found that exposure to a module on gerontology as part of counsellor training changed the stereotypes and attitudes of the participants with regard to older people. There was also a decreased use of categorical approaches.

Scrutton (1999) believes that the losses inherent in ageing mean that older people present with a repeating cycle of social distress, involving worthlessness, inadequacy, fear and vulnerability. Scrutton's psychological treatment plan would be to deal with developmental deficits, negative emotions, emotional repression, meaning making, reminiscence, failing health and death. Knight (1992) offers information about older people in the areas of intelligence and memory, personality and emotional development, and life satisfaction – and favours a maturity model. He points out the wealth of observations about life which older clients have at their disposal, the philosophy they have gained, their internal database of how humans interact, their experience of crossing gender roles as they have matured, their expertise in particular areas, their experience of many family constellations and in all, their more highly complex construct systems. Knight also sees preparation for the future (which may be as much as the last third of life) as the most important point to deal with in therapy, bringing into play strategies based on the resources which older people have gathered over the years and making therapy more of a norm than a rescue.

Depression is not a normal part of ageing and often co-occurs with other serious illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's disease etcetera. As many older adults face these illnesses as well as various

social and economic difficulties, health care professionals may mistakenly conclude that depression is a normal consequence of these problems — an attitude often shared by clients themselves. These factors together contribute to the underdiagnosis and undertreatment of depressive disorders in older people. Depression can and should be treated when it co-occurs with other illnesses as untreated depression can delay recovery from or worsen the outcome of these other illnesses.

An inquiry in 2003 focusing on older adults and mental health (Lee, 2006) provides an important reminder that the range of mental health problems in older age can be diverse, ranging across depression and anxiety, delirium, schizophrenia, and alcohol and drug misuse. It details prevalence rates and maps the patterns of mental health problems in those over 65 and the extent of unmet needs. Statistic show that one in four older people living in the community has symptoms of depression, often undiagnosed but severe enough to warrant attention. At least 30% of older people in acute hospitals and 40% of those in care homes meet the clinical criteria for depression. Overall, up to 60% of older people in acute hospitals experience mental health problems in some form. If tendencies continue, it is estimated that within the next 15 years, one in every 15 of the population will be an older person experiencing mental health problems. Levels of suicide among older people are high. Women aged 75 and over have the highest suicide rates of all women in the UK, while men in the same age group have the second highest rate. Suicide attempts by older people are more likely to be successful and one in four attempts lead to death compared with one in 15 attempts among the general population. The large majority of those who commit suicide have a diagnosable mental health problem, with more than half of those dying through suicide having visited their GP within the previous month. At the same time, people in the 55 - 74 age group have the highest rate of alcohol-related deaths in the UK.

Very few older people have access to specialist mental health care and older people have more limited access to psychological therapies than younger

people (Lee, 2007). For example only half of those in care homes diagnosed with depression receive any form of treatment and while a third of older people receiving home care experience depression few receive any treatment. It is estimated that only a third of older people with depression discuss it with their GP and less than half of these receive treatment. They are also more likely to be prescribed medication rather than offered an alternative intervention. Only 6% of older people with depression receive specialist mental health care.

Older people with mental health problems who were involved in discussions on the available support and services highlighted five key areas of concern. They indicated that age barriers made some services inaccessible, indirect age discrimination is a major problem, stigma is powerful and isolating, many problems are disregarded and overlooked and services are fragmented and distant. Counselling psychologists could play a role in not only providing therapy to older adults but also in identifying this gap in mental health services and helping to highlight areas for development and improvement.

Conclusion

Older widowed or divorced people in good health are developing innovative life strategies to cope with the challenges of living alone for an ever-extending later life (de Jong Gierveld, 2003). Awareness of alternatives to a traditional marital relationship such as LAT, may tip the balance in the process of weighing advantages and risks of engaging in new partnerships.

A further consideration for counselling psychologists is that just as spousal loss disrupts daily routine and activities, widowhood also alters the ways that older adults experience annual or periodic activities and celebrations. Mental health professionals base important professional decisions on the assumption that the bereaved are likely to experience heightened grief on special occasions such as wedding anniversaries, major holidays and their deceased spouses' birthday. Special events are believed to trigger memories of the deceased spouse, and accompanying feelings of sadness, yearning and grief

(Rosenblat, 1983). Psychological reactions may ebb and flow based on time and place and particular days and locations may elicit pleasant or painful memories of the deceased spouse. This needs to be taken into consideration in the therapeutic relationship. Counselling psychologists should also consider and be aware of issues of transference and countertransference within the therapeutic relationship with older adults that are unique to this age group. For example, transference and countertransference issues may reveal a client's desire to nurture or compete with the therapist, or an idealisation by the therapist of the older person as sage or grandparent (Woolfe & Biggs, 1997). Issues of difference, culture, and power in an ageist society also require explicit but tender exploration. Supervision is essential for helping the therapist understand and manage powerful feelings, such as pity, sadism and guilt that can be evoked in therapy with older people (Petford et al., 2006).

One of the aims of the counselling psychologist is to enable the client to grapple successfully with the burdens that brought him/her to therapy. Counselling psychologists might be better equipped to counsel people who are experiencing difficulties with the decision-making process in repartnering or opposition from family members. They may find it helpful to learn what family life conditions and personality traits influence older adults decisions., explore the extent to which, if any, societal attitudes, gender and culture influence older adults and furthermore, explore how free and able the client is to choose their ambitions, lifestyles and methods of personal / social adjustment.

An important interaction takes place between the ways others view older adults and the ways older adults view themselves. Other's perceptions help determine the older person's self-concept and resultant behaviour. For counselling psychologists there are three implications that derive from the nature of popular stereotypes of older adults. Firstly, stereotypes can influence the way in which the public treats older people. Secondly, if they accept stereotypes as valid, older people may behave in ways that are not in their best interests and thirdly, the approaches that counselling psychologists adopt

with older adults can be affected by how the counselling psychologists interpret the public's perceptions.

Clearly, there is a need to focus more research attention on remarriages among older adults and other options available to older single people. Exploring older adults' thoughts around divorce and remarriage and their views on alternatives to remarriage and cohabitation, such as LAT, may help us to better meet their needs through prevention and intervention strategies. Single older adults have several choices available to them, however, social and family pressures might hinder their decision. An awareness of their own values and thoughts of remarriage, cohabitation or LAT, enables the counselling psychologist to explore their readjustment, choices and constraints.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Reflecting on the use of self

Appendix 2 – Literature search information

Appendix 3 – Counselling Psychology Review – Notes for contributors

Appendix 1   Reflecting on the use of self

Why I chose to study LAT and older adults

I am not sure to what extent my upbringing has on my interest in older adults. I was born and raised in South Africa, where in many African cultures older adults were seen as a source of great wisdom and experience. I recall having to call my parent's friends Aunty and Uncle, out of respect, despite them not being related to me. This ingrained respect for older people is deeply rooted in me and I often struggle to call older people by their first names, believing that it is disrespectful. My own grandparents and extended family were all in the UK. This might have contributed to my interest in older adults and certainly had an influence on me studying adult development and ageing as part of my undergraduate degree. Perhaps I feel that I have missed out by not having the opportunity to bond with my grandparents.

I first became interested in working with older adults when I was employed as an assistant psychologist within a psychology department specialising in older adults. I was inspired to see older adults relishing the opportunity to be listened to and thought about. During this time, an 83-year-old gentleman was referred to the services for his low mood. During our sessions it transpired that he had met a lady through an advert in the local paper and had started an intimate relationship with her. They both lived in separate homes and met a few times a week, spending the occasional night together. They enjoyed going out to eat together, visiting museums and both belonged to a social club. This client enjoyed the company of his lady friend and the intimacy of their relationship, however, he was feeling guilty about this relationship as his wife had passed away six years previously and he was worried about betraying her memory. This gentleman helped me to reflect on my own ideas about relationships in later life and I wondered what choices were available to older adults after widowhood. I was inspired to take up further work with older people by conducting research into Alzheimer's disease and premorbid personality.

I became interested in remarriage in later life when I saw a friend's father walking towards me, hand in hand with a woman. I automatically assumed they were married. When my friend informed me that his parents divorced in their 60s and the women was his father's lady friend, I was interested in the reason for me making the assumption. Was it more acceptable for me to think of older adults as married? Did I think that his relationship would end up in marriage anyway and that this was the 'dating phase' or did this relationship fulfil a need, such as companionship? I was very curious about his thoughts and reasons for choosing this lifestyle over cohabiting or remarriage and started to think about using this experience as the basis of my research.

I decided to study remarriage in later life and made an appointment to see Dr Kate Davidson at the Centre for Research on Ageing and Gender (CRAG) at the University of Surrey to discuss a potential literature review on remarriage in later life. During our meeting, Dr Davidson mentioned a new phenomenon called Living Apart Together (LAT). As there had been very little research on the subject, I thought it would be an ideal opportunity to conduct research in this area.

Personal commitment to this topic

I have always believed that later life offers new opportunities, however, my experience working with older adults with Dementia and their carers was challenging. My own ideas about post-retirement life were filled with idealised views of travel, hobbies and spending time with family and friends. Working closely with clients in nursing and residential homes was very upsetting for me as I only saw the physiological and psychological decline in older people. Reading the literature on LAT, enabled me to gain a different perspective. It allowed me to see that older adults in good health have many choices and even in the face of physiological deterioration there is still an element of life satisfaction, well-being, adjustment and growth. I remained open-minded when reading the literature and at times I felt more positive about the choices

older adults have. At other times, I became more aware of the constraints. In particular, I was struck by the influence of the family on older adults' decision making and the importance older people place on their homes.

How I have been affected by exploring this topic

At the beginning of the course, it was suggested that trainees choose a topic that would maintain their interest and enthusiasm over the three years. I did not truly appreciate nor understand the importance of this at the time. This research has widened my understanding of the choices and constraints older adults face, after widowhood or divorce and at the same time has challenged my own prejudices about later life. I have thoroughly enjoyed the process of exploring this topic and have grown to believe that LAT offers older adults more choice than remarriage and cohabitation. I have been particularly affected by reading about structural lag and how society has not kept up with changing times. I was also affected by the attitudes of some adult children to their parent's new relationship, such as the children's fear over losing their inheritance and the amount of influence children have on their parent's decision to form new relationships after widowhood or divorce. During the review process, I have become particularly interested in the cultural and gender differences and the research around boundaries, home and autonomy.

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Individual's experience of Living Apart Together (LAT) in later life: An interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Abstract

When individuals are engaged in a decision to form a new relationship in later life, following divorce or death of a spouse, LAT is one of the options available. Surprisingly, there has been little research into LAT as an alternative to remarriage for older adults. This exploratory qualitative study explored the multidimensional experience of individuals' LAT relationships from a qualitative perspective. It aimed to highlight some of the key decision making processes individuals in later life go through when considering re-partnering and a LAT relationship. Five participants (2 men and 3 women) aged 59 –88 currently in a LAT relationship were interviewed. The participants were either divorced (2) or widowed (3). Data was analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Three distinct themes illustrated the participants' experience and choice to enter into a LAT relationship. These included the influence of singlehood & marriage, thoughts around maintaining a single household and support & future care. The findings showed the influence of individual's experience of singlehood and their loyalty to their deceased partner which had a significant bearing on their choice to LAT as well as their ideas around independence and future care.

Introduction

Living Apart Together (LAT) describes a couple that have a monogamous emotional/romantic relationship, but maintain separate homes and one-person households. They live together from time to time and are defined as a couple by friends, family and themselves. These relationships can be between people of the same or opposite gender (Trost, 1998). Despite increasing popularity of LAT relationships for older, previously married people, research has been very limited.

Census data can reveal couples that are co-resident, whether married or cohabiting, but there is virtually no statistical method of identifying this burgeoning group. Older people make up an increasing proportion of our population. According to the Office of National statistics (ONS, 2006) older adults aged 65 and over make up 16% of the UK population. The number of unmarried adults in the UK rose in 2006 and the number who chose to marry fell, producing the lowest rates on record. In 2006, there was a 4% fall in UK marriage and this is predicted to continue to decline (ONS, 2008). With the divorce rate on the increase in many western countries and the marriage rate decreasing, it could be taken to indicate a crisis for long-term romantic relationships. However, this does not seem to be the case.

Marriage is still viewed, by some older adults as the sole socially acceptable institution for couples planning to live together. Until the latter decades of the 20th century, cohabitation was often stigmatised and frowned upon, in particular by a generation socialised by Victorian parents (Trost, 1979). The sanctity of marriage and notion that marriage is a lifetime commitment is largely prevalent and the dissolution of a marriage due to the death of a spouse does not mean the dissolution of the alliance of the families (Mehta, 2002). It is possible to view cohabitation alongside marriage as a social institution despite the lack of religious or civil rituals. After cohabitation becomes an acceptable norm it follows that LAT might become accepted as a

social institute in society. Since the norms have changed there is no 'immorality' of cohabitation and LAT may be more socially acceptable.

Living arrangements have been found to affect life satisfaction and health (Velkoff, 2000) and change over the life course. There are several living arrangements available to widows and widowers, such as living alone, living with family, congregate living, remarrying or being in a relationship without remarriage. Alternatives to traditional marriage do exist and people can choose to arrange their lives as couples in a variety of ways. LAT is a relatively new concept and at present under researched with discussions about LAT relationships in the UK just beginning (Haskey, 2005). Older widowed or divorced people in good health are developing innovative life strategies to cope with the challenges of living alone for an ever-extending later life (de Jong Gierveld, 2003). Awareness of alternatives to a traditional marital relationship such as LAT, may help individuals to weigh up the advantages and risks of engaging in new partnerships.

This research aimed to detail individuals' experience of their LAT relationship from a qualitative perspective. The research question was borne out of a literature review conducted by the author (Nicholas & Brown, 2008) and was designed to study the participant's subjective experience of their LAT relationship, which may provide important information to researchers and counsellors about the decision making process older adults go through. The participant's conscious explanation provides an indication of what is required to help understand their reactions to choosing to engage in an intimate relationship in later life, following divorce or widowhood.

Method

Participants

The inclusion criterion for the study was that participants were 50 years or older, divorced or widowed and in a new relationship but living separately.

Recruitment was through word-of-mouth and snowballing. Five participants who met the criteria (2 males and 3 female) were interviewed. Participants were aged 59 – 88 and saw their partners between three and seven days a week. They were all single, following either divorce (2 participants) or widowhood (3 participants). Each participant was provided with an information sheet outlining the research and consent forms were obtained prior to each interview.

The interview

The interviews were semi-structured with five broad questions used to facilitate further discussion (*appendix*). The interview schedule outlined the areas of interest to be discussed during the interview and was used as a guide rather than to dictate the course of the interview consistent with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 2007). This allowed the exploration of interesting issues that arose and was aimed at facilitating the participant telling their own account of choosing LAT. The structure of the interview schedule began with a general question regarding the participant's thoughts about relationships, followed by more specific lines of enquiry, allowing the researcher to think explicitly about what the interview might cover based on previous research outlined in a literature review (Nicholas & Brown, 2008). Additional topics included in the interview schedule were around their feelings after divorce or widowhood; the reaction of friends and family to their new LAT relationship, their decision to choose a LAT relationship and an opportunity for participants to add any further comments that they felt was relevant to the study. Interviews were all conducted in the participants' homes and participants were given an information sheet and consent form before the interview was arranged. Interviews were carried out by the principal researcher and were all conducted in the participant's homes, lasting between 30 to 45 minutes. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Pseudonyms were created for each participant to ensure their anonymity. Full consent was obtained and the relevant research ethics committee approved the study.

Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was employed to analyse the data (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2003). This qualitative approach was chosen for it's phenomenological enquiry, which aims to explore in detail the participant's view of the world. The choice of IPA as method of data analysis for this study is based on the requirement for an approach where the meaning of the participant's subjective experience of their LAT relationship could be explored and engaged with. IPA may be described as inductive, as there is no attempt to test a pre-determined hypothesis. The aim is to explore, flexibly and in detail, an area of concern (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This allowed for an engagement in a dialogue and provided a flexible way of using probes to illicit a deeper understanding of the meaning of the process of decision making around forming a LAT relationship. In presenting the results, extracts have been used to demonstrate that the results are rooted in the data (Whittemore, 2001; Yardley, 2000). Thus the study aimed at being sensitive to context, 'committed and rigorous' in engaging with the research data, 'transparent and coherent' in all aspects of the research process and taking into account the 'impact and importance' of the research findings. The researcher's role in co-constructing the research data and analytic results are acknowledged as inevitable to the process of this study. The analysis makes extensive use of quotes as raw data to remain close to the participants' experience.

IPA was chosen over Grounded Theory as this may be considered more of a sociological approach (Willig, 2001), which draws on convergences within a larger sample to support wider conceptual explanations. IPA by contrast is more psychological, concerned with giving a more detailed and nuanced account of the personal experiences of a smaller sample (Smith et al. 2009), which was felt to be more in keeping with the study's aims.). Narrative Analysis was also considered, however narrative is only one way of meaning-making (others including discourse and metaphor), and so it was felt that IPA could include consideration of narrative in the sense-making of participants, without being constrained by this focus (Smith et al. 2009).

The process of IPA is case-by-case analysis followed by comparison across cases. This method consisted of a number of stages. Initially, one transcript was read thoroughly and repeatedly, which enabled a deeper insight into the personal account of the participant's experience. Initial coding then entailed noting anything significant, interesting and making summaries of ideas. Associations, connections and preliminary interpretations were then annotated that helped link certain ideas and thoughts. From this stage, key words or phrases were extracted that captured the essence of the content acting as codes. This procedure was then repeated for each verbatim transcript. At this point, certain repeated patterns started to emerge in the subsequent transcripts whilst allowing additional topics to be identified (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999; Smith & Eatough, 2007). The next stage involved establishing connections between the preliminary themes and clustering them appropriately into a consolidated list of master and superordinate themes. The transcripts were reread to ensure that the themes and sub-themes could be undoubtedly recognised in the verbatim transcripts. Finally, transcript quotations were noted for each theme and a file created.

Respondent validation was conducted whereby three participants were asked for feedback on both the preliminary list of themes and interpretations as a reliability check. This was to ensure internal coherence (Yardley, 2000) and to enhance the credibility of the study. In presenting the results, extracts have been used to demonstrate that the results are grounded in the data (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001 and Yardley, 2000) and the interpretations verified as accurate by the participants.

Findings

The individual's choice to live apart from their partners is influenced by a number of factors. Three superordinate themes emerged from the analysis. The first superordinate theme "singlehood and marriage" relates to the individuals reflections on their marriage, the merit of their deceased spouse

and their experience of singlehood following widowhood or divorce. The second superordinate theme "maintaining a single household" encapsulates the individual's thoughts and feelings around their home, independence and finances. The final superordinate theme "support and future care" highlights the participant's concerns and thoughts for future care and the reaction of friends and family to their new relationship. In the present study the experience of widowhood/ divorce and marriage; ideas about home and independence; future care and support and the opinion of family and friends all played a part in the individual's decision to enter into a new relationship but to continue to live separately. Each of these themes will be outlined in the following sectors.

Theme 1: Reflecting back - singlehood and previous marriage.
There are a number of instances in the transcripts where participants commented on the merits of their deceased spouse and their relationship and described their intensive feelings of love for their deceased spouse. Richard describes his deep love for his wife and similar ideas around 'loving only once' were expressed by other participants in the study.

My wife and I were unbelievably in love, incredibly in love, very passionate. If you ever met someone who physically, emotionally, intellectually ticks every box – that was her... Had I met (partner) when I was 24/25 it might well have been her because I have very strong feelings for her now, very strong, umm it really changes, as you get older. It's more protection. I want to try and make certain that nothing happens to her, nothing bad. So it's a combination of love but it's also protection but not fiery like (wife). When you get older, yes. I mean it's, it's a different type of love when you get older, but it's very much wanting to protect the person as well from anything bad happening, from arguments or from concerns or worries or upsets, you're much more concerned about protecting them making life comfortable for her and then (partner) is wonderful really. She's lovely – couldn't wish for anybody better that her, it's just different from when you're 25.

Participants also reported that their feelings for their partner were not the same as the love they had for their deceased spouse, as illustrated by Betty.

I'm very fond of him, as I said and I wouldn't hurt him but I couldn't say it was love…and I think you only love once…that's what I think about these film starts that marry 5 or 6 times. I think how can they be in love all these times. There was only one man I loved and wanted to spend the rest of my life with. I've never changed. Silly old woman I am. It was the same in the war when soldiers, sailors and airmen were killed and the women are still on their own, aren't they?

There was a sense of intense loss after bereavement, illustrated by Bob's experience of his 50-year marriage to his wife.

My wife was so fantastic. She was a wonderful person, really wonderful, the most intelligent women I've ever met…. obviously something that you have to experience, this loss of someone you love and your whole life wrapped around it and then catastrophe… because you blend your lives around…. obviously it's this sexual thing to start off with in a way and then you intermesh together and that's how it should be, how marriage should be.

There were several accounts of participants needing to take on different roles and tasks that were once performed by their spouse. These new roles and responsibilities highlighted the personal strain participants were under. There was also a sense of having to reconstruct their life as a single older person, by needing to learn new tasks and skills.

But then you let the wife do certain things and you do other things, It's not until she's not there that you think Christ, what do I do for bread then and well I don't play bowls at the moment but a lot of the chaps who are in my position and women of course would drop these little hints and tell me what to do. It's a whole new ball game really (Bob, 85)

Richard further highlighted this:

Yeh, it's something I never expected, you know, how do you put things together, to make food, how do you know what things to buy that when they'll go off and it's about...planning food, knowing that mushrooms will last a couple of days where potatoes will last a bit longer in the fridge. Buying crème fraiche and not cream because it lasts longer and is better for you and pasta, knowing that fresh pasta tasted much better than dried pasta but doesn't last as long, but it has the additional advantage of cooking in 3 minutes rather than 12 and different types of rice. Here's an example, I bought rice the other day and it turned out like glue because I could never be told to wash the starch out. It is tiny things like that and making up meals that taste awful. Things you have to learn like packing the washing machine, learning to buy washing powder and remembering the different types of washing powder and all the things that perhaps single people do, compared or have learnt a long time ago, you wife does automatically because that's part of your life and that was both interesting and annoyed having to learn all these skills.

New partners tended to help and support the participants with some of the skills and tasks, including cooking, sewing, gardening and household maintenance. This highlighted the importance of their relationship in terms of practical help. Betty mentioned:

...if there's anything to be done in the house he does it for me. He used to be very good. He used to do all my repairs and painting, the front and the back.

Betty spoke about how her current partner used to carry out a wide range of practical chores, however, she felt that he was not able to continue this in view of his age and health issues. The responsibility was therefore shifted to either paying for house maintenance work or asking her family to help with the work needed.

Loneliness and the desire for companionship are the two most common reasons for remarriage amongst older people. Loneliness is one of the long-term consequences of loss of a spouse (Dugan & Kivett, 1994). As participants described their experience of widowhood or divorce they painted a picture of feeling lonely, needing someone in their life and wanting to be part of a couple. Their accounts reveal their subjective experience of their loss and the impact it had on them. When asked how she felt after the death of her husband, Jane replied:

Very lonely and also I thought I was going to become a bit of a recluse and I didn't want to go out and I did not feel like meeting anybody and that's also why I started on the internet. I was talking to people all over the world as a sort of friendship.

Participants expressed wanting to be with someone and needing to be part of couple as illustrated by Richard.

For me personally, I like to be part of a couple. I like to share things with someone else so it is a bit of a hackney expression but if you see a beautiful sight or a sunset and you're on your own it's nowhere near as wonderful as if you've got someone beside you to share it with, but that really counts for everything. Preparing a meal, we do it together and we go walking together. We shop together, it's quite important to be together, to be part of a couple; combination is greater than the sum of its parts. I think it's good.

The sense of loss was not restricted to the loss of their spouse. Richard described a process of losing his friends and neighbours following his two divorces. This experience seemed to highlight the additional loss he suffered when his relationships broke-up, which may have influenced his decision not to remarry.

When you leave a wife, the house, you also leave your neighbours, because most of your friends are around that part of the world. They're fairly close to

where you live. It's only natural. In many cases you leave your friends and umm so I've lost 2 sets of friends in moving away. When (1st wife) and I broke up, obviously I never saw her sisters again not until recently and the sisters and I and the husbands and boyfriends of the sisters and I were very close but it would have made it much too difficult for us to meet so I lost my wife and all of our friends. And they, you have to make new friends which I did, but then breaking up with (2nd wife) you lose your neighbours and you lose all of your friends again and moving as far away as I did, you have to make a totally new set of friends.

Participants reported that there were no reasons to remarry as they all had adult children. Remarrying seemed to be associated with wanting to have more children and as this was not the case there seemed to be no need to remarry. The absence of incentives common to younger people (e.g. conforming to life-cycle timing) seems to have influenced their choice not to remarry, as outlined by Richard.

....not that there's anything wrong with marriage, there hasn't been any reason for us to have done it. There would have to be a good reason to get married probably having children. We're not going to have any more kids, we would see no reason for it.

Theme 2: Maintaining a single household.
As participants described their home and the importance of it, they seemed to experience a deep sense of independence and pride in what they had accomplished. There was a sense that their homes meant a great deal to them and holding onto it was an important common theme in the present study. Sue was adamant that she would not leave her home and said:

I wouldn't leave my home. It's my home, I've made it.

Participants seemed to dismiss the idea of cohabiting. When asked how she would feel about her partner living with her, Betty responded:

Wouldn't be very nice. It wouldn't be very nice at all but I probably wouldn't...I'd rather go in somewhere or have a stranger come back like home help or something like that. I don't know, as I say until these situations arise.

The above quote highlighted the importance that Betty places on her home and her independence. She would rather move out than have her partner move in. This was similar to other participants account.

Maintaining separate households means that couples also have separate finances. Participants maintained their own households and were solely responsible for their own bills. Bob's concerns about cohabiting highlights an important point about financial independence and home ownership, which was echoed by others. This seemed to influence his decision to LAT rather than cohabit.

Well, I always point out to (partner), I say well, just imagined we moved in together and then we had a row you'd be homeless wouldn't you – good point isn't it?

Bob's wife had discussed the importance of the home, shortly before her death. His concerns about someone taking his children's inheritance and having a verbal agreement with his wife enable Bob to make the decision not to share his home with anyone. This was also based on his personal experience of a similar situation his friend was in. Bob's wife had said:

I don't want some flighty little tart come in and take my share of the bungalow that I've worked hard for, for the children and actually sort of made this in a will but when she was near the end we checked up the will and the solicitor said that is doesn't bear, you can't do that so you've got to rely on the person who's still surviving to umm, to figure out what they're going to do and if you think that the children are more important or they need the money or need the whatever it is umm you have to rely on whoever's surviving and that is one of

the reasons why I would never think about getting married. My kids are all well off obviously but this is one of the reasons I wouldn't think about getting married...and we made a will when, before she died and so I'm going to stick to that really...I have looked at it that way because I know, because obviously I'll be in here all my life and know lots of people and you think if they're living in a council flat or something and they see old Bob up there with the big garden and stuff and he seems like he might have a bob or two, I mean it's happened to a few friends of mine.

Only one participant (Jane) expressed a wish to share her home with her new partner, however, she was also the only participant who was open to living together in future if her circumstances changed. This is possibly related.

I don't feel that is my place. I feel it's a place where I am and anybody is welcome here. I don't feel it's mine. In fact I wish (partner) would say you know let's paint that in pink or blue or whatever. It's our place. It's not mine. It happens to be mine but you know that's circumstances make it mine but something which it's not something I built with my own hand, I just see it that way. It's not mine to hold onto, it's mine to share with whomever, anybody in my life. It's ours.

Theme 3: Support and future care.
Participants had thought and talked about future care with their partner and had very clear views on what they expected. It seemed that although the relationship was based more on voluntary commitment, there was a strong sense of responsibility to care for their partner. Richard and his partner had a mutual agreement with regards to future care and support. The agreement was:

...that if we stay together- that one will look after the other and that's twofold. The person who is being taken care of has the happiness of thought that they will be taken care of and the other person has someone to take care of which is also a very human thing to actually take care of another person.

Participants reported not wanting to rely on their family for support and future care and there was a feeling of not wanting to be a burden on their children. The participant's accounts outlined a preference to relying on their partners for support and care in the future.

I think I would rely on (partner) more than I'd rely on my children because I don't expect them, my eldest has her own life to lead and is building up a career...so yeh, the expectation is that if we stay together then we will take care of each other. The responsibility will be ours. It is twofold. The one is being taken care of, that is nice and the one is taking care of... I don't want my kids to be thinking they have to be around me all the time, they have, their own lives and the thought of being with somebody of the same age, doing the same things is very attractive. (Richard)

... 'cause I don't think it's fair to go and live with your children 'cause they've got their lives to lead I always think, unless it's like a granny flat on the side of the house where you are apart but they can still keep an eye on you. But to go and live all in – no I don't think I'd like that. (Betty)

The acceptance of the new relationship by family and friends is a determinant factor in the success of the relationship. The present study highlighted the fact that all the participants were seen as a couple and were often referred to as husband and wife, despite not being married. Sue highlights this by saying:

Well they think we are married, they think we get on so well together and they have such a shock when we say we're not married.

The participants' partners are often included in social occasions, family gatherings, outings and trips thus giving the impression that they are a 'married' couple. Participants also reported describing their relationship as a married couple but living separately as illustrated by Jane:

I think now we're almost like an old married couple (laughs), because you know we do very mundane things like you know, he could be working on his computer. I could be doing something else. It's become like that really where at the beginning I thought maybe he was visiting me and we were you know doing things and looking for things to do but now we're very very comfortable with each other which means he could do things while I could be doing the ironing or he could be looking at something on the computer. We could be in different rooms. It's like we could be married for 20 years.

The reassurance from friends and the support of children are needed to overcome social pressures, real and imagined, that threaten the relationship. It seemed important for the participants in this study to gain the reassurance from their family. Some noted how daughters and sons perceived the relationship in a different way.

...my eldest son well obviously if you look on the face of it you think well dad's got a bit of stuff to look after him so that's one thing - worry off his mind not that he would have worried, but he could see it as a sort of perfect relationship. Daughters are always funny, I think, about whether their dad has got the right woman. (Bob)

Yes, they accepted him from the start. I suppose it was they weren't children as I said. (Daughter) was 17, perhaps she'd be a bit older than that and (son) would have been 21, so they were older people by then. Because they were older they were more accepting. Yes, I think perhaps if they were younger, I might have had trouble, I don't know. It never occurred to me to think that, but as I said, we just used to go out. He used to be down here a lot more then because we used to be together in work, and then perhaps he'd call here on the way home from work and then when he retired, he'd retired 2 years before me so he'd be down. He'd pick me up from work and then he'd probably stay here for the afternoon and then tottle off (Betty).

My daughter asked whether I stayed here, she said –is it a one bedroom house, 2 bedroom house – I said it's a 4 bedroom house and yes we do sleep together, it's a normal relationship. Oh cool, fine….they're happy for me, they're happy for (partner) and they like (partner) as a person and I believe they're very comfortable with the fact that their father is now in a relationship with another woman who is not their mum, very comfortable with that. (Richard)

Participants also reflected on how their children explicitly and implicitly wanted them to start a new relationship. Jane's daughter was explicit:

My daughter said to me even before I met (partner) – you know, I hope you find somebody and you should. Something you must do and I thought yeh, good…Yeh, no and they accept him.

Richard mentioned his concerns about entering a new relationship following divorce and how his children perceived that:

They were fine with me getting involved with somebody within a year of being divorced, that's one worry that I had. I think they're quite interested to know what the nature the relationship is… (Eldest daughter) has told me that specifically that she's happy that I'm with someone. (Middle daughter) has never said it but she is more than comfortable talking to and talking about it to (partner). I don't think (youngest daughter) would be at all with it. I think she would find it not just disturbing but embarrassing to meet (partner) and that I was having a relationship with someone who wasn't her mum.

Participants noted that friends were very supportive of their new relationship. Often their friends had become mutual friends within the relationship. This seemed to be important to the participants and added to the inclusiveness of the relationship. Richard also commented on the differences of friendships for women and men.

One other aspect is that men don't make friends as easily as women do, umm, men have to be macho all the time, you know. It's, you've got to do these types of things. It must be wonderful to be able to have a friend and I've seen women do it, they haven't seen them for a little while they can put their arms around each other and give each other a kiss. Men can't do that. You can never have that kind of depth of a relationship that women have.

There was also a sense of losing friends after divorce or widowhood, which may be one of the reasons some participants felt they did not want to remarry and had chosen to live separately. Richard highlights this.

They didn't want to be in the middle and they felt difficult and awkward and they didn't know whether to talk to me about (ex-wife) or whether not to and so on, but it is interesting. Men will make a couple of good friends if they are luckily. Most men have acquaintances that they meet in the pub, they don't have deep friends that they can sit and talk to. Men can't talk to other men the way women can talk to other women. Women I envy you, greatly. I envy you very greatly so umm, the combination of losing everything and of not really having the depth of friendship women can, led me to believe that it would be just better for me to just live together and I think we will do so very, very happily so from a financial and emotional basis it would be better if we just lived together.

Discussion

Repartnering in later life creates diverse new marital and extra-marital families and complicated household patterns. Stevens (2004) identified various issues that have to be resolved if a new partnership is to develop and continue, including agreeing on the form that the relationship will take. This study has presented an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the personal accounts of individuals' LAT relationships in later life. The analysis yielded three superordinate themes common to all the accounts - singlehood & previous marriage, maintaining a single household and support & future care.

The death of a spouse represents more than the severing of an emotional attachment to one's partner and confidante (Bowlby, 1980). For some, the end of marriage means the loss of an intimate life partner, confidant, or friend. For others, it may represent the loss of a handyman, domestic help, mechanic, or financial advisor (Utz, 2005). The true nature of the loss depends on the history of the relationship with the spouse. Widowhood also alters the routines, tasks, and living arrangements that characterised the everyday life of the married couple. The bereaved must reconstruct their daily lives to reflect their new status as an unmarried person. This process typically involves modifying the daily decisions, household tasks, and routine responsibilities that were once shared by both spouses. Many researchers have focused on the mental and physical health consequences of widowhood (Waite & Gallagher, for review, 2000), however relatively little is known about the social and behavioural adjustments made by older bereaved spouses. The lives of the widowed are also altered in terms of their activities within the home and the maintenance of their household remains a pressing concern for older bereaved. Consequently, when one spouse dies, the survivor is responsible for running the household and performing the tasks that were once performed by their spouse. The personal strain is often considerable, and is most acute for those who were highly dependent on their spouses prior to death. Participants in the current study experienced significant changes after bereavement or divorce and this was consistent with the findings of Ginsburg (2005), where the term 'uncoupling' is used to define a person evolving from one half of a couple to a whole person. The Dual process model of coping (Stroebe & Schut, 1999) explains that bereaved persons alternate between loss orientated and restoration oriented coping tasks. This was highlighted by the participant's account of making sense of themselves as a single older adult and the adjustments that they made.

The participants' account suggested that loneliness was a motivating factor to form a new intimate relationship following bereavement or divorce. Loneliness is one of the long-term consequences of loss of a spouse (Dugan & Kivett,

1994). A study done by Lopata (1979) showed that younger widows and widowers were more likely to move after the loss, whereas older ones were more likely to remain in the home they lived in at the time of the death. Living alone can lead to intense feelings of loneliness, particularly intensified by living alone in the same physical surroundings shared with the spouse. There is anecdotal evidence to support the fact that older adults who are forced to move out of their homes after losing a spouse may be at higher risk for mortality. In another study on loneliness, Dykstra (1995) examined the importance of having a partner and the desirability of being single among formerly and never married older people. Widowers and divorced men rated being single as least desirable and gave the highest desirability rating to being partnered. Widows rated being single more positively than widowers and the desirability of being partnered less highly. Widowed people often miss both the intimacy of the relationship with the partner and the social life that they lead as a couple. Thus they are vulnerable to two forms of loneliness - emotional and social isolation (Weiss, 1973).

Whether or not individuals feel that remarrying is feasible or desirable (Dixon, 1971; Hatch, 1995 and Davidson, 2004), widows seem to agree that remarriage can be risky. There have been several accounts of cautionary tales and a general feeling of uncertainty surrounding taking a chance on remarriage (Van Den Hoonaard, 2002, Talbott, 1998). Remarriage is one of the choices available to older adults to combat loneliness, however, there are many factors that need to be taken into account. Participants in the current study did not view remarriage as an option. In Talbott's (1998) study she looked at older widows' interest in men and their attitude to remarriage. The widows' views of their previous marriage were instrumental in their decision whether to remarry or not. Factors such as the merit of their deceased husband, scarcity of older men, health, mobility, finances and the absence of incentives common to younger people (e.g. conforming to life-cycle timing) influenced the older persons decision to remarry or enter into a new relationship. This was consistent with the findings in the current study in that participants engaged in a kind of internal dialogue involving different voices or

selves; the self that is loyal to the original partner, the self that longs to be part of a couple, the sexual self, the independent self and the self as a parent (Hermans & Kempen, 1993).

Sixsmith (1986) argued that the importance of one's own home for older adults represents a continuity created in a lifelong marriage, as the home is a continuous context in which couples raise their children. A person's home therefore provides a familiar, secure place for retirement. After the death of a spouse the home may become a place of memories and can fulfil a wide range of social functions. The home may also be perceived as a way in which traditional gendered role can be challenged and boundaries established. In order to establish these boundaries, women in LAT relationships can fall back on the rules for access to a home that already exists in Western cultures (Karlsson & Borell, 2002 & 2005). The boundaries are maintained through social rules governing the right of access to a home. Members residing permanently in the home have free access whilst others need to be given 'permission' to enter the home. The home is therefore a place where older adults are able to either include or exclude individuals. This is an importance factor in a LAT relationship. Women can have independent relationships with their partners, friends and kin whilst giving them the flexibility to alternate between meeting friends and family with their partner or separately, depending on the situation.

Consistent with the findings of Karlsson & Borell (2002 & 2005) where women valued their own homes as a means of protection against the gendered duties implicit in a marriage, the female participants' account in the current study commented on the dissatisfaction of routine and domestic labour often associated with marriage. Having one's own home acts as a demarcation for the distribution of domestic labour. Sixsmith (1990) identified three themes, which underlie the meanings that older people generally associate with home and which are central to an understanding of home and residential experience in later life. Firstly, the home is seen as a major focus in life for refuge. Secondly, it enables them to remain independent of others and thirdly, older

adults have an attachment for their homes in terms of memories. The participants' account suggested that they valued their independence and felt that it was an important factor in them not wanting to remarry or cohabit. The LAT couples studied by Karlsson & Borell (2002) all had their own private household economies and very few had joint resources or shared possessions. This was also reflected in the present study where participants were solely responsible for their own household expenses and would only share costs when travelling or going out together.

Many significant adjustments in family relationships take place during later life. Older adults and their adult children develop, ideally speaking, an adult relationship. In modern Western society this relationship is very complex and differs from community to community and from family to family. In a LAT relationship, one cannot demand that a partner provides care in later life, as the relationship is based more on voluntary commitments than on institutional commitments between partners. Care might therefore need to come from family members. However, LAT relationships should be acknowledged as an important resource for emotional and other support (Karlsson, Johansson, Gerder, & Borell, 2007). In the present study, a common theme emerged of participants seeing themselves as responsible for the future care of their partners. Many had discussed this with their partners and had agreed on a mutual understanding about their future care. All participants had at one time or another either cared for their partner in their homes or been taken care of by their partner and this experience highlighted the importance of their relationship. It was also clear that the participants felt uneasy about relying on their family for future care and there was a sense of not wanting to be a burden on their family.

Although studies such as McKain (1972) found that older adults were likely to be faced with opposition from family and friends when considering remarriage or a new relationship, the present study did not show this. Many adult children have trouble visualising their parents, especially their mother as being sexual adults outside the parental role (Brecher, 1984 and McKain, 1972), this was

highlighted by a natural curiosity of the nature of the relationship expressed by one of the participant's daughters.

Conclusion

One of the aims of the counselling psychologist is to enable the client to grapple successfully with the burdens that brought him/her to therapy. The three superordinate themes offer insight into the practical and psychological experience of individuals in a LAT relationship. The accounts of the participants revealed their multidimensional experience of their decision to LAT and form a new relationship in later life, which may better equip counselling psychologists working with individuals or couples who are engaged in the decision-making process to repartner. Furthermore, exploring how free and able the client is to choose their lifestyle and methods of personal / social adjustment may be useful for practitioners to explore with clients. The participant's accounts also revealed shared experiences in their decision to choose a LAT relationship over remarrying or cohabiting. The themes highlight the need to attend to the psychological processes that impact on their decision and the psychological well-being of older adults engaged in this decision making process.

By selecting an IPA approach, this study formed an idiographic contribution to the literature by presenting a detailed exploration of five individual's experience of their LAT relationship in later life. The present study supports the idea that older adults have a variety of relationship choices open to them following widowhood or divorce. Consistent with the principles underlying IPA, the analysis presented is not intended as a definitive account but rather as the author's interpretation. The reader is therefore invited to consider the findings from their own perspective.

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Appendices

Appendix 1   Reflecting on the use of self

Appendix 2   Interview schedule

Appendix 3   Information sheet for participants

Appendix 4   Consent form

Appendix 5   Copy of letter granting ethical approval

Appendix 6   Interview transcript of one interview conducted

Appendix 7   Research journal - submission guidelines

Appendix 1   Reflecting on the use of self

I have a natural curiosity about other people's relationships and am particularly interest in later life and older adults. It seemed like an ideal opportunity to combine my interests by looking at relationship choices in later life. My personal thoughts and opinions were instrumental in my choice to study LAT in later life.

When thinking about ageing and post-retirement I have noticed that I become defensive when hearing or reading about the increasing disability that happens in the 'third age'. Even the words elderly and old people seem derogatory and debilitating. Although I have worked in various clinical settings with older adults, the focus seemed to be on degenerative diseases and physical decline. Working closely with clients in nursing and residential homes was very upsetting for me as I only saw the physiological and psychological decline in older people. Reading the literature on LAT, enabled me to gain a different perspective. It allowed me to see that older adults in good health have many choices and even in the face of physiological deterioration there is still an element of life satisfaction, well-being, adjustment and growth. It is well documented that funding in the NHS tends to be directed at child, adolescent and adult mental health services and I have tried to understand the importance of this in my own choice to study older adults. I believe that despite a National Service Framework policy for older adults the focus is still on physical and mental decline rather than, as I see it, opportunities to concentrate on quality of life. Older adults have increased freedom from structures of work and of family with dependent children and this period of the life cycle could be a wonderful time of life. I have also noticed that colleagues and other trainees do not have the same passion and interest in older adults and there tends to be more of an interest to work with children or adolescents. Many trainees and colleagues that I have spoken to feel that there is more opportunity to help younger people change, however, I believe that even in later life the quality of life is far more important no matter what age the person

is. There is also no evidence to suggest that older adults are less likely to benefit from therapy than people of younger ages (Garner, 2002).

Personally, I believe that it is not about focusing on a loss-deficit model (Scrutton, 1999) but tend to agree more with the maturity model of Knight (1992), which points out the wealth of observations about life which older clients have at their disposal and their more highly complex construct systems. These views and personal thoughts have influenced my decision to study relationships in later life and to focus my research on the 'third age'.

My own positive views about choices in later life may have influenced the way I interpreted the data. I have grown to believe that LAT offers older adults more choice than remarriage and cohabitation. During the analysis of the verbatims, I was curious about the reasons why the participants had chosen LAT and my relationship with them was based on an open discussion. I think that by interviewing participants in their own home added to the richness of the data as they were in their own environment. I had also talked to participants over the telephone prior to interviewing them and had tried to make them feel as comfortable as possible to talk about their relationship. The questions were specifically designed as a guide only, and the conversation seemed to flow well, this is one of the reasons I chose IPA as the method of analysis. I enjoyed managing my role as researcher and feel that the data was enriched by the semi-structured approach. After analysing the data, I felt that I could really understand each participant's account and felt that I was in a better position to think about how I would deal with the particular situation. I would like to think that if I was divorced or widowed later in life that there are relationship options available to me, such as LAT, as at this point in my life I cannot imagine wanting to remarry or cohabit again. I was also surprised at the amount of common themes each participant had and was able to think about how these shared thoughts help to link us together at a deeper level. It was particularly beneficial to ask further prompts about interesting and

important issues that participants raised and this added to my own thoughts and ideas about loss, intimacy and relationships in later life.

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Living Apart Together (LAT): An alternative to remarriage or cohabitation after divorce or widowhood.

Interview

Participant Name: _____

Participant No: _____

Interview completed   ☐
Transcript completed   ☐

Study Status: Themes   ☐
Recruited via:

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

NAME OF PARTICIPANT	
GENDER	0 Female 1 Male
ADDRESS	
TELEPHONE NUMBERS HOME: MOBILE: WORK:	
MARITAL STATUS / SINCE:	1. Divorced, _____ 2. Widowed, _____
DATE OF BIRTH (& AGE AT INTERVIEW):	
NUMBER OF YEARS KNOWN NEW PARTNER:	
HOW OFTEN DO YOU SEE YOUR PARTNER ON AVERAGE?	
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	

NOTES:
PARTICIPANT NEEDS TO HAVE
- **STARTED A NEW RELATIONSHIP AFTER DIVORCE OR WIDOWHOOD AT AGE 50 OR ABOVE.**
- **LIVING SEPARATELY FROM THEIR NEW PARTNER.**
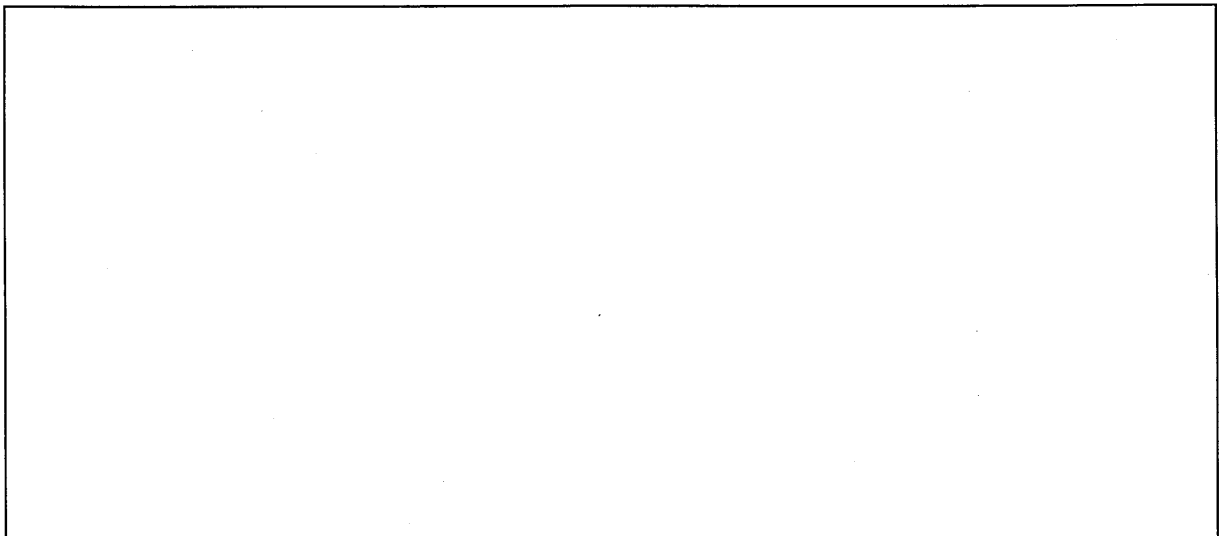
Does informant meet one of these criteria?
YES☐ NO☐

Appendix 2: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. **Could you please give me your opinion on relationships?** (Prompts: - mutual activities, how often seen, what type of activities do you do together, expectations for the relationship).

2. **What was it like for you after your divorce / spouse's death?** (Prompts: previous marriage influenced choice?, loneliness).

3. **What was your families and friends reaction / opinion about your new relationship?** (Prompts: constraints?, influenced decision to LAT?).

4. **I am aware that you are living apart from your new partner / 'lady friend' / 'man-friend. Could you tell me a bit more about your decision to do this?** (Prompts: views on marriage / cohabitation, any reasons for not remarrying).

5. **Is there anything that you would like to add before we end the interview?**

POSSIBLE THEMES FROM INTERVIEW

END OF INTERVIEW AND DEBRIEF

Living Apart Together (LAT): An alternative to remarriage or cohabitation after divorce or widowhood in later life.

You are being invited to take part in a research study into relationships after divorce or widowhood. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information and feel free to discuss it carefully with friends and relatives.

I am interested to hear about your experience of starting a new relationship after divorce or widowhood in later life (age 50 or older). The research is part of the Doctorate in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling psychology at the University of Surrey. The reason for collecting this information is to provide valuable information about the choices that older adults make when forming new relationships. Taking part in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

If you agree, I will ask you some questions relating to your experience in an interview. This interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes and will be recorded for research purposes. The information gained at interview will be stored in a secure database. The data on the database will not include your name or address or any other information that could identify you personally. A separate, confidential list of this personal information will be kept.

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Surrey. If you have a complaint or concern about any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study then you are encouraged to approach me.

If you have any further questions I will be delighted to answer them, either in person or over the telephone.

Helen Nicholas
helennic@hotmail.com
Tel: 07717590176

Consent Form for participants

> **Living Apart Together (LAT):** An alternative to remarriage or cohabitation after divorce or widowhood in later life.

HELEN NICHOLAS is carrying out a research project on new partnership formation in older adults after divorce or widowhood. This research is part of the Doctorate in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Psychology at the University of Surrey. As part of this project, an audio recording of a semi-structured interview will be required. At all times, your identity will be protected and any information that might identify you will be removed or disguised to safeguard your anonymity. The recording will likewise be treated in the strictest of confidence and erased or destroyed as soon as it has served its training purpose.

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on new relationship formations in later life.

- I have read and understood the information sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation of the nature, purpose and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the information given as a result.

- I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have given adequate time to consider my participation.

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Signed:

Date:

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Dr Mark Cropley
Chair: Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Ethics
    Committee
University of Surrey

Faculty of
Arts and Human Sciences

Guildford, Surrey GU2 7XH UK

T: +44 (0)1483 689445
F: +44 (0)1483 689550

www.surrey.ac.uk

Helen Nicholas
Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Trainee
Department of Psychology
University of Surrey

9th December 2008

Dear Helen

Reference: 273-PSY-08 RS
Title of Project: Living Apart Together (LAT): An alternative to remarriage or cohabitation after divorce or widowhood in later life

Thank you for your submission of the above proposal.

The Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Ethics Committee has given favourable ethical opinion.

If there are any significant changes to this proposal you may need to consider requesting scrutiny by the Faculty Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Mark Cropley

Appendix 6 – Transcript

Interviewer[3]: So from what I gather you've been widowed?

Mr O: Yeh, 14 years.

Interviewer: And how old are you?

Mr O: 85

Interviewer: How long have you known your (partner)?

Mr O: Well actually, I've known her for donkey's years 'cause she was actually engaged to my (relative).

Interviewer: Okay

Mr O: So she's always sort of in the background in a way. Umm, I don't know, it would be about 14 years I suppose, a long time. I didn't have much to do with her but she kept in touch because, umm, she always, I don't know women are funny aren't they, well men are funny but umm even on her wedding day she thought well if (person) comes along I'll pack it in. It's always been a sense of mystery to me how anybody could do that but anyway, umm then my (family), we got them down (street name) and umm she used to come and see my (relative) and then they used to come along here for tea and teas and things and umm, you know I didn't know her very well. She was there and that was it really. How much further do you want to go on this line?

Interviewer: I just...so she's kind of been on the scenes for a very long time but how long would you say that you've been going out with her as a partner?

Mr O: Well umm, it's, you know obviously (wife) was so fantastic. She was a wonderful person, really wonderful, the most intelligent women I've ever met but she didn't have any confidence to push it. We used to go, she worked, when (children) started to go to

(university) she thought oh I'll have to, umm, they never got a full grant, which niggled me so she got a job so that she could umm, she should have finished at half passed nine so we had three children and she thought well if one of them is ill I'll only be, I only have to stay, well the eldest one could look after the younger ones or something and they can stay away from school and I'll be home quarter to ten, you know, anyway none of them were ill but anyway that was the theory so she got this job and umm she used to be a (job title). She did that for nearly twenty years, but umm, then when my wife died umm, obviously something that you have to experience, this loss of someone you love and your whole life wrapped around it and then umm...catastrophe...I mean, (friend) cries now when she thinks about it now, I know she does. She tells me and, we discuss things together and umm, now whoever you meet after that will never come up to that because you used your whole things marriage which niggles me when they talk about marriage because you blend your lives around, obviously it's this sexual thing to start off with in a way and then you intermesh together and umm and that's how it should be, I think but to return to this other thing umm when she had thousands of, well not thousands of but lots and lots of cards when she died and umm because a lot of people on her walk and that and she was a lovely person that everyone loved her then and all these cards sent to me and she died (month) and umm I always like to acknowledge when people send me things I think and I thought how can I get over this so I sent them all a Christmas card and umm, saying well whatever I said I don't know but I sent one to A[2] as well and then I went away down to my (child) for Christmas and umm when I came back there was a letter through the door from A that said umm welcome back home and I know what it's like when you have to return to an empty home after Christmas or after being away. Which is a wrench really and umm she said if you, if ever you feel you'd like a meal umm I'd love to welcome you. So that's how that started really umm.....

Interviewer: What's you opinion on relationships in general? You've spoken about marriage and what you think about it. What about relationships?

Mr O: Umm, well to be quite honest. I've never had any trouble with finding women. I mean I like mucking around and chatting away to women, you can imagine. I've got plenty of old sshpeel and rubbish like that and umm but sexually I was never really well my wife was never you know. She was rather clever really, she said why don't you find yourself a nice clean girl you know, we used to try sex occasionally, I don't know if it's the effect of having children but she was always ill and she was so shy, this is a funny thing I know it has nothing to do with well maybe it has something to do with all this but even though we've been together for 50 years she always used to turn the light off when she took her things off and umm she was so shy, just quite the opposite for me really and umm you know she had all these problems and umm to be frank about it all, when she dies I couldn't understand it because I

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[2] A has been used to illustrate Mr O's new partner.

wanted some sex. I thought God and she died at (hospice) and it was only one of the things that they gave me to read that I then umm well I suppose it's natural in a way and then so I'm always interested in birds and animals and things like that and this is follows. We're animals anyway so I suppose it follows the same pattern, the same thing. Do you understand what I'm talking about?

Interviewer: Yeh

Mr O: But and umm, I wouldn't say I've ever loved A or anything like that but umm she'd been on her own for 17 years or something like that and umm she well, she felt a bit like I did I suppose really.

Interviewer: You kind of had similar backgrounds or interests that brought you together.

Mr O: Umm, actually because I've always been, what's the term, gregarious? I've always been, I used to run the (clubs) and I ran the (club), always involved in things like that you know hundreds of people in the village and umm when she came on the scene well it was one of the funny things about it all was umm, I was the (volunteer position) at that time I think and we were going to (trip/outing) and umm there were 52 seats I think and one seat vacant and umm as I'd been around with her a bit then and umm I said how do you fancy a holiday then? She said yeh, yeh (mumbles) and then after several days she said that she'd come along and umm it was so odd because I thought about but afterwards that if you'd been, she was looking after her (family) I think and umm she kicked (husband) out and he was living away and all this kind of thing and (sons) had gone and she'd do all those work she used to work seven days a week when I first met her just because she was lonely and umm then of course it was a very narrow lifestyle when she came to me, eventually she said she would and of course it was so funny she was plonked among them, plonked among 51 other people and it was, it must have been a nightmare in a way plunged from being on your own to all this lot but that was me and you know, she sort of gelled in with everyone else and it was lovely, yeh great but umm, I'm deviating from the point?

Interviewer: well you talked about holidays, is that what you do a lot of – to go on holidays together?

Mr O: Umm, yeh, my my wife when we went to (country) and places like that she used to say I'm not the travel picture but A was quite the opposite umm she, she wanted to well she'd been travelling to (Europe), driving her car around (Europe) and things like this and umm then of course umm when did we first go? Oh, because she was working a lot, she had the money, I suppose she had saved with regards to finances, she was quite well off I think, she took me to (country), that's right and umm she treated me actually and

that was the first, first actual holiday where we went as sort of man and wife I suppose, shared the room and then I thought you can't get away with that so I took her to (country) afterwards and umm we've been all around the world in a way I suppose.

Interviewer: In terms of finances is that how it normally works one pays and then the other person.

Mr O: We always share yes that's how it started but since then we cut, like we're going for next week, we're going to (Europe) but umm that's the only way well, I couldn't afford to take her anyway really. We've been to (countries). No it's like everything isn't it, they don't cater for single people anyway but today I've got a big list there 'cause I do her shopping for quite often because I'm afraid to say she's very, she's older than I am (age) and umm this is why I've said for a long time, I've said well I'm not going on holiday with you anymore because the old drip, drip, drip starts….drip, drip and it's fairly recently I said okay go on we'll go to (Europe) and umm I can't afford to go because of the greenhouse and the garden and everything but you know, 'cause I'm getting to the, got to the age that umm when we go abroad she's dodgy on her feet now, the last time, we were in (country) and she just spun around on the gravel and before I could catch her she fell over and broke her shoulder… now that's a story in it's own, umm so yeh, I've been very weary about going abroad now because of this problem we had this funny do in (Europe) and we had a funny do in (country) where she was gored by a buffalo that was dreadful she comes back and she lives on her own in a flat so Mr O is the governor and I have to look after her for some weeks but umm you can imagine my worry now   well it might be me, but she couldn't cope with me and she couldn't cope on her own.

Interviewer: So do you see it as your responsibility to be there for her in terms of her care needs or…

Mr O: Well I do if we go on holiday, yeh, I do umm, she's got two sons but one of them is a funny bloke the one is, well they don't take the responsibility but children never do I suppose – It's quite a force I think not all of us are the same but umm people say if you've lost someone "you've got your family", well don't know, friends are quite often more beneficial to you than your family umm you can't say that's a strict rule can you? I'm sure you are lovely to your mum.

Interviewer: I'm sure! (laughs)….You mentioned your friends. When you entered into a new relationship with A what was your families impressions or you friends, what did they say about it?

Mr O: Well, this a problem in a way…

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Appendix 6 – Transcript

Interviewer: Okay.

Mr O: because I don't think daughters ever, umm, my (eldest son) because they live in (county) and my daughter lives in (county) and umm I and I've got one son in (same town) but umm I know, I know my daughter said to me well you seem to get on alright with her she said I suppose that's all right but she's never really hit it off with her I don't think umm but my eldest son said – well it was mum who arranged for you to meet up with her. I'll tell you another thing umm I'm not trying to be high and mighty like this but when my wife was dying we knew she was going to die both of us knew and umm for the last year or so she said I don't want to be around you, you'll be no good but that was totally wrong because the last few months we were together this is why we had this built because she thought she might need to stay here so I built this (points to the sun lounge) myself. We got this bigger one because she thought she might have to be on the bed out here I suppose but umm but, what was I talking about?... oh yeh but well my eldest son said I think mum arranged that, I know what I was going say, that when we discussed this my wife said look I know because she knew me anyway she said I know you'd like women and things she said and I know when I'm gone you get married but she said I don't want some flighty little tart come in and take my share of the bungalow that I've worked hard for, for the children and actually sort of made this in a will but when she was near the end we checked up the will and the solicitor said that is doesn't bear, you can't do that so you've got to rely on the person who's still surviving to umm, to figure out what they're going to do and if you think that the children are more important or they need the money or need the whatever it is umm you have to rely on whoever's surviving and that is one of the reasons why I would never think about getting married, umm, my kids are, all well off obviously but umm, this is one of the reasons I wouldn't think about getting married, umm.

Interviewer: So you have the house in your name and the finances that you control.

Mr O: Yeh, that's right and we made a will when, before she died and umm, so I'm going to stick to that really, unless you fall in love with me this afternoon, no but..

Interviewer: but wouldn't I fall into the category of the younger person coming to take half of the bungalow that your wife was ..

Mr O: Well, I have looked at it that way because I know, because obviously I'll be in here all my life and know lots of people and umm you think if they're living in a council flat or something and they see old Mr O up there with the big garden and stuff and he seems like he might have a Mr O or two, I mean it's happened to a few friends of mine.

Appendix 6 – Transcript

Interviewer: So is it a concern for you that someone might come...

Mr O: Well, then I'll be denying my kids part of their won't I, but umm I don't think that's going to happen because all this sexual drives gone now, but umm a friend of mine, we used to play bowls together, a women, and she knew my wife, we always played together. Umm she got divorced from her husband but umm she had, she would bring these blokes up here and, I think she used to do that for me to vet them for her, if they were any good for her but anyway, this chap, he was quite a nice sort of bloke umm and she lived in (town) and she had quite a nice flat there but he lived just along from her and lovely flat. I said well umm, (friend) you ought to come on Friday (event) and she knew people there so she said well I can't come on my own really can I? Don't you know anybody? Well there's a chap just along the road who gets his eggs for the egg man during the week, they deliver it and umm I said well ask him, I know what men are all about but eventually and he's a nice sort of chap and he came here and within six months he was engaged and I went to the wedding which was very, and he's in his 80's and she's coming up 70 umm, but I know that some of my mate play (sport) with him, I said how's it going? I think I jumped too soon (laughs) but then coming back to what I was saying she sold her flat, she sold her flat and the house and I just wondered because he's a bit of one of these. I thought she's attained that hasn't she and now I said how you two getting along? Well, you know, you could feel it was going down hill, married well two years now I suppose.

Interview: But what about living together because I can understand not wanting to remarry. Would it be the same type of reasoning for you not wanting to live together because then you're also...kind of bringing in the assets into one pot?

Mr O: Yeh, well there's not a lot of differences nowadays between living together and getting married. Well, I always point out to A, I say well, just imagined we moved in together and then we had a row you'd be homeless wouldn't you – good point isn't it.

Interviewer: It is.

Mr O: Umm, which is true, but umm..

Interviewer: So you'd say that your family was maybe less accepting than your friends were of you and your relationship.

Mr O: Umm, well this caused a lot if problems in a way because my (youngest son), he's a)occupation) and he married this women who came from (Europe) actually and umm she wanted some extra tuition I suppose and they eventually got married and umm

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Appendix 6 – Transcript

talking to you just now about loneliness and stuff…well, it was some months after (wife) had died that she phoned me and she said umm you are seeing a lot of women. I said oh?. You should be grieving over (wife) she said wah wah wah. She is the most horrible woman under the sun I think and she said I don't want to see you, speak to you or anything, bang the phone went down, umm and then through that my son didn't speak to me for ten years. I said what's wrong with (daughter-in-law), I said. You were a bit of a shit weren't you? He said. What all that was about, I've never been able to figure, umm…

Interviewer: So because of the relationship with A they…

Mr O: Yeh

Interviewer: didn't want anything…they thought you needed to grieve for a longer period.

Mr O: That's right, yes. Who knows who grieves? I grieve or her now, (friend)'s another one isn't she? She's always grieving for her husband 'cause it's never the same…but as the time's gone on now A's deaf. I could ring her neck sometimes and umm although it's nice to have someone like her we don't fall out or anything and it's just a shame that we're getting so blimen old now so umm no I think we get on in the main, jolly good and she comes every Friday night and we play cards with my sister-in-law across the road and we sleep together umm which don't worry me.

Interviewer: Do you spend weekends together?

Mr O: Well, yeh.

Interviewer: Do you see each other during the week at all?

Mr O: Every day.

Interviewer: You see each other every day?

Mr O: Mmm, I don't know why I got involved in that but umm yeh, so, I always think she likes me a lot more than I like her but maybe I'm wrong I don't know but umm, no I've never said I love her or anything like that but, it sounds a bit horrible doesn't it?

Appendix 6 – Transcript

Interviewer: Well, I'm trying to … maybe it's something hidden like a hidden agreement that you have or an unspoken contract of what you relationships is.

Mr O: Well not really except, we just get on all right together and umm she'd be absolutely true to me, umm…yeh

Interviewer: and do you see yourself as a couple when you go travelling together? You see yourself as…

Mr O: a couple?

Interviewer: Mmm.

Mr O: Well everyone else thinks, they always refer to me I saw your wife and you wife, yeh. We get along remarkably well I suppose but there's only this as you get older physical things break down and then I suppose you have to because the attraction goes for someone else it goes umm so you rely more and more on each other I think. I've got a list that long, I'm going to get her shopping for her on Sunday, umm, yeh, I suppose I'm quite…

Interviewer: You seem quite happy to do that, that's part of the relationship.

Mr O: Yeh.

Interviewer: that you help her out.

Mr O: Umm, yeh, I suppose it is yeh. I've never been threatened by anybody sort of thing, well I know other people of course. I (Cuckoo clock goes), two o'clock, umm but (eldest son) well obviously if you look on the face of it you think well dad's got a bit of stuff to look after him so that's one thing - worry off his mind not that he would have worried, but he could see it as a sort of perfect relationship. Daughters are always funny, I think about whether their dad has got the right woman. I know (daughter) never thought that, she thought well I don't know what she thought, but she didn't think that was…(son), well he's non committal because if he opened his trap his wife would clout him or something, umm, but on (day) actually, (day) he said do you want to come round and we'll have a cup of tea in my flat dad and to me it was like a bolt of sunshine shooew. Umm and umm, ah I said It'll be lovely, so I

went there to his flat, he lives in (town) and umm I went there because the old lady was in (Europe) looking after (family) (laughs) honestly the most despicable person I've met in my life.

Interviewer: So it sounds like you're saying that there's still this kind of stigma about people not, well living apart or separately from their partner, umm, difference between..

Mr O: A stigma?

Interviewer: Well the way you're talking, sound like, you're saying your daughter sees it differently than you son. Your daughter, I don't know, maybe not wanting her to replace your wife.

Mr O: Well I think it would always be, what about you parents then?

Interviewer: My parents are still married.

Mr O: Yes.

Interviewer: and they are still together.

Mr O: it wouldn't occur to you then would it. I'm sure it would cross your mind if your mother died and your father was seeing another women or something, umm. It goes through your mind, I wonder if she's suitable for him.

Interviewer: All right.

Mr O: It must do, no, it's okay now but you're going back to when we first started going around together umm. I suppose I'm easy going from that point of view but well she's been fine really. And I said the difficulties that appear now is that we used to go walking a lot but she can't walk   umm, her hearing's gone really and I think, going back to holiday, I think it could be dangerous. She said things like, I said well we ought to do things like so and so; you're the man you've got to do it. I said, no, I know I'm the man I said but it's a common thing we should be together. What I often feel is that if she it goes on the airport and they say (tanhoy announcement) I say what did they say? You know, umm, travelling should be, you should be together. I think sharing each other's

interest and things, if you can't hear what the other one is saying particularly me, I babble on and drop jokes and things like that, seems a bit empty but apart from that I don't suppose I'd ever have anybody else move in with me but there you go.

Interviewer: What about domestic things, you said about doing the garden and everything does she help you with housework of some sort or.....

Mr O: Not really, no, umm, I think I'm quite good really I tidy up. You can go through the place, it's quite nice.

Interviewer: (laughs) No thank you.

Mr O: What's that?

Interviewer: No, when you said "you can go through the place" (laughs). Are there certain things that your wife used to do that you had to take over....learn to do on your own?

Mr O: Have you been married long?

Interviewer: No.

Mr O: Umm, well it's probably not the same cause you. We were married – I was thinking about it before you came – we were married 50 years. We were together 7 years we were engaged you know. None of us particularly wanted to get married I suppose but we were made, we knew we were meant to be together and actually my wife knew A, they used to go (club) together and things like that so I mean she's always been around and about and about sort of thing, umm but then you let the wife do certain things and you do other things. It's not until she's not there that you think Christ, what do I do for bread then and well I don't play bowls at the moment but a lot of the chaps who are in my position and women of course would drop these little hints and tell me what to do. It's a whole new ball game really - perhaps you didn't want to know that did you?

Interviewer: Well I think it's interesting because I'm wondering if that maybe helps with the decision about trying to be independent because you had to be independent when you wife...

Appendix 6 – Transcript

Mr O: Yeh, of course you do and umm well I do everything. I cook and I clean and though my neighbour comes in every fortnight she's been in this morning and umm she goes through the house but A…well, when I go down there I usually do all the washing up and umm, when she comes here she just likes sitting out in the sun lounge (laughs). Umm, she does less now than what she used to I think but I'll be all right.

Interviewer: Well, I've kind of asked all the questions that I was, I wanted to. Is there anything you'd like to add before we…
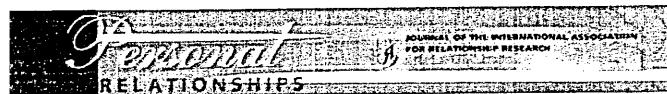
Mr O: I don't feel I've said anything really.

Interviewer: It's been very good to talk to you.

Mr O: Is it?   Interviewer: Absolutely. I'll switch this off.

WILEY-BLACKWELL

Personal Relationships

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Author Guidelines

Instructions for Contributors

Scope and Mission:

Personal Relationships, an official journal of the International Association for Relationship Research (IARR), was first published in 1994 and is an international, interdisciplinary journal that promotes scholarship in the field of personal relationships using a wide variety of methodologies and throughout a broad range of disciplines, including psychology, sociology, communication studies, anthropology, family studies, child development, social work, and gerontology. The subject matter and approach of Personal Relationships will be of interest to researchers, teachers, and practitioners. Manuscripts examining a wide range of personal relationships, including those between romantic or intimate partners, spouses, parents and children, siblings, classmates, coworkers, neighbors, and friends are welcome. Typically published work focuses on attributes of individual partners in personal relationships (e.g., personality factors or social positions as influences on relationship outcomes) at all stages of the life course, interactive relationship processes (i.e., behavioral, affective, or cognitive), the internal structure of dyads and networks (e.g., size, density, hierarchy, solidarity, homogeneity), personal relationships in social contexts (e.g., families, work-places, historical periods, cultures), and the consequences of personal relationships. In addition to original quantitative or qualitative research, theoretical or methodological contributions, integrative reviews, meta-analyses, comparative or historical studies, and critical assessments of the status of the field are welcome as submissions. Full-length submissions as well as brief research reports or theoretical notes (a maximum of 15 pages, including references and tables) will be considered for publication.

Manuscript Submission and Review:

Manuscripts should be submitted online at http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/pere. Full instructions and support are available on the site and a user ID and password can be obtained on the first visit. Support can be contacted by phone (434 817 2040), e-mail or at http://mcv3support.custhelp.com. If you cannot submit online, please contact Rebecca Adams in the Editorial Office: Personal_Relationships@uncg.edu .

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After receiving a submission, the Editor will inform the author whether she or one of the Associate Editors will serve as action editor for the manuscript. Three scholars, at least one who is a member of the Editorial Board, will generally review each manuscript. Because the International Association for Relationship Research is committed to the mentoring and education of new scholars who are choosing to study relationship issues, a graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, or non-tenure track faculty member will often be included as a fourth reviewer. Reflecting the interdisciplinary and international foci of the journal, the Editor and Associate Editors will typically strive to have manuscripts reviewed by scholars representing at least two different disciplines and at least two different countries. Initial editorial decisions will generally be made within three months of receiving the manuscript.

Manuscript Preparation and Style

Submissions should be written in English and follow APA style guidelines (see Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Fifth Edition, or http://www.apastyle.org). The entire manuscript should be double-spaced and typed in a 12-point font with 1 inch (2.54 cm) margins all around. Pages should be numbered consecutively starting with the title page and include a page header, and paragraphs should be indented 5-characters. Words should not be hyphenated at the ends of lines, text should be left justified, and endnotes should be numbered consecutively and used sparingly. Paragraphs should be longer than a single sentence, levels of headings appropriate and consistent, abbreviations explained the first time they are used, Greek symbols identified, and non-Greek symbols displayed in italics. Authors should take care to use unbiased language.

When initially submitted, the title page should include a title (no longer than 12 words), a running head, and the authors' names and institutional affiliations. The abstract, which should start on a separate page, should be no longer than 120 words. Also on a separate page, the authors' note should include all authors' complete departmental affiliations, changes of affiliation since manuscript was written (if any), any other information (e.g., acknowledgements, credits, grant support), and contact information for all of the authors. The text of the manuscript should be followed by the references (starting on a separate page), appendices (if any), footnotes (listed together on a separate page), tables (each on a separate page), figure captions (all on one page), and figures (each on a separate page), respectively.

Bibliographic citations in the text should include the names of authors and year of publication. Where authors' names are included in parentheses, they should be joined by an ampersand (e.g., Branje, van Lieshout, & van Aken, 2005; Cate, Levin, & Richmond, 2002; Frijns, Finke-nauer, Vermulst, & Engels, 2005; Solomon, Knobloch, & Fitzpatrick, 2004). After the first citation of works with more than two authors, only the name of the first author should be included (e.g., Mikulincer et al., 2005).

Where actual quotations are used, page references must be included in the citation (e.g., Boon & McLeod, 2001, p. 464). Where more than one citation is used, citations must be in alphabetical order by first author (see earlier example). Every reference cited in the text must be included in the reference list; every reference in the reference list must also be cited in the text.

Examples of reference style:

Journal
Blieszner, R. (2006). A lifetime of caring: Close relationships in old age. Personal Relationships, 13, 1-18.

Book
Bedford, V. H., & Turner, B. F. (Eds.). (2006). Men in relationships: A new look from a life course perspective. New York: Springer.

Chapter in an Edited Book

, K., & Adams, R. G. (2006). Adult friendship: A decade review. In P. Noller & J. Feeney (Eds.), Close relationships:
:ions, forms, and processes (pp. 151-169). Hove, England: Psychology Press.

s must appear as a set, each double-spaced on a separate sheet, numbered consecutively with an Arabic numeral and
 an italicized short title (e.g., Table 3. Marital Outcomes for Premarital Cohabitors and Noncohabitors). Every column
 have a heading and all vertical rules should be omitted where possible. All tables must be cited in the text.

figure must be numbered consecutively with an Arabic numeral and must include a brief title (e.g., Figure 1. Knowledge
tures and the Development of Relationships). Titles must be doublespaced and included together on a separate sheet
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When work keeps us apart: A thematic analysis of the experience of business travellers.

Abstract

Business travel is seen as essential to the growth and planning of companies, however individuals face difficulties meeting the demands of integrating work and family life. Surprisingly, there has been little research on the impact of business travel on the individuals or their families. This exploratory qualitative study examined how business travellers (3 women and 8 men) attempt to find a balance between work and family. The study aimed to explore how the participants experience the interface between work and family and how they experience their time apart and together with their family. The results can be interpreted and framed within work/family border theory in that business travellers' borders are less defined and less permeable, thus requiring them to border-cross more frequently. This necessitates a process of negotiation with key border-keepers (their spouse/partner). Business travellers also undertake compensatory behaviours to make up for their time away from family. In order to find a work/family balance they go through a process of adapting, negotiating and tailoring their lives around their work commitments to alleviate work-life conflict.

Introduction

Business travel/professional mobility has become omnipresent in the 21st century and according to the Office of National Statistics (UK National Statistics, 2006) commuting and business travel was the most common type of travel made by men in 2006. Women were more likely to have flexible working hours or term-time working arrangements (UK National Statistics, 2008). Business travel may entail visiting customers, attending meetings, participating in conferences and exhibitions, working at customer sites and so forth. Thus, business travellers experience irregular/temporary periods of absence as a result of their career or work demands. Although communication technology has improved greatly, the need for face-to-face contact is still seen as necessary to create mutual trust and other such interpretative skills (Aquilera, 2008 and Ivancevich et al, 2003), hence today's global economy necessitates (inter)national business travel.

Whilst business travel is a commonplace experience, and may affect individuals as well as their personal relationships, there has been little academic research conducted in this area. Existing research has tended to focus on business travel from an organisational point of view (Striker et al, 1999; Espino et al, 2002), in order to inform company policies or management practices. Indeed, there are other occupations that have long been associated with marital separation, for example military personnel, salesman, airline pilots and long-distance lorry drivers. These have focused on commuter/dual-career relationships or long-distance relationships (Blake, 1996; Harris et al, 2002; O'Dorisio & O'Dorisio, 2003; Rhodes, 2002; Morris, 1995; Schneider & Waite, 2005; Tessina, 2008), where couples see each other on weekends. Couples who choose to live separately; a term coined Living Apart Together (Levin 2004, Levin & Trost, 1999; Nicholas, 2008; Nicholas & Brown, 2009; Roseneil, 2006; Trost, 1998 & 2003) have also received limited attention. However, we can use existing literature in these areas to begin to inform us about the psychological, emotional and behavioural impact of business travel on

individuals and their families. Some business travel studies do exist, however, they have tended to be organisation (Espino et al, 2002; Lassen, 2009) or occupation specific (Hubinger et al, 2002) or used mainly quantitative research methods (Striker et al, 1999; Gustafson, 2006).

It has been argued that as companies and businesses become more global and geographically dispersed there is an increasing demand for business travel (Beaverstock et al, 2009), with some companies exerting 'institutional pressure' on employees to be mobile (Lassen, 2004). Nearly two decades ago, Gerstel & Gross (1984) argued that commuter marriages illustrated how economic system's demand for mobile workers clashes with traditional patterns of shared family cohabitation. A potential benefit of this mobility/flexibility may be career development or financial gain. Indeed, the opportunity to work flexibly may improve individual's ability to integrate work and family, for example being able to work from home at times. Business travellers need to balance work obligation and career aspirations on the one hand and family obligations on the other in order to minimise conflict (Gustafson, 2006). Clark & Farmer (1998) argue that work primarily satisfies the ends of providing an income and giving a sense of accomplishment, while home life satisfies the ends of attaining close relationships and personal happiness.

Business travel undoubtedly brings both benefits and sacrifices for travellers and there is a strong relationship between income and travel activity (Gustafson, 2006), possibly as a result of their status within the company. One such sacrifice may be periods away from family or working during 'family-time'. Time away from family may bring added stress and strain, especially if business travellers have children (Espino et al, 2002). Self-reported psychological stress among international business travellers reported health concerns, heavy workloads when they returned (Fisher & Stoneman, 1998; DeFrank et al, 2000) and the lack of time off work after travel (Striker et al, 1999) as key factors in their psychological stress. Work-related travel becomes particularly stressful when it comes into conflict with family life and

family obligations (Espino et al, 2002), including disruption of family plans and celebrations. Business travellers time together is noticeably bracketed off from time apart, this distinctiveness makes their period together more vulnerable and they may be more aware of spoiled time together as in commuter relationships (Jackson et al, 2000).

Studies on work and family show the implications of managing/combining multiple roles (work/family) and the impact of work-related stress on families (Perry-Jenkins et al, 2000). Others have shown that work and family systems are interconnected, such as the work/family border theory (Clark, 2000), which attempts to explain how individuals manage and negotiate the work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance (Clark, 2000). Current theories on work-family conflict and work-family enhancement indicate that the individual's emotions and attitudes from work often spillover to family life (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Frone, 2002). These mood spillovers may affect the interactions of individuals with their family, in terms of negative spillover (work-family conflict) and positive spillover (work-family enhancement). Individuals often make daily transitions between the work and family systems, tailoring their focus, their goals and their interpersonal style to fit the unique demands of each.

A qualitative approach was chosen as the study aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the experiences of participants by intensively studying the cases through idiographic research (Banister et al, 1994) as they encounter, engage and live through situations (Elliott et al, 1999). The purpose of the research was to firstly, develop an understanding of the subjective processes participants undergo and secondly to look at commonalities within participants' responses.

Method

Participants

The inclusion criterion for the study was that participants engaged in irregular business travel as part of their employment involving at least five overnight stays away from family in a one-month period. Recruitment was through word-of-mouth and snowballing. Each participant was provided with an information sheet outlining the research. The aim was to understand common perspectives and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals. Eleven participants who met the criteria (8 males and 3 female) were interviewed. Participants were married (9) or living with their partner (2) and all had children. Seven participants were employed and four were self-employed. The spouses of the business traveller were either unemployed (3); employed part-time (1) or in full-time employment (7). The participants had been engaged in irregular business travel for an average of 20 years. Consent forms were obtained prior to each interview.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants using broad, exploratory and open-ended questions, including prompts that facilitated further discussion and elaboration of the topic under discussion. Interviews were chosen as they are particularly useful for pursuing in-depth information around a topic and are a more personal form of research whereby the researcher can work directly with the participant (Banister, et al, 1994). The interview schedule (*appendix 2*) was used as a guide only, giving the participants leeway in how to reply and was informed by the guidelines for qualitative interviews outlined by Smith and Eatough (2007). It consisted of open-ended questions about the participants' lifestyle and their time together with their family and time apart. Initially the participants were invited to share their experiences of business travel and how the travel fits into their work and

family life. The aim was to gain an insight into the participants' experiences and to understand 'what it is like' to negotiate family life and work. Participants were also asked about the aspects of the lifestyle they enjoyed / found difficult. Participants were prompted to describe their experience when they were away from their family and when they returned. This enabled a detailed exploration of how business travel impacted (or did not) upon their family life and work. Finally, participants were asked about potential coping strategies that they used, together with possible advice they would give to others in a similar situation for making this lifestyle work. The final questions widened the focus to exploring the participants' more general experiences of business travel.

Interviews were carried out by the principal researcher and were all conducted in the participants' homes or place of business and lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Potentially identifying information such as names, countries visited and organisation names were removed or altered and the participants were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Time was permitted after each interview for collecting of demographic data, debriefing and questions.

Analysis

The method of analysis chosen for this study was a qualitative method of thematic analysis and was used within a broadly critical realist framework (Willig, 1999) in order to identify, analyse and report common themes within the data. A six-phase approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) was used, which involved: familiarisation with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes, defining and naming themes; before producing the research article. The themes were re-constructed and reviewed in collaboration with the supervisor, noting relevant connections and contradictions and discarding themes with weak evidence base or little relevance to the research question. The resulting themes were then

categorised and organised to allow a coherent story of the participants' experiences.

Thematic analysis provides a flexible tool for qualitative research and was chosen for its theoretical and epistemological flexibility (King, 2004). In line with Braun & Clarke (2006), certain decisions were made in terms of the theoretical position, which were chosen in order to address the research question and the aim of the research. Thematic analysis was carried out within a broadly critical realist framework (Willig, 1999), which "acknowledges the ways individuals make meaning of their experiences, and in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of reality" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81). Thematic analysis also aims to enrich the reader's understanding of the experiential perspectives of research participants (Elliott et al, 1999) and is not webbed in any pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clark, 2006). As current research on business travellers' experience is very limited thematic analysis was used in an inductive way, meaning that the themes are data-driven and strongly linked to the transcripts (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis allowed for psychological interpretation of the data as well as highlighting similarities and commonalities across the data set, in line with the purpose of the study. In presenting the results, extracts have been used to demonstrate that the results are rooted in the data (Whittemore, 2001; Yardley, 2000). Thus the study aimed at being sensitive to context, 'committed and rigorous' in engaging with the research data, 'transparent and coherent' in all aspects of the research process and taking into account the 'impact and importance' of the research findings. The researcher's active role in identifying, selecting and reporting the themes are acknowledged as inevitable to the process of this study. The process of data analysis makes extensive use of quotes as raw data to remain close to the participants' experience and to ensure that data interpretation remains directly linked to the words of the participants. The participants' reflections thus strengthen the credibility of the research and allow the readers to evaluate the validity of the analysis for themselves (Smith, 1996). Respondent validation was conducted whereby two participants were

asked for feedback on both the preliminary list of themes and interpretations as a reliability check.

Results[1]

Four themes were identified from the data and are illustrated in the thematic map (figure.1). The first theme (accepting their lifestyle choice and role) is mainly concerned with the participants' perceived role within their family and business/company. The theme highlights the process of accepting their multiple responsibilities and roles and how they justify their lifestyle choice. Indeed, business travel was seen as a necessary part of their work and the theme relates to how the participants found a balance between their commitment to their business/company and their family. It includes how participants made the most of their time when away on a business trip. The second theme (process of negotiation) refers to the additional negotiation that business travellers are required to engage in with family members, friends and employers. It also outlines how business travellers negotiate their re-entry into the family after time away. The third theme (needing to adapt and adjust) includes additional pre-flight 'obligations' that business travellers undertake, the additional psychological stress that they experience when away and highlights the process of adjusting and adapting to their roles and lifestyle choice. The process of learning is a key factor in successful adaptation to their multiple roles. The fourth and final theme (business travellers valued quality of time) is entirely concerned with the behavioural aspect of the research questions and outlines the compensatory behaviours business travellers undertake in order to reduce the impact of their absence from their family. It also includes participants' personalised styles of coping they adopted in order to reduce the impact of their business travel on their family and themselves.

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[1] In presenting the results, quotations have been used to illustrate the points and have been chosen for this purpose. Brackets have been used to indicate changes or omissions made for the purpose of anonymity and clarification. Care has been taken not to change the meaning of the participants' accounts.

Accepting their lifestyle choice and role

All participants had chosen a career or work that involved business travel and business travel was seen as a necessary part of their role within the company/business. They spoke of a 'love of their job', their enthusiasm about 'career prospects', 'chosen career path' or the flexibility that came with being self-employed. Over time, they accepted that they had chosen this lifestyle and engaged in a process of 'defending' their choice and outlining their motivation for taking on a business travel role. This seemed to help participants begin to define themselves in terms of the multiple roles so that they could begin to deal with the psychological stress associated with business travel. Participants justified their reasons for their lifestyle choice in a variety of ways. Firstly, they mentioned their choice of 'area' and 'location' akin to providing a 'better environment' for their family. Secondly, participants highlighted the financial benefits and rewards of their work and thirdly, they outlined their flexible working practice, such as working from home on occasion, that enabled them to spend more quality time with their family. They used compensatory statements to highlight the 'paybacks' and all participants believed that the perceived sacrifices involved, such as being away from their family and the psychological stress associated with business travel, were 'worth it'.

All participants highlighted the additional psychological and emotional stress associated with business travel. They were aware of the additional volume and intensity of work that continued despite them being away and the pressure of keeping on top of the work that continued to be generated. Although the participants tended to accept the 'reality' of business travel, these additional stressors had the potential of impacting upon their psychological and physical health. Brian illustrates the additional volume and intensity of work when away.

(There are) still questions that need to be resolved so you end up doing whatever you're doing during the day and the evening time you are actually

catching up. Most of the time you end up getting up early in the morning before you leave the hotel room and you catch up, especially if you look at America. When you get up in the morning it's already half way through the UK day, so you have to get up earlier in the morning to catch up on the mails that half a day's already gone by because you can't do that during the day it's most definitely 50% more work during a travelling week than it would be normally.

Furthermore, there was a universal acceptance that business travel entailed working longer hours whilst away in order to cope with the volume of the work. This was further illustrated by participant's account of work that needs to be done whilst away, such as meeting tight deadlines and busy schedules. Derek stated:

It's really meetings and conferences and you'd have (targets) at the start of the week that you'd try to achieve and if you hadn't achieved it you'd work longer.

Despite the pressure to 'get the job done' whilst away, all participants made the most of their time when away on business trips and spoke about preferring to work longer and harder when away from their family to minimise their workload on their return. When away on a business trip, seven participants spoke of a mindset of being in a work mode, aware of needing to follow the work schedules of colleagues and the added pressure of achieving what they needed to on their business trips. They attempted to make the travel worthwhile, whether it was to be as productive as possible or even combining trips so that they are away from their family a minimal amount of time as illustrated by Brian:

There's no point trying to travel where your mind is back at home still anyway. You have to make sure that if you are travelling you make that travel worthwhile, otherwise why do it, why leave your family, have a guilt trip and then not be productive when you're away. So when I travel I am committed to what I am doing and then obviously in between I make time to ring my family,

my wife and see how things are and all of that but when I am there I am focused because I have to travel I make sure I make it productive so that I don't feel guilt about the time that I've spent on that side... It's just (keeping) on top of things. So you minimise the amount of catch up you need to do. I'm away from (family) anyway so why not take that time to do the work when I am away from them and minimise the amount later on.

Brian suggests that when away on a business trip, it is important to be focused on the task at hand. Although this clearly added to the stress and pressure, the process of accepting what their business travel would entail was one of the ways participants could then begin to find a balance between the commitment needed for work and the family. Those that were International business travellers where also affected by time zones, different cultures and jetlag, which seemed to add to their psychological stress. Edith describes her experience of being away on a business trip.

You work longer, much longer because you haven't got the distraction of having to go home and if you are at work in the day, you absolutely pack the day in and if you're there for two days you end up being there as late as possible before going to a hotel. You haven't got to cook a meal or think about it. You've literally got to walk into a hotel, walk up to a bar, your food and drink; you haven't got to do anything. There's no putting the washing machine on. There's no thought literally. I can think of a couple of times going to the gym to switch of and then you go to bed and get up the following day. You do work much longer hours than when you are at home especially in the States.

Edith highlights a traditional gender role of finding time to carry out household chores. Her perspective shows that for her, business travel focuses her into a work-mode with fewer distractions than she may experience if working from home and she enjoyed not having the 'mundane' tasks to distract her from her 'goals'. For those participants who were self-employed, they placed great importance of working longer and harder as it was mainly to secure contacts and business contracts, thus directly affecting their business leads and profits.

This use of time when away illustrates how business travellers immerse themselves in work, which then necessitates time afterwards to recover from their travels. Recovery time is then negotiated with family, friends, and employers. In order to meet the needs of their business commitments as well as the needs of their family, all participants found that they were constantly negotiating and re-negotiating with family, friends and employers.

Process of negotiation

All participants felt that they needed to negotiate with family, friends and their employers to find an acceptable work/family balance and to fit the demands of work and family around what they needed to do. The areas that seemed to require the most negotiation were their children, such as childcare arrangements and domestic responsibilities. The irregularity of their business trips necessitated having regular conversations with their spouse/partner about childcare and domestic arrangement. This process of negotiating entailed negotiating their role within the family to best suit their model of marriage and their personal circumstances. It was noted that the participants' model of marriage often required the spouse to be available to cover childcare or to arrange for the necessary support networks. Most participants had a spouse who covered the childcare arrangements as a default and the business traveller became the backup if they were able to accommodate, depending on the frequency and duration of their business trips. There was also a minimal level of support network needed. Participants felt that they had become reliant on friends, extended family members, formal childcare and neighbours. The support networks of people were often relied upon especially when travel plans changed or short notice was given for a business trip. This caused additional pressure on both parents and had the potential to become a cause of tension in the relationship.

Especially when children were younger, but even when they were older, the spouses' lives tended to focus on the children's activities. Managing the

children's schedules was seen as a combined responsibility and one that was negotiated between both parents in order to lessen the impact of the business travellers' schedule on the family. Brian's account illustrates this point:

I think it's absolutely key to communicate with your partner and make sure that they're aware of why and what the travelling entails - that when you are away the responsibility isn't dropped. I think there's almost like a minimum network that you need to cover the eventuality when you are travelling and if you don't have that the stress level on the person that's travelling and the one's who are left behind would be significantly higher. I think that could potentially cause a lot of problems.

In contrast to Brian's account, three participants were not necessarily concerned about the added pressure and responsibility left to their spouses. They felt that their spouses' were 'independent', 'capable' and 'got on with it'. Interestingly, two were female and the other participant had limited input into his children's daily routine.

All participants described taking care of home and family issues before and after a business trip. One participant described this as his 'responsibility' and felt unable to leave it to his spouse. Business travellers made an effort to leave not only their work in good order pre-trip but also take care of home and family issues. In particular, the male participants paid extra attention to practical matters such as gardening, paying bills before going away, commenting that if something needed to be done before going away they felt a sense of responsibility to complete the task. The female participants did not feel that they needed to 'make up meals' or carry out any additional tasks pre-trip, however, all participants spoke of activities that were aimed at compensating for their absence, including spending quality time with spouse and children, arranging childcare arrangements, though many viewed these activities as part of their home responsibilities.

Further negotiation occurred between the spouse and their employers, if they worked. The spouse/partner needed to negotiate their hours of employment to be able to provide the required childcare cover. Participants recognised that the family's support and support networks directly depended on the business traveller's job, thus assuring it priority. One participant commented on the dilemma of who remains behind if a child is ill, which was a source of conflict:

If (child) is ill and I had to travel, then should I not go? If one of us needs to be at home I can see the conflict in (wife's) eyes. My job is no more important than her job but who sacrifices? Think about the implications, my employer - how it's going to be seen there, the impact of me taking (a day off) as opposed to (wife). So the conflict was there. That was a problem, I could see generally the more serious impact was me not going to work but (wife) resented that I think (Colin).

Colin's wife was in full-time employment and his account was similar to participants whose spouse worked. These participants felt that their income was an important factor in maintaining financial security and their standard of living, thus justified it as taking priority over their spouse's work commitments. Edith spoke of changing her travel plans due to family commitments and commented that she was able to do this because her employer was 'sympathetic' and 'flexible' when it came to family commitments.

If my child was sick I could change it. I mean I once arrived in (Europe) at 9:15 only to have a phone call from my children. I had sent them to school on an (inset day) and I had to fly back again. (Husband) was away and I had one child at a bus stop and one child going 'I can't believe you sent me to school' and so I got them home. It happens. There have been occasions when I've had to change it but they are few and far between.

Edith's accounts highlights the intense work pressure and mindset that led to her 'forgetting' that her children had an inset day. Participants all seemed to become work-focused pre-trip and often worried about work during 'family

time'. The flexibility outlined by Edith was also an important factor in accommodating the interface between work and family and thus required negotiation. The self-employed participants seemed to have more flexibility and could tailor their travel around their family more. The employed participants did express the importance of flexibility within their company, although they reflected on how it might be seen by management.

When returning home from business trips, there was often a spillover of emotions and participants were aware of their attitude when returning home. All participants believed that they were 'not good company', could be 'cranky' and were often left 'drained' and 'tired' from their travels. Of particular interest were those participants who engaged in international business travel (seven in total) as the effects of their travel resulted in needing to sleep after their return. This was seen as essential and often interfered with family plans, especially if they returned early morning or shortly after their children were back from school. There was a need to negotiate the best way for them to integrate back into family life, taking the required steps to be available to their family whilst regaining their strength for work. Frank takes a very similar line when talking about the spillover of emotions:

When things were stressful at work then it becomes fairly stressful at home. I can be a bit stressed out with the kids. They are getting a bit older now so they are a bit more controllable. They understand generally about my home office and when I'm working. They will come in quietly and say hello rather than come in bounding to find me on the phone with a customer. There have been times in the past when I have been away a couple of nights, get home late, I'm completely knackered, I've got a suitcase, briefcase, something else it's pouring with rain, I can't find a parking space. Trudging, walk in and they are all sitting watching the TV, and 'oh hi' and after I've dumped my stuff they are still there watching the TV. So I've been away slogging my guts out and no one even comes to say hello. And, so my (wife) and I have talked about that and she said 'sorry, I've been busy in my world' and you forget about the other person.

Frank's account suggests that family life was mostly predicted on their work and travel schedules. Participants felt that they needed to 'cope', 'adjust', 'evolve' and 'get used to' integrating work and family life, which all suggest a process that seemed to develop over a period of time. For participants who had the flexibility of working from home, there weren't clear boundaries between their work and family commitments. Eight participants also talked about working late into the evenings when at home and this inevitably affected their relationships as the work was carried out during 'family time 'leaving the spouse to continue with the childcare despite the business traveller's return.

Business travel was a norm within the participants' families and families tended to adapt and adjust around the business travellers' schedule and work. Although all participants believed that their families did adjust and adapt to this lifestyle, they also described the psychological and emotional stress, which necessitated the process of adaptation as a way of responding to stressors.

Needing to adapt and adjust

All participants felt that they and their families needed to adapt and adjust to their chosen lifestyle. Firstly, the participants' account showed how their families went through a process of adapting and adjusted and secondly, they described their own unique learning process that helped to reduce their psychological and pre-trip stress when engaged in business travel.

Participants believed that their children had grown up with them travelling for business and thus did not know any different. Their absence became a norm within their family system. When speaking about the impact of business travel on their children, Colin stated 'it's what they've always known'. This was similar across all participants where they reported that business travel was a part of their work commitments and perceived as such by their children:

My kids have always adapted because they've grown up with me going away. I'd say that the kids just accept that I go away. There's never been any kind of time when I feel as though the kids say 'oh why do you have to go away, why can't you be here all week?' because I think they just accept that that's just what I do (Allan).

The participants' belief that their families, especially their children, accepted that business travel is part of their work commitment may help participants feel that the impact of their absence is less than it actually is. This may then help participants reduce their feelings of guilt when away.

Many felt that 'life went on' and that when they returned after being away for several nights, the family adapted to their presence again. This seemed be more evident when the periods of absence were longer and the spouse continued the parental role within the family, such as discipline, organising the children's schedules, and basically maintaining the household chores and tasks. Gemma went on to describe:

It's always very nice coming home and they are always happy for me to be home and sometimes if I'm a bit tired I can get a bit grumpy, but I go off to have a shower or a bath. We just carry on. Life just carries on. We have cuddles and hugs. When they were younger read them stories. There were times when I wasn't there I couldn't read them a story every night but when I was home I did and (husband) did if I wasn't home. They did get that but I think the other thing is knowing that (children) have been brought up by both parents. We've both been very active in working and bringing them up. It's not been one parent or another. It's been both of us.

Gemma describes that although 'life goes on' she does engage in compensatory behaviours to reduce the impact of her absence.

Furthermore, participants themselves went through a process of adapting to their role, which seemed to highlight their own unique process of learning.

They described needing to be 'planned', 'methodical', 'productive' and 'efficient' when it came to their business trips. It was evident that the irregular nature of their business travel required additional planning and organising, from an individual and family perspective. Participants' travel arrangements tended to evolve into a well-ordered, task-orientated operation and they often tried innovative ways to change, adapt and adjust. Successful adaptation to living this lifestyle seemed to require a process of learning. Participants all spoke about how this was done by emphasising the 'mistakes' they had made, making the necessary corrections along the way and eventually finding the right method that best suited them and their family, from travel arrangements to packing their suitcase. Derek offers:

There is no question that in the beginning you are still trying to find the right method and that's a much more stressful thing. If things don't go according to plan, like flight delays so I have now (changed routes).

Derek suggests that this process of adapting to the role leads to added pressure and stress in the beginning but once a planned routine is in place the level of stress reduces. All the other participants reiterated this by describing their individualised method and as Irene viewed it: 'I've got it ideal now'. Derek commented that he had 'got it down to a fine art'.

Participants also adjusted to the role of being a business traveller and their role as parent, often switching back into their parental role as soon as they returned from their business trips. Edith elaborated on returning from a business trip:

You just switch back in to being a parent. You drop your bags, you might pick them up from school and they're thrilled to see you and for 2 hours you listen to everything they've done from it was her fault, his fault to I scraped my knee on this - everything. You become mum and then you unpack and then yeh, it's always good coming home, always. When you drop your cases at the door, you have to switch into being the parent, whether you are male or female.

Children don't allow you that time to unpack and talk about your trip because let's face it they aren't interested.

This account was similar to other participants in that it shows how they felt an obligation to listen to what the family had done whilst they were away, thus 'fitting into' family life again. One participant spoke of feeling 'out of the loop' when she returned home and needing to re-adapt to her role as parent:

Sometimes I feel guilty if I don't know the detail of what's happened at school or at the club because I wasn't there so I didn't know the detail. You can hear the other mums they all know. You feel a bit guilty as a parent. I'm not up to speed but I have spent time thinking I wasn't a good mum and I tried to overcompensate I think by doing stuff at the weekend (Gemma).

Indeed, on returning to the office nine spoke of needing to catch up on e-mails and queries that arose when they were away, however, they felt that they were never truly away from 'work' with the technology available, such as smart-phones and Wi-Fi. Of particular importance was to make time available to carry out these tasks, however, this time often fed into 'family time', especially if the participants were self-employed or were able to work from home. Many spoke of blurred boundaries between work and family, as illustrated by Gemma, who is self-employed:

I am often thinking about the work I need to do. I need to do some work today and because you are working in the house there is a constant reminder. If I work hellishly long hours now it's for my business, for me and it's a choice rather than you have to do it.

The above two quotes illustrates how Gemma felt about her lifestyle choice and this was of particular importance to her. Despite her feelings of guilt about not being 'a good mum' and her blurred boundaries, she was able to justify this as her 'choice'.

Similar accounts from other participants were noted especially when it came to making an effort to spend time with family. All participants spoke of quality of time, meaning that the time they have together is better used and more appreciated.

Business travellers valued quality of time

All participants held great importance of the quality of time they spend with their family. As they experienced a variety of disruptions of family plans and celebrations, they believed that they needed to 'make up' for their periods of absence. All felt that they made the most of the time they had when together and wanted to spend time with their family. They tended to ensure that they bathed, read stories or were the one to tuck the children into bed when they were home to compensate for the times when they were away. On their return, participants spoke of quality family time and often tried to 'pack days full of activities'. They also made an extra effort to be with the family and engage in family activities, often before taking time for themselves. This may have also been to compensate for their own feelings of guilt about leaving childcare arrangements to the spouse, the perceived added burden on the spouse and missing family occasions. Brian describes making a (un)conscious and concerted effort to arrange time with his family:

We definitely make an effort to get time together. If I've been away from a week, the following week, I'm a lot more conscious of the time I finish in the afternoon or the evening and what time I get home or when I'm working from home. Similarly I'd be saying to (wife) 'you're not working late tonight are you?' So for that first week, it's not really a conscious thing that's the bizarre thing but it's, because I missed her I would then make sure that for that next week, I suppose as a coping mechanism to make up for the time lost.

All participants maintained contact with their family whilst away, via telephone, e-mail or Skype. They were aware of thinking about their family whilst away, often purchasing material gifts to bring back from the countries visited. These

gifts became an expected treat and something that both the children and business traveller appreciated. It seemed to be a way of heightening the excitement of their return and a way back into their parental routine and responsibility.

I've always bought them a treat. They looked forward to a treat, little jellybeans from America or a chocolate or a teddy or a t-shirt or something. I think they used to quite enjoy that and I'd try and get them a treat when I'd been away (Gemma).

It's all blackmail, it's kind of mum's going away for the week we get a treat at the end and we get presents, so that's kind of what you do. Probably most business travellers would probably do the same (Edith).

One participant suggested that 'the longer the trip, the bigger the present' (Frank). These quotes suggest that business travellers realise that their business travel has an impact on their family and this compensatory behaviour was one of the ways that they could 'make up' for their time apart. Gemma overcompensated and her account was similar to other participants who spoke of the (un)conscious effort that they made:

I don't think I always have coped. I've probably overcompensated, so I feel like I'm not a terrible parent. I always make quite an effort for birthdays or treats, weekends or activities I think. I try and think outside the box for what to do or where to go and just try and do things with them and stuff so I suppose that's a coping mechanism, a way of feeling you continue to be a good parent. I suppose because of working you can afford to do things a bit like paying for extra activities for (children). If we didn't work we couldn't afford that sort of thing so I suppose goes some way of justifying some of that side of it. The fact that we live somewhere nice, we couldn't afford anything like this if we lived somewhere else.

Another way participants 'justify' their lifestyle choice was to outline the positive aspects of their work. There was also a process of finding a balance between 'making time' to be with their family and needing time for themselves to recover from their work schedules. Participants spoke of also needing 'alone' time and time where they could 'recharge their batteries".

All participants felt that business travel was tiring, often leaving them physically and mentally drained. In order to overcome this, they spoke about needing space to 'release' and 'relax'. They had an awareness of their individual and personal style of coping with the effects of business travel. It was particularly important for participants to have an individual outlet that did not involve the family and to have personal time to 'relax' and 'wind down' from their travels. There was a general consensus (10 participants) that business travellers need an outlet of some sort. Participants referred to a variety of physical exercise activities such as sport (individual or team), attending the gym, swimming and running:

I think everyone needs an outlet. Whether it's a hobby, sport whatever. If you've got that on the weekends, evening times when you get to totally detach from your work and get sort of away time I think that helps as well. But the best thing was taking the time off to recharge the batteries. That's something that I still continue to do (Frank).

Brian also illustrates the importance of taking time to recover from travel and highlights the potential negative impact if this is not done:

Travel is tiring and over a period of time you actually get incredibly fatigued and I think you need to take the down time. You have to make sure you get rest so if that means that you have to plan your holiday time more evenly throughout the year to give you that down time. When I was travelling extensively I actually take a week (at a time), throughout the year because I need that down time just to recover from the travelling and to relax a bit. If I had waited for a few months I'd have got to breaking point probably because

your body never has a time, especially with jetlag, jetlag is a killer. I'd run myself into the ground very quickly and that could easily affect your work and your relationship as well, very easily because you just become irritable, you get too tired, you're not able to focus as much. I realised pretty quickly when I was travelling that you can't keep going at that pace (Brian).

Brian presents the possible impact of business travel on both the traveller and their relationships. This seemed to be important for other participants who spoke of a transition period between work and family domain. They often used their time on the aircraft, train or car as a way of making the transition from employee to parent/spouse. This time seemed instrumental in balancing work and family life and their perceived role within each. Participants knew that when they returned they would need to make that transition seamless and were prepared to immediately engage in family conversation. Indeed, some participants acknowledged that this was not always possible and greatly depended on their attitude when returning home.

Discussion

This research was strongly rooted in the participant's accounts of integrating work and family and the themes offer insight into the practicality, negotiation and psychological experiences of business travellers (Figure 1). An important finding of this study, and one that has not been previously researched was how the participants coped with their lifestyle choice.

We argue that business travel is different to commuter relationships and occupations that demand long periods of absence, as it is irregular in nature and thus has unique challenges and benefits. One such difference is that of weekly regrouping. Commuter relationships, for example, attach symbolic meaning to their weekend reunions and take comfort in this regularity (Gerstel & Gross, 1982). Business traveller do not have the benefit of such routine and regularity and as such needed additional and ongoing planning, negotiation and adaptation for both themselves and their family. The nature of irregular

business travel also means that there is no clear dividing line between 'work-time', which is owned by the employer and 'leisure time', which is owned by the individuals (Holley et al, 2008).

Our results can be interpreted and framed within work/family border theory (Clark, 2000). This theory addresses how individuals construct, maintain, negotiate and border-cross and how they draw the lines of demarcation between work and family. It further shows how domain integration and segmentation of domains, border creation and management, border-crossers behaviour and the relationships between border-crossers (at work and home) influence work-family balance. We suggest that business travellers 'border-cross' more often and have less clear boundaries between work and family, thus requiring more negotiation and adaptation. One element of this theory involves the degree to which psychological or behavioural aspects of one role/domain enters another, for example, when business travellers are working from home, they have highly permeable borders because family members are accustomed to frequently entering and talking with the individual while at work. However, when business travellers are away they tend to be work-focused, working at an increased pace to achieve deadlines, goals and objectives. This requires working longer and harder and their time is taken up by work related tasks. Thus, during these times their borders are less permeable, which requires additional time to recover after each trip. Their spouse/partner also becomes the 'border-keeper' who is essentially influential in defining the domain and border, once again requiring additional negotiation in order to maintain a work-family balance. However, speaking of a work-family balance suggests a state of equilibrium between the domains of work and family that did not exist in our study (Holmes, 2004). Balancing work and family is a wider societal problem, but our findings mirror those of Hochschild (1997) in that they suggest that families see it as a private dilemma and devise strategies, individually or as a couple, to cope with the impact of business travel and psychological stress. This study shows that participants went through a process of making the lifestyle work for them as individuals and as couples by individually tailoring their lives around their work commitments. They were

able to do this by accepting what the business travel entailed, for example, the need to travel, the added psychological stress of pre-trip planning, flight delays, etcetera. Individuals devised strategies to prepare for and cope with travel, such as jet lag (DeFrank, 2000; Fairechild, 1992) and in particular finding time for themselves by engaging in their chosen outlet. They also coped with feelings of guilt of being absent through compensating behaviours when they were home and when they were away. Participants (un)consciously made extra efforts to make their time together a priority, carrying out tasks related to their perceived responsibilities at home and working longer and harder when away in order to minimise their workload when they returned. The time lost travelling is rarely compensated for in terms of reduced workloads (Espino et al, 2002; Gustafson, 2006) and participants found employer flexibility, such as days off in lieu or working from home as an important factor in reducing their stress. These compensatory behaviours seemed to help participants face the unique demands and challenges of business travel.

These findings also suggest that based on their family dynamics, the relationship between family obligations and work-related travel tends to be a matter of individual adaptation to their multiple roles. Indeed, this seems to suggest that their family relationships evolved and adapted in order to meet the demands of work. In this study, the experiences of the spouse/partner were filtered through the participants' interpretations and thus future research on business travel would benefit from gaining a better understanding of the impact on the whole family, including children. A comparison study of male and female business travellers may further our understanding of gender roles within this group of individuals.

Our findings further build on research on integrating multiple roles in that business travellers need to 'juggle' their commitments, which affect their mood. In order to cope with the 'spillover' (Grzywacz & Marks, 200; Frone, 2002) of emotions, participants devised specific strategies, such as having outlets or alone time that enabled them to recuperate from travel. All

participants were aware of the impact of their emotions and moods on their family and were keen to keep this in check. They did this by making the transition from work-mode to family-mode as seamlessly as possible.

Indeed, the nature of doing business has become geographically dispersed (Beaverstock et al, 2009) and this view resonates with participants' accounts of their (inter)national travel. The current study also found that the importance of face-to-face discussions took priority over communication technology. Communication technology is not likely to replace face-to-face interactions and thus a key factor for participants was finding a balance between their work commitments and maintaining their familial relationships. Participants accepted their role within the company/business and that this came with a certain amount of responsibility. The acceptance of their lifestyle choice seemed to be highly linked to financial benefits and security that their career and lifestyle brought. Travel was seen as important for career opportunities and there was a strong relationship between income and travel, which were similar to the findings of Gustafson (2006). Lassen (2009) showed that employees have an obligation to travel in order to access, maintain and enhance their knowledge networks. Although participants described their 'reality' of business travel, they felt that they could 'live with' the need to travel for business given that they had chosen this lifestyle. They also placed great importance on providing their children with material resources to ensure their future success and spoke of certain choices and decisions made, either individually or as a couple, to live a certain lifestyle and have a certain standard of living. Many individuals will not be able to find a comfortable work/life balance and it therefore seems important for future studies to research those relationships that broke down as a result of irregular periods of absences or individuals who were not prepared to negotiate and adapt to this lifestyle. Business travel may not suit all individuals and couples' model of marriage may not be strong enough to withstand the irregularity of absence, short-term planning and added spillover of emotions and mood.

Implications for psychologists

Psychologists emphasise that individuals and couples deal with stress in a variety of ways and are interested in how individuals develop skills or methods for dealing with life (Cassidy, 1992). An implication for psychologists working with business travellers individually or as a couple is that this research may assist psychologists to think about the transitions and processes that business travellers and their family go through. Psychologists may then be better equipped to engage with those who are experiencing difficulties with work-family conflict (Bruck et al, 2002), the impact of business travel on their well-being (Grzywacz & Bass 2003) or marital difficulties by helping them deal with psychological stress in a more effective ways. Studies have shown that the impact of business travel may manifest itself in psychological difficulties such as depression and anxiety (Hubinger et al, 1999) and poor physical health (Frone et al 1997). This study highlights the need for psychologists to attend to the psychological processes that have an impact on business travellers' work and family, such as negotiation skills, coping with stress and strategies to help them integrate work and family commitments. Indeed, psychologist can become more responsive to the unique needs and sources of relational stressors of both the business traveller and their family and may assist couples when they encounter marital and familial difficulties.

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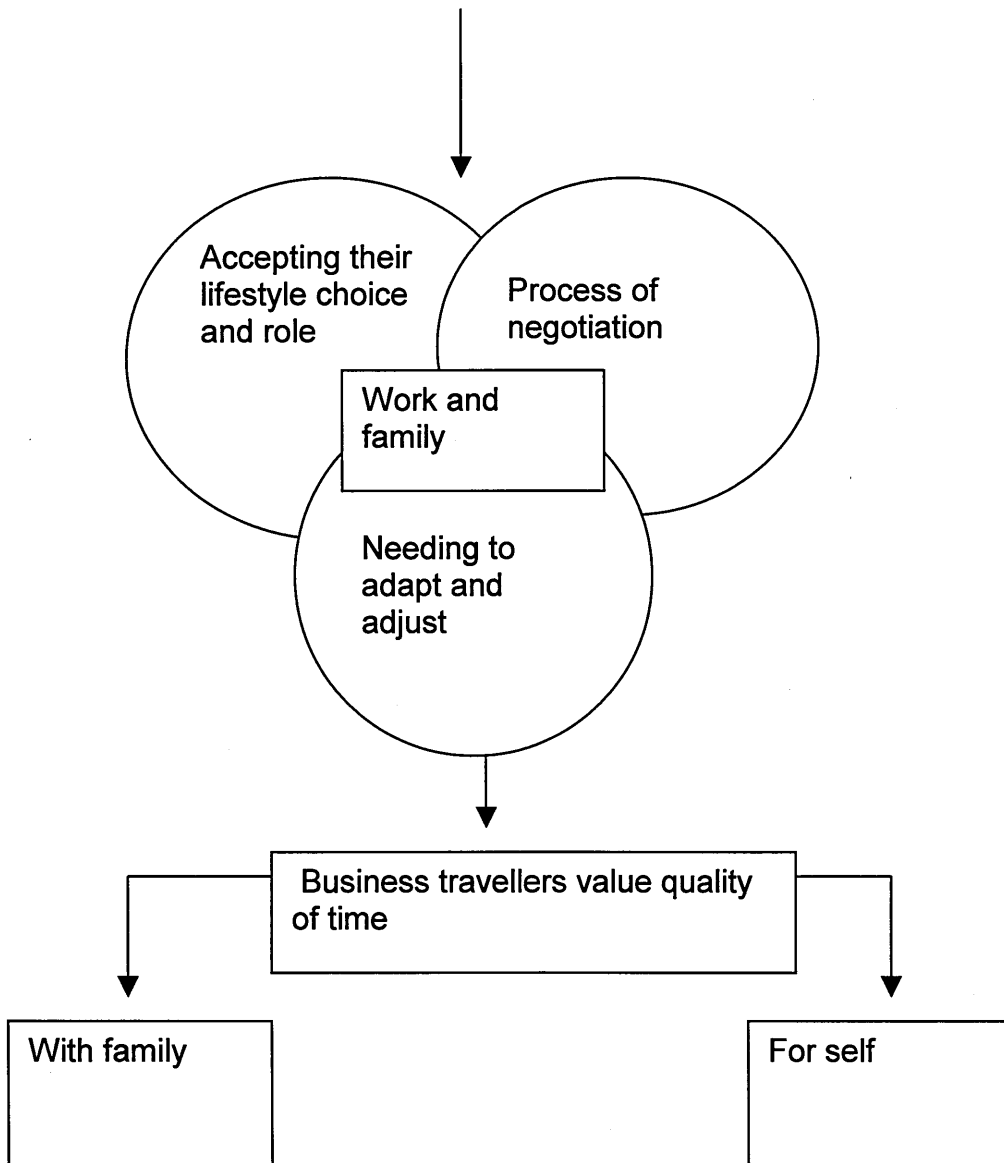UK Statistics Authority website. National travel survey: 2008. www.statistics.gov.uk.

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The experience of business travel for business travellers

Accepting their lifestyle choice and role

Process of negotiation

Work and family

Needing to adapt and adjust

Business travellers value quality of time

With family

For self

Figure 1: Thematic map: Process of making the business travel lifestyle work.

Appendices

Appendix 1   Reflecting on the use of self

Appendix 2   Interview schedule

Appendix 3   Information sheet for participants

Appendix 4   Consent form

Appendix 5   Copy of letter granting ethical approval

Appendix 6   Interview transcript of one interview conducted

Appendix 7   Research journal - submission guidelines

Appendix 1   Reflecting on the use of self

As a researcher and counselling psychologist my particular interest is in the choices and decisions individuals make and their process of transition. During my second year research project (Living Apart Together), I became more interested in how couples chose a certain lifestyle and started to wonder about couples that experience temporary periods of absences from each other. Initially, I began to read up on commuting relationships, long-distance relationships and dual-career earners and wondered how this impacted upon their relationships. I reflected on my own experience of being the partner of a business traveller and the one 'left behind' on occasion. Surprising, there was very little research available on business travellers and I saw an opportunity to build on some existing research in other areas of marital separation, such as commuter relationships. I also realised that having similarities to the spouse/partner may allow me to reflect on my own processes more. The few articles on the spouses' experience of these periods of absence highlighted their added stress and burden, however I realised that I did not know much about the experiences of the business travellers themselves. I therefore decided to study business travel from the business traveller's point of view in an attempt to understand 'what is was like' for them to negotiate family life and work.

With regards to the similarities between my experience and that of the spouses', I attempted to utilise my experience as a means to enrich the research process and not hinder it. In order to achieve this, supervision and self-monitoring of my own thoughts and feelings have played an important role in gaining greater awareness of the impact of the research process. I have tried to 'bracket' my own personal agenda as much as possible to prevent them from impinging on the participants' accounts and dominating the analysis. I am aware, however, that it is impossible to fully set aside ones assumptions and motivations, especially the ones that are not so obvious. Indeed, throughout the process I also realised that my own ideas were not necessary the same as others.

On reflection, I was somewhat naïve/denied the stress and pressures on my partner and the impact of the business travel on him. I had a tendency to be more focused on practical matters such as organising childcare, relying on the flexibility of my work schedule and the children's activities. This sense of taking over the responsibility fed into my own ideas of being independent, possibly allowing me to cope with the absences in my own unique way. I was aware of many of the positive aspects of being solely responsible for the family during these short periods, even the smallest of pleasures seem to be a way of me 'enjoying' these periods of absence and promoting my own individuality and independence. These positive aspects seemed to be lacking in the research. I was also able to think about the perceived negative aspects of these absences on me, such as added pressure to be the one to cover childcare arrangements and the extra planning and organising needed to juggle my role of employee and mother. I sometimes felt resentful that my partner was experiencing new cultures and countries and was only able to justify this by thinking how his salary enabled us to have a certain standard of living.

My second year research project was my introduction into qualitative research and I used an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore the participants' subjective experience of their LAT relationship. I particularly enjoyed the richness of the data that was generated by this approach and specifically wanted to conduct further qualitative research. With the current study, I was very interested in the choices / decisions business travellers made and how their relationships adapted. In particular, I was curious about their time together with the family and their subjective experience of their time when apart. My own wonderings have shaped the research and i feel that I have a better understanding of the impact of business travel from both perspectives. The research further highlighted the individualisation of couples and how their processes are often a private matter within the family.

I chose thematic analysis for its flexibility and in view of the limited research on business travel, I wanted the themes to be strongly linked to the transcript and thus made a decision to use it in an inductive and data-driven way.

My own process of familiarising myself with the data was going from themes that were too descriptive in nature to being more interpretative. Feedback from my supervisor helped me to reflect that I was possibly 'worried' about making interpretations in case I over-interpreted. I also struggled to stand back from the research and at time felt too close to the data. Supervision helped me to reflect more on my interpretations and how my research could have importance implications for psychologists working with this client group, as individuals or as a couple. After completing the results section, I felt that I was able to really get a sense of what the participants were telling me and this helped to shape the framework within interpretation. Revisiting the themes also enabled me to gain a better understanding of the experience of business travellers.

I feel that I am now more able to see business travel and the impact on all parties concerned. I have a better understanding of how couples' relationships evolve and change, the positive and negative impact of business travel and the unique ways in which couples cope with this lifestyle. It links in with my own interest of process and transition, in that it outlined how they negotiate and adapt depending on their individual stages of development. I hope that this understanding can be linked to my clinical practice in highlighting the responsibility, need to adapt and the process of negotiating that comes with choice and decisions for many of us. Overall, the research has had an impact on me and I am much more aware and empathic to the views of business travellers as well as their spouse/partner.

When work keeps us apart:
The experience of business travellers.

Participant No: _____

Could you please describe a typical working month for me? , - How often you travel abroad for work/ stay overnight away from your family. (Prompts: - decision process to take the job, time away from family, work obligations, need to be flexible for work, expectations from work perspective, enjoyment of lifestyle).

In an ideal world, what would you like your work to be? (Prompts: -travel less, spend more time with family)

How do you think your partner / family perceive your current working arrangement?

What aspects of this lifestyle do you like? (Prompts: - work rewards, focus/concentration on work., promotion and career development, independence / autonomy).

What aspects of this lifestyle do you find difficult? (Prompts: - family life, children, additional planning needed, time away from family).

What coping strategies have you used to help you deal with this lifestyle? (Prompts: coping strategies, personality traits, support of family)

Think of a time when you were away from home for work.
a) How did you feel about it?
b) To what extent did you miss your family / friends and in what way. (Prompts: focuses on work, guilt about being apart, relational stressors)

Now think of when you returned home. What did you do? How did you feel about it. (Prompts: did you do anything special, making more of an effort, planning, holidays, family life, children, letting little things slide, arguments, relationship)

What advice would you give to others in a similar situation for making this lifestyle work?

<u>Demographics.</u>

Gender:

Marital Status:

Children:

Ages of children:

Occupation:

Number of years of business travel:

Partner's occupation:

<u>END OF INTERVIEW</u>
<u>SUMMARIZE AND REFLECT BACK.</u>

When work keeps us apart:
The experience of business travellers.

You are being invited to take part in a research study into business travel and how you experience the interface between work and family. I am interested to hear about your experiences as a business traveller and how your lifestyle impacts (or does not impact) upon your family life. For the purposes of this study your travel should involve at least five overnight stays away from your family /partner in a one-month period.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information and feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions.

The research is part of the Doctorate in psychotherapeutic and counselling psychology course at the University of Surrey. The data collected will provide valuable information about the impact of business travel on families and travellers. Taking part in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

If you agree, I will ask you some questions relating to your experience of business travel. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be recorded for research purposes. The information gained at interview will be stored in a secure database. The data on the database will not include your name or address or any other information that could identify you personally.

This project has received ethical approval from the University of Surrey. If you have a complaint or concern about any aspects of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study then you are encouraged to approach me.

If you are interested in participating in this research then please contact me on the details below to arrange an interview time and location that is convenient to you.

Name of Researcher:
Helen Nicholas
Tel: 07717590176
Email: h.nicholas@surrey.ac.uk

Research supervisor: Dr Almuth McDowall
Email: a.mcdowall@surrey.ac.uk

<u>Consent Form for participants</u>

When work keeps us apart:
The experience of business travellers.

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HELEN NICHOLAS is carrying out a research project into business travel and how it impacts (or does not impact) upon family life. This research is part of the Doctorate in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Psychology at the University of Surrey. As part of this project, an audio recording of a semi-structured interview will be required. At all times, your identity will be protected and any information that might identify you will be removed or disguised to safeguard your anonymity. The recording will likewise be treated in the strictest of confidence and erased or destroyed as soon as it has served its training purpose.

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study.

- I have read and understood the information sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation of the nature, purpose and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the information given as a result.

- I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my anonymity is preserved.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have given adequate time to consider my participation.

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS):

Signed:

Date:

Dr Adrian Coyle
Chair: Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Ethics
     Committee
University of Surrey

Helen Nicholas
Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Trainee
Department of Psychology
University of Surrey

9th February 2010
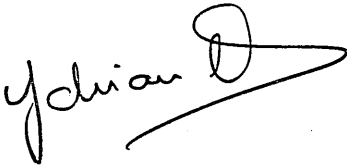
Dear Helen

Reference: 395-PSY-10
Title of Project: When work keeps us apart: The experience of business travellers

Thank you for your submission of the above proposal.

I am pleased to advise that this proposal has received a favourable ethical opinion from the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences Ethics Committee provided that the following conditions are adhered to:

- Further details of how you will recruit and copies of advertisements used are provided.
- Information regarding how long the data will be kept for.

If there are any significant changes to this proposal you may need to consider requesting scrutiny by the Faculty Ethics Committee.

Dr Adrian Coyle

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Interviewer[4]: Can you just give an idea about the typical working month in terms of business travel?

Mr B: Well, I've done extensive travel within the last couple of years, within the last 6 –12 months It's been less but when it comes to typical travel there is trips to, with the family now there are trips to and I do just do day trips to (country) and (country) and to (country), so they are all, all of those I would have done in the last couple of months in the beginning of this year, you know a couple of 2 day trips to (country) and yeh, it really depends, when, before the kids came along it was very much a case of I'd do the overnight but now I tend to maximise on my day trip so if I can if not then 2 days but obviously for any America trips, it's predominantly a week at a time

Interviewer: So are you saying you would feel more comfortable spending overnights when it was just your wife and you?

Mr B: Yes

Interviewer: Okay…Kids have changed your business travel?

Mr B: Yeh, yes definitely, definitely. Umm, yeh it's a case of wanting to be here and help my wife here in the evenings you know with the kids and spend more time with my wife and the kids I mean it's because of the kids I don't get to spend much time with my wife therefore you know before the kids came along we had much more time together anyway so spending an overnight on a business trip didn't make a huge amount of difference where now we don't get much, as much time because it's focussed around the kids so clawing back that extra time, so yeh makes sense.

Interviewer: And does your wife work full time

Mr B: She does, well she's a (occupation), currently she's on a full time contract but going forward, so the next contract we're hoping to do 3 days a week roughly

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[4] Potentially identifying information such as names, countries visited and organisation have been removed or altered and the participant has been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. Brackets have been used to indicate changes or omissions made for the purpose of anonymity.

Appendix 6: Anonymised Transcript

Interviewer: Do you need to sit down and plan things like if you're going away?

Mr B: Of course, of course It's got to be done,. We are constantly comparing diaries, what her plans are and making sure that there is cover. We have a (child) at the moment who goes to (childcare) so picking him up and dropping him off is another thing as well. So that's another complexity, yk. (Nanny) doesn't drive so it's a case of, and we have a live-in nanny, so it's difficult – we have our neighbour next door who helps out and that kind of thing

Interviewer: It sounds like a lot of juggling and organising needs to happen

Mr B: Massive. Yeh

Interviewer: When you decided to take this job did you know that business travel was involved?

Mr B: Of course yes,

Interviewer: And was...did you have to make a decision with your family, was it a career...?

Mr B: Umm, my career was going in this direction anyway. The role itself so the current role is (management). Prior to that I was a (occupation) myself. So that was the role I took on myself and had .....more travel. That role had me travelling globally much more than the current role has now and, so , but that was a ...travel aspect so it wasn't as if it was a chore – I did enjoy it yk there was a downside of obviously being away from wife and kids but it was always something that I was aware of and I was happy to do it. Umm, but it is just a balance. It wasn't as if I was travelling every single week so I what I would try and do is condense trips yk as much as I possibly could. Instead of having 3 weeks where I travel 2-3 days a weeks I would try and travel up to sort of 1 week so we only had to organise that 1 weeks and look at things that 1 week ...much more flexible things like that a juggling act definitely,

Interviewer: Okay. And are there any benefits for you from the company, like working from home?

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Mr B: The company's very flexible in that respect. I work from home for probably half the time, 50% of the time approximately. I'd go into the office maybe 2 days a week and then I'd yk on an average month it would be 2 days a week in the office, 2 days a week at home and then the other 4 days will be travelling, something like that roughly speaking. Umm, but that all disappears if you take, I think it's (3 months) – three whole weeks, 2 of those in the (USA) and then another one in (country). So for 3 or 4 days so yk it's sort of a roller coaster and then it can be quiet more.

Interviewer: Okay. You said you really like your role but in an ideal world what would you like your work to be – would it be e.g. travel less / more, spending more time with family.

Mr B: In an ideal world – win the lottery tomorrow and quit travelling, there wouldn't be any business travel it would be personal travel (laughs). From a real perspective, right now, for where I am at the level I'm at yk. I've been striving for this, I've been working my career to this I think I would pretty much have the best of both worlds. Yk I'm at a good level, I have the flexibility of working from home, my travel isn't too excessive now. If I was doing the travel now that I was doing 3 years ago 2-3 years ago as a (occupation) then it would be much more taxing because then the juggling act would be exponentially more difficult to do and then we'd have to be looking at how we do that. Right now I am sort of well balance or as well as I could possibly be I don't think I could reduce any more travelling and do my job effectively but at the same time I could do more travel but the company now is restricting expenses anyway so if that wasn't the case I would probably be travelling a bit more anyway, yk between the company saving money and the role I am doing, I'm sort of sitting in the middle reasonably well right now

Interviewer: So it sounds like once the kids came along, your priorities changed.

Mr B: Umm, yes, definitely. I had a lot more focus on career, yk, every yk, yeh I suppose there was definitely a change of focus once the kids came. A lot of time and effort goes into that, there's no point in me being on the road yk that yk extensively as I used to be, so if it was a case of if I had to do it I would but it wouldn't be a choice now, yk I want to send time with them and grow up and It's all fine and dandy working in a career, bringing in the money to support your family, but if you are not there when your family is growing up what's the point. So, umm, so it's a balancing act, yk

Interviewer: Okay. Umm, how do you think your wife perceives your current working arrangement?

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Mr B: Umm, How does she perceive. I think it's as bad as, we have it as well as it can be. We both understand that I have to travel for this role. It's a role that I generally enjoy doing so it's not a job that I …that's the other side. I don't mind travelling in itself anyway, I enjoy travelling, umm, it's a bit different travelling on business that it is yk socially, personally but umm I think she, we, she accepts that it's something I have to do and there's never a question of oh you have to travel again, oh you have to…it's a case of I know you have to travel …so there's not a , there's not a , there's no contention or issue because she knows I travel because I need to travel or if I …it's not a case of me travelling for the sake of it

Interviewer: Yeh, and you kind of work around that together

Mr B: Yes, well, she knows I'll only organise trips when I need to do them. So there's yk, she knows my focus will be yk to spend time with herself and the kids yk there's no question round the travel. I mean obviously for her perspective she'd like it is I wasn't travelling and I was around but yk we don't always live the perfect life yk. We all have to make sacrifices along the way and if this is one of them. But if, as overall in the role that I'm doing, and the travel I am doing is relevant to this role and the it's what I got myself into then it's umm, it's not umm, yk it's eclectic.

Interviewer: Okay. What type of aspects of this type of lifestyle do you find difficult?

Mr B: Yeh, umm, well the worst case scenario is being away if anything happened or yk if my family needs me if my (children) get ill or if my wife is ill and I am travelling in (USA) for a week or if I'm in (other countries), which I did several times so yk, it's one thing when you are in the (Europe) where it's only an hour or two's flight but yk when you're further away like the US for example so it's umm yk, it's a worry if anything happens or they need you for support then…and that's always in the back of your mind. You never know when things are going to happen of course but if I go away for a week and the 1st day, 2nd I'm travelling and my wife gets sick, who takes care of the kids? We have a live in nanny, which certainly helps, however, it's …challenging. So that's really the most difficult part of the travelling and of course being away from my family.

Interviewer: I'm just thinking, having you ever missed occasions like, I don't know birthday or when they were younger when you were travelling their first tooth or…

Mr B: Umm, I certainly have missed my wife's birthday probably. I've missed bank holidays, so that's a fairly, that's been a regular one when in the past I've missed several bank holidays. Which has been unfortunate because obviously my wife would

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have the same time off so I can maybe take that time off in lieu later on but she won't have that time off so there's times when there's been... and weekends. I mean each trip to (USA) means going out over on a Sunday, I miss that weekend and when I come back maybe Friday, or following Saturday depending then I loose that weekend as well. So a trip to the US then 5 days or 6 days is actually 2 full weekends and personal time lost. So that's, that's never easy and yeh this job is very flexible but at the same time I don't count up every weekend I take and then take that off as time in lieu because that's not, that's just not the way this role works or the company works. Umm, so yes there are some sacrifices to personal time and umm,

Interviewer: But when you have to sacrifice like that does it bring out any feelings, thoughts?

Mr B: Umm, I think in this respect it really ....how the company treats you. If the company treats you well, I think we are still in the start up mentality. I mean we are a growing company but I think a few years down the line that's going to change but at the moment it's a good company and it has flexibility. So if I need to take a half day off on a particular day, I'm going to say to my boss look I'm just going to take a particular day off in lieu for doing a weekend trip or whatever, I can do that but umm, yeh, it's yk I might not be particularly happy at times. I don't want to take a weekend ...if it's been a busy week or whatever but It's a case of almost accepting that's the yk, that's the job, that's the sacrifice you have to make and the company is able to make times to get some of that back so ...flexibility so it's give and take. If I was doing that and there was no flexibility on the company's side then I'd be pretty angry and I'd be pushing back and the weekend trips I would fly on the Monday and return on the Friday and things like that. It's very different. To me I'd be much more, it's not that I dislike travelling, I'd be more ..... I won't. If I can't see any way around it I won't travel on the weekend

Interviewer: Okay but it's important for you that the company gives you that flexibility

Mr B: Yes, absolutely. If they don't give me the flexibility then my flexibility will ...diminish

Interviewer: Stressed

Mr B: Yes, much more stressed. I'd be very unhappy. I wouldn't be willing to work as hard for the company when they push me to work and to travel over the weekend and personal time. Even if they believe that it's just part of the role. I think it's very much give and take , literally and the company actually permits that

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Interviewer: Okay, what coping strategies have you used to help you deal with ...would you say you have a certain personality that's fits in well with this or

Mr B: What the sacrifices of...?

Interviewer: Just juggling

Mr B: Just juggling...umm, I...good question, I don't know, I suppose it's personality, umm, there is nothing specific that I can think of ...It's...I'm a very sort of analytic person anyway. You look at the situation, you look at the problems, see how you can solve that and then you get on and solve that the best you can. Umm, it's I can sit here and moan about it and pull my hair out but yk umm, get upset about it but that's not going to solve the situation so I don't know. I just...yeh, it's difficult and frustrating and yk I'll have to be somewhere and my wife has to be somewhere at the same time, we really have to find a different way of dealing with the situation but there are times when it's very stressful and there's time when my son, for example we might have to consider keeping him at home for a day because neither of us can drop him off and pick him up. Or, umm, yeh it's there's no mechanisms I would use. It's...I'd be interested to see how other people answer that question..

Interviewer: I'm just thinking well, you did...from what you said your family does sound quite supportive, If you didn't have that support, if you had a wife that for example said you're not travelling it's this child's birthday it's....it may be difficult, so maybe it's also to do with the relationship.

Mr B: Yeh, I think...

Interviewer: As a coping strategy

Mr B: Yeh, I think it helps that my my wife has been in (industry), the same business and she's been a consultant so she's travelled an extent as well in the past and she understands what needs to be done, she understands the whole travel mentality that the business travel yk, umm, drain on your energy. The whole thing. So therefore I think if I, If my wife had never done that and she was in an office job yk, if she was in an office job and never travelled she wouldn't understand ...works, what the expectations are from the company's point of view, what ...etcetera, whereas she has a much more... understanding of that so yes I get that kind of support so if a person wasn't.... that ...to me it's like you can tell immediately when you talk to someone about business

travel whether or not they travel themselves on business extensively that when you say I'm going to (country) I'm going here it's fantastic, wow, but actually I'm up at 4 o'clock in the morning and I use 2 weekends plus I've got meetings all day plus I'm out in the evening with clients for dinner and away from my family for the entire week or so and then I come back and I've got jetlag for 2, 3 days so yk it's just that some people don't understand that, my wife does because she's done that before so.

Interviewer: So there's maybe a perception that if you go away overseas or abroad for business that you get the chance to tour or ....hotel room to conference room back to hotel

Mr B: Yes, there's been a couple of occasions, on 2 or 3 occasions when I've gone to the US on a Sunday because the flights are cheaper on a Sunday , so I have the Sunday to myself but you still get the situation where I've got a family, I've got a wife and kids that Sunday I've got the whole day in the US and I can't share it with them, I can't share it with anyone so even if they were there with me we could got out and do something and enjoy that but doing that same activity on my own and not sharing it with anyone isn't that fun anyway so primarily I would say ...most of those days...keeps me busy and umm it's yk so that I try to ....evenings that week...I come back so yk yeh,

Interviewer: Because I wanted to ask you when you work away, like comparing your situation to someone who works 9-5, when you work away do you think you work like early in the morning, later at night?

Mr B: Most definitely, especially if you're outside a time zone. You end up working...time. Some people still have an expectation that you...emails. The fact that you're in meetings all day is irrelevant to them. They still have questions that need to be resolved so you end up doing whatever you're doing during the day and the evening time you are actually catching up. Most of the time because with dinner in the evening you don't get enough time so you end up getting up early in the morning before you leave the hotel room and you catch up partly especially if you look at (USA). When you get up in the morning it's already half way through the UK day so you have to get up an hour earlier in the morning or an hour and a half to catch up on the mails that half a day's already gone by because you can't do that during the day it's most definitely, 50% more work during a travelling week than it would be normally.

Interviewer: Okay, and when you come back, because obviously your work doesn't stop just because you are away...emails coming and...is it more stressful for you coming back when you've been away

Mr B: Yeh, it's like being on holiday. You come back to hundreds of mails in the inbox, you have to catch up, you have to ring a number of people and that first week back is a killer, yk, those first few days are not enjoyable. It's just catch up to a point where you are getting on top of things again so it's almost the same as, not quite to the same extent as you've been working early and later in the evenings so you've minimises the amount of catch up you need to do but still

Interviewer: Being away, more time

Mr B: Absolutely, overall, you've still done the same but you've just spread it differently.

Interviewer: But you aren't able to do that because your families not with you

Mr B: Yes, yeh. So that's the thing. I'm away from them anyway so why not take that time to do the work when I am away from them and minimise the amount...later on.

Interviewer: Is it okay to carry on? (nanny walks into kitchen with child)

Mr B: Yeh, yeh sure.

Interviewer: So can I get a bit more about when you return home? Maybe, worst-case scenario you get back from (USA) jetlagged, how does that impact, when you get back really tired, how does it impact on your family life?

Mr B: Yeh, I am really tired and cranky. Definitely I am a nightmare for the first day. I have a routine now, which I go through It took a while to find a routine but basically most US flights we get back in the morning about 6, 7 am. There's a few that get in a bit later but generally speaking ..so I get home go straight to bed and then get up. So my wife, well my kids don't understand it, but my wife leaves me sort of get through it. Generally that day is pretty tough because I stay late again from the evening time. I'm tired, I'm cranky, I'm not eating at the right times. The whole things, my body clock is messed up and it's only the following day that I start getting back to normal so yeh, she just leaves me to it....

Interviewer: Like avoids you?

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Mr B: Probably, almost yeh, so conversation is very limited because I am not in that kind of mood to talking, I'm tired..

Interviewer: So maybe one of your coping strategies is that maybe your wife learnt the hard way that when you get back tired , if she gives you your space then you can kind of...

Mr B: I definitely agree with that , yeh, I definitely agree with that, that's been trial and error, yes. Yes she would have learnt the hard way with that. Yes.

Interviewer: And when you get back do you feel that you need to do extra things like, because you've been away, I don't know, conscious or unconscious that you do something to compensate...

Mr B: Well, conscious that I've been away from my family and for that period of time so yes I definitely want to, I make an effort to spend time with them over the coming days. Umm, I think that yk if I'm jetlagged I'm not very good to anybody really so that I sort of take my recovery time and get back to my self but it was not, aside from that I think that, umm, no I, I suppose it's the same as anybody else, if I've been ....the thing is I know I have to do it so I get back and I put in some extra time and effort for my family.

Interviewer: To what extent would you do extra things?

Mr B: It depends. If I refer back to the weekends when I am back on Saturday, then on the Sunday we will all go out as a family and we'll do something...jetlag so as a family we would spend the entire day together. Will I take my wife out, yeh, I'll try and do something maybe during the following week or something. With the kids it's not that easy doing that so...

Interviewer: It's very different if you work 9-5, some couples don't have that going away, coming back, the quality of time...I'm just kind of...How would the time you spend with your family or your wife be different from someone who is 9-5 and home every week.

Mr B: Umm, well we definitely make an effort to get time together. Whereas if it was a normal week then it's not as, so what I would say is if I've been away from a week, the following week, I'm a lot more conscious of the time I finish in the afternoon or the evening and what time I get home or when I'm working from home...office and that's it. Similarly I 'd be saying to my wife yk

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you're not working late tonight are you? So I'd be, for that kind of first week it's not really a conscious thing that's the bizarre thing but it's a, because I missed her I would then make sure that for that next week, I suppose as a coping mechanism to make up for the time lost that we both physically have no time whereas if it was an 9-5 thing that's not an issue because it's just normal routine, if you work a bit later that's fine but of you've been away or you come back the last thing you want , yk the last thing I want is if I came back and, umm, is to see my wife working until 8 o'clock every night. Myself, being in a position when I work later in the evening, it's not just the time when we're away ....so

Interviewer: So making up..

Mr B: It's definitely making up, definitely a focus on that umm, certainly I would, say certainly for the next week definitely, yk

Interviewer: I'm just thinking...there's some research that suggest that people who have this lifestyle – business travel let little things slide so that they don't get irritate and you let things slide because you are going away. So..

Mr B: Umm, that's a great theory. Great theory and I don't, I think when it comes to that I almost believe it's the personalities involved because basically is what you're saying is in a normal situation you would do x and because this situation you're going to do y...

Interviewer: Yeh...

Mr B: I think that 's got to do a lot with ...yes sure you've got to make a conscious decision. Some people might be able to do that and it's not easy for me to do that so that would mean changing my character, for that circumstance...

Interviewer: So you don't do anything different?

Mr B: ...pretty much stay the same, Yeh, so I wouldn't, umm, I mean there would be occasions where yes I would but in general as a rule travelling. I know I'm travelling next week and I'll be away for a week, will I be more lenient with my wife or will I let her get away with murder, will I be extra nice to her this week, umm, no I don't think so. Unless there's a specific reason, if there's something going on where it's important to do that but it wouldn't be something I would do because of the travel

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Interviewer: So it's not like you think If I leaving tomorrow I'll let that slide because I 'm going to be away for a week , because it wouldn't be conscious for you because your personality would be...

Mr B: Yeh, because it's something that I believe in, whether I am travelling or not I would do, umm, yeh, there would be some circumstances where would be there would some behaviour I would change but it would not be just because of the travel for example. It might be because yk wife isn't feeling very well travelling next, okay we'll just let that go, okay, I mean there could be a lot of things need to be done around the house and then I'm travelling next week so I'll have to do that before I go away or it's going to have to wait anther week or two things like that. So there are certainly things that need to be thought about and actions that need to be taken but not just on the...it's kind of on the responsibility side. So just because I'm going away for a week does not mean my responsibilities, I can just wash them aside and transfer them onto my wife so things that, all the things around the house or the garage or the garden or the things that need to be done. Those things I'll do so I'll think okay I'm travelling here and I only have this period of time before hand to get those done otherwise it won't be done. Then my wife has to put up with that in that situation and that's not fair because I'm travelling and that's something that I would certainly think about and certainly when I am travelling it's a case of so wit the kids, how are we going to manage the kids while I am away yk, you look at the situation

Interviewer: I wonder if it's your personality because you sound like you are very planned, more planned because you travel or is that just the way you are...

Mr B: Umm, I would say, I'm planned because I think I have to be, umm, because if I didn't it would be chaos (laughs), umm I think the funny part is my wife and I love spontaneity. Our perfect holiday will be to book a flight to somewhere and then yk book one night in a hotel first so that we had somewhere to go to and then just basically play it by ear and see how we want to go, yk, just be totally spontaneous and just not have everything planned. We don't want everything planned but in my job I have to plan everything and I'm good at planning and that sort of falls over into the responsibility, sort of thing so when I have family responsibilities, I plan all of those because the consequences of dropping things are just, it's just too high. It's just simple thinks like my son goes to, goes to yk year 1, he starts school in September yk there's deadlines for getting the paperwork in for applying for school and all that kind of thing. So yk my wife and I talk about it, I'm working from home, she's in an office where she can't do those types, so I've got more flexibility so I do that, I make sure it gets done on time so I plan that yk so we balance it between ourselves. Yk the next contract she goes on, if she can work from home if she can work from home more of the time we got some flexibility so we can share more things, some more of the tasks that need to be done at home or whatever but at the moment that's the way it is

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Interviewer: Okay, so you still get done what you need to do it's just maybe it takes a bit more planning that...

Mr B: Oh definitely. There's definitely a lot more planning involved but it's not because I love the planning, it just has to be done otherwise things slip through the net and yeh, it's just, yeh, things have to get done. It's like paying bills, you can't just forget to pay your bills. Yk there's consequences, so you need to plan, you need to get your direct debit in place or you need to do your payment on line or go to a bank or whatever you want to do, so it's the same idea. There's things to be done in the house or with the family or whatever and you plan it.

Interviewer: So when you get back you wouldn't say you do more things. You wouldn't...because you are working from home I don't know say put the dishwasher on or put a load of washing on because you've been away.

Mr B: I do that anyway. I wouldn't say my behaviour changes dramatically because I've come back because we can go back to what I said a few minutes ago which is if I knew there were things that needed to be done while I was away I'll do them before hand or if I couldn't do them before hand then I'd do them when I came back. But any of the extra things like do I help out around the house, do I do the dishwasher, do I do whatever, then I do bits and pieces anyway.

Interviewer: Which sounds as if it's something you would do if you had a 9-5 job anyway. You would just do it at different times.

Mr B: I think so, yeh probably not dramatically different no.

Interviewer: Last question really. What advice would you give to others in similar situations for making the lifestyle work?

Mr B: Mmm, umm, I think it's absolutely key to communicate with your partner, yk and make sure that they're aware of why you're travelling, what the travelling entails. That yk you do, you are going to be away and the responsibility isn't dropped while you're away. Umm, I think you just need to know, if anyone is going to take on a role with travel then they need to know what, they need to know what it entails and ensure that they have the support network behind them. Now, I've got my wife, I've got a live-in nanny and then we've got a next door neighbour, if any of those, yk if my nanny or my next door neighbour were missing then we'd have a real problem. So I think there's almost like a, it sound really analytical, but there's almost like a minimum network that you need to cover the eventuality when you are travelling and if you don't have that the stress level on the person

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that's travelling and the one's who are left behind would be significantly higher. I think that could potentially cause a lot of problems...

Interviewer: And I guess for you having children and when you didn't have children...there were differences?

Mr B: Definitely...

Interviewer: Do you think it's more stressful for people that have children than...

Mr B: Yes I think people who have children always feels guilty at some point, you're not doing enough for them or you're not providing as much as you can and umm certainly when they're growing up the age my kids are they don't understand why you're not there. You know you can't, okay now my son at 3 coming on 4, he sort of gets the point that yes daddy has to go to work to get money so that we have food on the table but yk up until that point he had no idea why I disappeared for a week and a week is a long time in the life of a kid so because they just don't have the concept of time. So the funny part if that he probably gets used to that within a day or 2 that I'm not around but I actually feel guilt for not being there thinking that he's yk so you feel like, it's almost like a personal emotional blackmail on yourself for that travelling time. I think that's, so when you have children and you travel I don't think you're ever happy in the travel because there's always a part of you that is feeling guilty for travelling because your kids don't understand why you're travelling or if they do they miss you and you want to come back with them and so on but then there other side is it's my job, I want to provide for them, I want to do the right thing. It's like that dichotomy where you balance the scales, umm and you just have to sort of live with it.

Interviewer: Mmm, does your (child) react to you any differently when you get back?

Mr B: Yes, well he does, I think...he's actually changing as time goes on, initially he'd be very off-handish he wouldn't pay me any attention when I'd get back at all and then it would be a day or so before he would actually be really affectionate again and then yk lots of hugs, kisses and all the rest. So he would actually be, the only way I think of it is he'd actually be you're back now but are you going away again, and that was the feeling I got and that happened several times and it's quite gutting as a father to come back and your kid not wanting to give you a big hug and kiss so stay hugged to mommy rather than come over. Now it's a bit different because obviously I can talk to him on the phone during my time away so it's not that whole break and so obviously when I come back now he understands. But my daughter wouldn't understand of I went away now and she's even more stand-

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offish for a day so if I'm working from home that's fine but if I have to be in the office and away until tonight, so 50% of the time at the moment she might rush to the door and give me a big hug and then at other times she would go okay what you were here today...so...

Interviewer: Interesting. They pick up things...

Mr B: They do, they do and then obviously as a parent it's very difficult taking that on board because it's almost like a rejection, even though you had no choice you feel guilt because you've made them feel like that.

Interviewer: So the guilt being away, even though you have to and you like it and the guilt of them not wanting you when you get back.

Mr B: That's right and you've got to be careful not to let that build up and sort of make you feel down. I sort of rely on the, I don't have a choice, if I had a choice I'd be doing something else or I'd be at home, whatever, but yk I'm in a job that I enjoy doing because it's bringing in the money I need to support a family and this is part and parcel of that yk that's the sacrifice we make. The sacrifice is yk my own guilt trips as well. So I think for anybody doing it, it's having the support network in place and just understanding what it entails because there's no point trying to travel where your mind is back at home still anyway. You have to make sure that if you are travelling you make that travel worthwhile, otherwise why do it, why leave your family, have a guilt trip and then not be productive when you're away. So it's yk, so when I travel I am committed to what I am doing and then obviously in between I make time to ring my family, my wife and see how things are and all of that but when I am there I am focused and I make sure that because I have to travel I make sure I make it productive so that I don't feel guilt about the time that I've spent on that side, even though that side doesn't change

Interviewer: It sounds like there's lots of guilt, guilt for the family...

Mr B: There is, yeh, you always want to do more for your family. You want to spend more time with them, you want to provide for them but yk it's just not a perfect world and some people might feel more guilty than others, some might not be bothered by it at all, I don't know. I'd like to see how other people think about this

Interviewer: I think the stress levels may also be very different

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Mr B: Yes

Interviewer: Depending if you are, I don't know, but if you have a job that you hate and you had to travel, it would be different from if you had a job that you loved.

Mr B: Oh, that would be very painful. I would find that extremely difficult to do. I'd probably end up resenting the company if I was in that situation and I would resent wasting, wasting is how I'd look at it, weekends for business travel for a job I didn't like and the company taking advantage of you and all of that. Whereas with this company it is very much a give and take so I'm umm okay with that.

Interviewer: And it's probably an important thing for other people considering business travel and what the company policy is. Do they give and take?

Mr B: Yes, I totally agree with that. It's not as important if you're single or if you just have a partner. If you've got family then the company you work for becomes much more relevant and their ethics and how flexible they are and then if you don't have that because umm, that makes such a difference then, in the long run. So then definitely the company is absolutely key. Without that umm, support I suppose, whether by flexibility of whatever else from the company then umm, travelling would be a lot more stressful than it is now, significantly so.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you think is important to tell me that maybe I haven't asked a question and you've thought that might be relevant?

Mr B: Travel purposes…umm, eh, I think one of the things in the long run if you are, as I was doing a lot of travel, so just before this role, so just over a year ago I was doing significant travelling. It's very easy to forget that you're…travel is tiring and over a period of time you actually get incredibly fatigued and I think that if you're travelling a lot, whether you've got family or not, anyone doing that travelling needs to bear in mind because you have to take the down time, you have to make sure you get rest so if that means that you have to plan your vacation / holiday time more evenly throughout the year to give you that down time. So what I've found was, before I was doing the travelling I could take my 4, 5 weeks holidays, I could take 3 of those (Christmas) and I could take the rest of it during (summer). When I was travelling extensively I actually took a week, a week, a week,

throughout the years because if I needed that down time just to recover from the travelling and to just relax a bit. If I had waited for a few months I'd have got to breaking point probably because your body never has a time, especially with jetlag, jetlag is a killer. If it's short trips around Europe then it's fine to a degree – it's not as taxing but if you're doing international travel I found I had to change the way I took my holiday time because if I didn't, I'd run myself into the ground very quickly and that could easily affect your work and your relationship as well, very easily because you just become irritable, you get too tired, you're not able to focus as much. Definitely made a difference and it's something that I realised pretty quickly when I was travelling that you can't keep going at that pace yk and if you do you burn out and that can happen very quickly if you're travelling a lot. So that was something that was important

Interviewer: And I guess that if you hadn't figured that out yet you'd learn the hard way.

Mr B: Definitely, There's a particular person that I work with and I've worked with a lot in the past in the company. He burned himself out to the point of internationally, where he couldn't maintain any relationships because he was travelling all the time and umm, his focus was almost the workaholic thing and he went into a UK role where he travelled much less and so on and now he's with this partner coming up 8 months or 9 months, things are going really well. Yk, his way of resolving this was to take away the travel all together, whereas my way is that if you have to do that travel is to get enough down time throughout the year and if that means that every 6 weeks, 8 weeks you need to take a week or more off then you do that and you take that as being a requirement just to recover.

Interviewer: and in a way that's more important that if something is coming up work wise you book that time off otherwise you couldn't do the work.

Mr B: I found that, if I had a lot of travel coming up I would look for 3, 4 weeks after that travel and then just book some time in there so it wasn't a case of me going right for this next year I am going to have, every 6 weeks I'm going to have a week off because that doesn't reflect, that wouldn't be the right time frame in terms of the travel because sometimes you are more tired than other, sometimes you are travelling more than others but basically if I knew I had a lot of travel coming up then I would plan ahead of that or after that travel time for my holiday because I know that for that 2, 3 weeks of a lot of travel and then 2,3 weeks after it's going to be tough because there's a lot of catch up time, then there's so many more customer meetings and then by the end of that time I'm going to be absolutely exhausted, I'm not going to be pleasant to live with. So that was a very personal choice in the way I managed my, the effects of my travelling. I think ever person has to figure out how you would, how to do that.

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I think everyone needs an outlet. It depends if you have an outlet as well. Whether it be a hobby, sport whatever. If you've got that on the weekends, evening times when you get to totally detach from your work and get sort of away time I think that helps as well. But the best thing was taking the time off all together, whether spend the time with the family or whatever that's fine but it just recharged the batteries. That's something that I did and still continue to do. So if you take this year for example, so I've got time off booked in, actually I don't have any time booked at the moment. I'm only talking about now putting some time off for (Christmas period) but in relation to anything else we're going to, we've got the I(public holiday) coming up but beside from that we don't have anything booked for the moment because were reasonably refreshed we've just had a long weekend gone by, not this one but the previous one we had 4 days off and went to Ireland for the weekend. Travel wise for me now in the next couple of weeks aren't particularly taxing but when we get into (3 months) that's going to be a lot of travel so (after travel) most definitely we're going to be looking at now to see what we do around that because I know I am going to be travelling a lot and at the end of that after a bit of catch-up time I'll need a holiday, I'll need a break, whatever so we start planning now but unlike a lot of people, umm, your 9-5 is great because in some respects you can plan out your holiday time at the beginning of the year because it's all predictable, whereas mine is completely, reasonably unpredictable.....

Interviewer: and irregular....

Mr B: and irregular so it doesn't, I mean I could book my travel holiday in advance but it wouldn't serve me at the times I need it most and that's important for me and my family.

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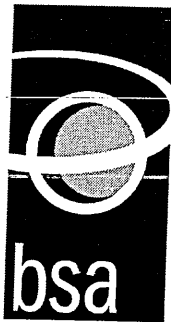
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