

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY
INTERNS: EXPLORING CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

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ABSTRACT

The journey towards becoming a counselling psychologist, in South Africa, includes the completion a 12 month internship. The internship year holds many challenges and demands for novice professionals and aims to assist them in making the transition from student to professional. This study aims to explore the subjective experiences of intern counselling psychologists and the critical incidents which assist them in making this transition. In addition, it aims to identify experiences impacting on the interns' professional development and professional identity. Three registered counselling psychologists, who completed their internship at a South African university counselling centre within the last year, were recruited and participated in individual interviews. These interviews were semi-structured and followed the Critical Incident Technique method. Each interview was voice recorded and transcribed. The data collected was analysed using thematic content analysis. As the research design is qualitative, using a phenomenological approach, the focus is on presenting information-rich and detailed descriptions of participants "lived" experiences of their internship year. It attempts to understand significant incidents or events which influenced the participants' professional and personal development as they navigate through this ambiguous period to become independent and ethical practitioners. Four predominant themes emerged from the data collected, which include a discussion pertaining to professional boundaries and limitations, learning within the internship environment, the effects of professional and personal support and, lastly, the transition from dependent to independent professional functioning.

Keywords: intern psychologist; internship; counselling psychology; critical incidents; Critical Incident Technique; professional development; professional identity.

DECLARATION

I, Beverley Teixeira, declare this work has not previously been submitted, in part or whole, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work or works of other people has been attributed or acknowledged and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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This work is dedicated to my mother.

Thank you for your ever present love, support and belief in me.

I miss you.

My intention is to tell

Of bodies changed

To different forms.

The heavens and all below them,

Earth and her creatures,

All change.

And we, part of creation,

Also must suffer change.

OVID, *METAMORPHOSIS*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to highlight the context in which the study is situated and provides an introduction to the study. The rationale and aims of the study are described which demonstrate the significance of the study. An abridgement of the research questions is provided as detailed questions will follow in the Methodology chapter. Key concepts are defined in the context of the study and an outline of the various chapters is presented in order to optimise understanding and decrease confusion of the contents of the document.

1.2. Background to the Study

Counselling psychology, in South Africa, is evolving rapidly due to many factors including socio-cultural, economic and political. The challenge is to move from its politicized past (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Leach, Akhurst & Basson, 2003; Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2011; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004) while remaining relevant in a South Africa (Macleod, 2004; Pretorius, 2012; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004) characterised by high unemployment, high crime rates and where psychotherapy is a luxury for the majority of the population. Currently, there is an ongoing debate within the counselling psychology profession regarding the relevance of psychology and the training of psychologists (Macleod, 2004; Pretorius, 2012; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). The training of psychologists is crucial as it forms the intellectual and ideological basis that influences the professional identity of the novice psychologist. Part of this professional moulding or professional development involves establishing a professional identity, integrating the skills and attitudes of, as well being accepted into and making a contribution within, a professional community (Elman, Illfelder-Kaye & Robiner, 2005; Mahoney, 1998; Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014).

Individuals who want to become registered professional psychologists in South Africa need to complete the formal academic requirements of a postgraduate training program as well as an internship relevant to the category of registration with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) (i.e. counselling, educational, clinical, industrial or research psychology) (Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2010). The prescribed minimum period for an internship is 12 months of full time training at an accredited

institution (HPCSA, 2010). Within the current regulations (in 2014), counselling psychologists do not need to complete a community service year prior to registering as a professional psychologist. The internship year is considered important as this can be viewed as a transitional period from student to professional. This is when the individual transitions from the safety of the classroom environment to that of the working experience and the internship training site should be facilitating this shift by recognising and cultivating individual variability as part of their professional development. Elements, such as self-knowledge, social awareness, compassion, reflection and reflexivity, the ability to assess and teach basic skills (for example problem solving and coping skills) in addition to ethics and values (Mahoney, 1998) are crucial in counselling psychology or the psychology profession in general. These personal attributes, along with academic and practical training, serve as the primary instruments in the psychology profession thus they are essential to the optimal functioning of psychologists as, unlike with other professions where practitioners have tangible tools, psychologists do not. This raises questions related to whether interns enter internships displaying rudimentary aspects of professionalism or whether an internship training site is responsible for instilling the skills and values underlying professional development to enable them to function as competent psychologists.

The relevance and training debate is important as the majority of South African training institutions continue to train novice psychologists in approaches and methods aligned to European and American ontological assumptions about what constitutes psychological theory and methods and applying this to individuals belonging to an Afrocentric context (Pretorius, 2012; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004; Watson & Fouche, 2007). The Western, masculine, middle-class, white cultural bias is utilised as appropriate for the treatment of black, poor or female South Africans, who occupy a different cultural persuasion and who are invested in their community (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2011; Pretorius, 2012; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). The acceptance and practice of these Western bias assumptions lead to the cultural constructions of what behaviours or difficulties can be classified as being in need of psychological intervention from the perspective of the white middle-class male (Pretorius, 2012; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004), who as a result of being privileged had an influence on the development of psychological theories and practice (Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). There is much criticism of Western or traditional psychological theories and practice which are considered as lacking in cross-culture relevance and it has been advised that the counselling psychology profession may need to shift its current focus from the individual to a collectivist

approach where cultural sharing is a norm for a high percentage of South Africans in order to remain relevant (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2011; Pretorius, 2012). Many Western theories do not consider cultural beliefs, such as the level of influence ancestors have on an individual's life or the belief in a universal bond or connectedness amongst all people which is commonly referred to as "Ubuntu", and as such there is a call to convert universal knowledge to more indigenous knowledge or theories which can be applied to communities (Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2011; Pretorius, 2012). A consequence of universally applying Western psychological theories and methods is that many South Africans are uncertain about these "foreign" psychological principles employed to assist with difficulties and may even be mistrustful of these westernised solutions (Pretorius, 2012). A major proportion of South Africans will preferably place their confidence in traditional healers and their practices rather than in psychologists (Leach et al., 2003; Watson & Fouche, 2007). Thus, it may benefit training and professional counselling psychologists to learn from traditional healing practices in order to make themselves more accessible to the majority of the South African population (Leach et al., 2003). In saying this, academic and internship institutions ought to train novice psychologists to practice in a way that respects multiculturalism.

Furthermore, an indicator of relevance is the profession's ability to be cognizant of social dynamics and competency to understand its ambit in terms of social relevance and the impact this has on the field (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Maree & van der Westhuizen, 2011). The current social context illustrates many South Africans are in need of psychological services however due to preconceptions and cultural differences, these services become unavailable (Leach et al., 2003). The politicized history of South Africa has left many black South Africans mistrustful of what can be termed Western practices or influences as these are often perceived as an attempt to continue the oppressive ideologies of the past (Leach et al., 2003). Therefore the profession needs to be viewed as relevant and more responsive to the culturally different South African communities and needs to be willing to engage with the underlying cultural values of the counselling psychology vocation as this aspect has a great influence on the novice psychologist development and identity and connection with a professional community. Ratele and Mohamed (2004) argued that female and black novice psychologists, in particular those from rural areas, struggle to identify with a counselling psychology profession based on Western, middle-class, white, male principles as these universally applied psychological theories and methods fail to recognise their own experiences and those

of the communities from which they come or operate in. Consequently, the incongruence between the training and practice of psychotherapy in South Africa may leave these professionals with a sense of being an outsider within the counselling psychology profession as well as their communities (Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). It is noteworthy to mention that the psychology profession, which has a history of male hegemony, is presently dominated by white females in South Africa (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Leach et al., 2003). However this trend is shifting as there is an increase in the number of applicants across the cultural and ethnic spectrum being accepted into psychology postgraduate academic training programs thus ensuring that the demographic profile is more representative of the population or communities the professionals are likely to serve (Cooper & Nicholas, 2012; Watson & Fouche, 2007). In turn, the psychology profession becomes more accessible and relevant to the communities they operate in.

There is further debate concerning counselling psychology merging with clinical psychology as there are perceivably very little distinguishing factors between the two categories (Leach et al., 2003). There is considerable overlap between the skills of these two registration categories although, a big differentiator is that counselling psychology follows a humanistic approach to treatment with a solution focus on the well-being of the individual and on adjustment issues to daily life (Watson & Fouche, 2007) whereas clinical psychology follows a medical model approach to treatment with an interest in psychopathology and diagnosis (Pretorius, 2012) however not all clinical psychologists adhere to the medical model as some embody a different approach in their therapeutic practice. Moreover, the public perception stirs up the historical bias of clinical psychologists being the preferred category among professionals (Watson & Fouche, 2007) thus being able to practice and apply psychological interventions on a broader array of clients. This highlights the public's ignorance regarding the registration categories and their functions and accentuates the ongoing power struggle between clinical and counselling psychology. This tension may be caused by the decreased cohesion between the categories and leaves the profession of counselling psychology in a state of confusion (Pretorius, 2012; Young, 2013). The promulgated Scope of Professional Practice is likely a response to this confusion and attempts to define boundaries for each registration category (Pretorius, 2012). As many counselling psychologists train with clinical psychologists, the new scope of practice negates a large portion of counselling psychologists training which has implications for many counselling psychologists in private practice who may become exposed to claims of unethical or violations of practice. In addition to this, it

contributes to the mounting tension between the two categories of registration. Pretorius (2012) argues for a deconstruction of the discourses in the profession as well as the hierarchy of categories and the “creation of a new vision and mission for the profession of psychology in South Africa” (p. 516) in order to effectively serve the best interest of our clients.

In view of the various discussions within the profession it is likely that intern counselling psychologists may struggle to create a professional identity which is socially responsive and rooted in a professional community. Liddell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy and Boyle (2014) stated that counselling psychologists develop their professional identity through socialisation, which is the internalisation of norms and standards of, as well as a commitment to, the profession of counselling psychology. However, the professional identity of counselling psychology is considered as being in a state of transition because of a lack of cohesiveness in the profession and a lack of leadership to define the role of counselling psychology in South Africa (Watson & Fouche, 2007). This sentiment is reflected by Young (2013), who mentions that the professional identity of counselling psychologists within South Africa lacks clarity and without “a coherent value base, professional status and employment opportunities” (p. 423) the struggle for a clear identity may remain unchanged. This lack of clarity may become problematic as counselling psychologists require a clear understanding of their professional identity in order to remain relevant and practice ethically and effectively. The HPCSA’s probable response to the relevance of the profession is the promulgated Scope of Professional Practice as defined in the Health Professions Act of 1974 (Department of Health, 2011). There has been much discussion around the scope of practice and a major concern is that it lacks clarity (Pretorius, 2012; Young, 2013). Young (2013) speaks about counselling psychology being viewed as a general specialisation which aims to assist individuals, groups and organisations and that it is likely that this diversity in functioning and psychological interventions makes the profession of counselling psychology difficult to define. Possibly, the values of the counselling psychology profession, more than the scope of practice, provide an identity which counselling psychologists can connect with and internalise. It can be said that counselling psychology is an “expression of its values” (Young, 2013, p. 429), such as respecting the client’s autonomy, trustworthiness, or commitment to maintaining confidentiality (Howard, 1992; Young, 2013).

1.3. Research Rationale

The researcher's own journey as an intern counselling psychologist inspired this research study. During the researcher's period as an intern, numerous supervisors and professionals advised her that this period would be the most difficult time, professionally, as it would involve allowing for an alignment between her cultural or personal identity and the developing professional identity. This alignment is to be further considered in relation to any cultural biases towards Western psychological theories as well as research methodologies where cultural identity may collide with academic training and practice (Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). Furthermore, the researcher was advised that this time would be stressful due to having to fulfil the immense expectations placed on an intern.

The researcher completed her internship year, at a ¹counselling centre at a major university in South Africa. Her transition from student to professional, as predicted, bore many challenges and she struggled to clearly understand what professional identity and professional development related to. The researcher considered the current debates within the profession of counselling psychology and struggled to situate herself within and connect to this profession. She was concerned about the perceived limitations the new scope of practice placed on counselling psychologists and the implication of this on employment opportunities within South Africa. Through discussions with her peers, it was realised that this is a common theme amongst interns. The researcher's understanding of these concepts became clearer as she engaged with her supervisors, peers as well as clients and progressed towards a feeling of increased competence as a psychologist. Kottler and Swartz (2004) described the internship as a period of professional infancy where the intern undergoes various developmental stages, including having a sense of increasing competency and of becoming a member of an established social group. These challenges allow the intern to create a new professional identity as a counselling psychologist.

A curiosity developed within the researcher as to what incidents, whether negative or positive, have an effect on an intern's professional development given the current discussions

¹Many counselling psychology interns complete their internship year at a student counselling centre linked to a university thus this study will refer to this by the generic "counselling centre".

within the profession and whether this is further influenced by the amount, quality and type of support received from the internship site. It raised questions regarding whether the internship site or the academic training institution or both have the responsibility of training the intern in various aspects, such as academic, practical and personal skills, as well as dealing with different cultures and the unfamiliar.

1.4. Research Question

This study aims to address how intern counselling psychologists define their professional identity and what critical incidents, in the internship year, lead to the development of this professional identity and aid or hinder their professional and personal development.

1.5. Research Aims

The study aims to explore the experiences of three counselling psychology interns and the incidents which contributed to the transition from student to professional. It looks to identify, through the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954), general experiences which had an influence on the interns' professional development and professional identity.

Further, it seeks to investigate whether the professional training obtained at the internship site is sufficient in providing an environment conducive to the development of professionalism, which includes the underlying values and related skills, however the study does not aim to use the interns' experiences as a means to evaluate the internship program. This may be of interest to the directors of internship sites and may be useful when considering the tasks which interns are required to fulfil in the internship programme.

1.6. Definition of Terms

A variety of definitions can be posed for the following key concepts however they are defined below in the manner in which they are primarily used and understood in the study. This is in order to eliminate any misperceptions and to facilitate greater understanding. It is important to note that some concepts will also be defined and elaborated upon throughout the study.

Intern: “refers to the intern psychologist that needs to complete an accredited internship programme prior to registration as a professional psychologist” (HPCSA, 2011, p. 1). An intern is also referred to as a novice or neophyte psychologist or professional.

Internship: “is an accredited one year (12 months) structured programme that consists of practical, competence based activities that need to be completed by individuals that wish to register as psychologists. The internship is an entry requirement for professional registration.” (HPCSA, 2011, p. 1).

Psychologist: “refers to an individual that has completed all entry requirements to the profession of psychology and that has been duly registered by the Board as a psychologist. A psychologist is empowered to perform psychological acts within a specific category of registration (clinical, counselling, educational, industrial or research).” (HPCSA, 2011, p. 1). A psychologist is also referred to as a professional.

Training institution: “denotes the institution that is officially accredited by the Board to provide specialised practical training of accredited internship programmes. The duration of such accreditation is usually five years, but an institution can also be afforded temporary accreditation for the training of one or more intern psychologists.” (HPCSA, 2011, p. 1).

Professional development: is concerned with the process of attaining and enhancing skills and knowledge relevant to professional functioning (Elman, Illfelder-Kaye & Robiner, 2005).

Personal development: refers to the skills and attitudes, such as authenticity, intimacy, interpersonal relationships, and multiculturalism, which facilitate real-life encounters in the therapy space thus increasing the effectiveness of the therapeutic relationship (Elman et al., 2005).

Professional identity: is the lifelong process of assimilating the professional self with the personal self and feeling a sense of belonging within a professional community (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010).

Turning point: Positive or negative events or periods of change which alter a professional's subjective appraisal of her or his meaning of life or purpose which impacts on her or his professional identity and wellbeing (Sutin, Costa, Wethington & Eaton, 2010).

Phenomenology: a qualitative theoretical approach which is used to explore the "lived" experiences of individuals with a focus on the subjective meaning of the experience rather than how the event exists externally to the individual (Chamberlain, Camic & Yardley, 2004).

Critical incident: "An incident is critical if it makes a 'significant' contribution, either positively or negatively, to the general aim of the activity and it should be capable of being critiqued or analysed" (Flanagan, 1954, p. 338).

Critical Incident Technique: a procedure for collecting data of significant incidents and attempting to understand the incidents from the perspective of the individual; considering feelings, thoughts and behaviours (Chell, 2004).

Thematic Content Analysis: A qualitative analytic method for: "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

Theme: "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

1.7. Structure of the Study

This research document comprises of five chapters. Chapter 1 provided a background for the study and discussed the rationale for the study. It also described the research aims and questions as well as specified definitions of the major terms used throughout the study.

A review of the research literature relative to professional and personal development is discussed in Chapter 2. Furthermore, Chapter 2 describes the internship environment and factors impacting on interns.

Chapter 3 will cover the research design and approach as well as the data collection and analysis procedure used in the study.

The research findings are presented and discussed in Chapter 4.

The study concludes with Chapter 5 in which the implications of the findings are discussed, as well as a personal reflection detailing the strengths and limitations of the study and contributions to further research.

1.8. Conclusion

In this chapter a background of the research study was provided in order to orientate the reader towards the study. This research study focuses particularly on how intern counselling psychologists define their professional identity as well as which significant events, in their internship year, contribute towards their professional and personal development. The rationale and aims of the research study were discussed. Regularly used concepts were briefly described to ensure clarity. The next chapter will introduce existing theory relating to professional and personal development as well as the internship environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The process of becoming a counselling psychologist is a long and arduous one. Individuals invest not only financial resources, but also a commitment to time. Individuals spend many hours attempting to meet academic and practical obligations of the course, from undergraduate through to postgraduate studies. The internship period is no different. When entering an internship, the individual confronts an unfamiliar and demanding working environment. This odyssey involves a transformation of identity at a personal and at a professional level. This is a journey of becoming a more competent and complete practitioner but also of becoming a more cohesive person. Therapy is a deeply intimate space and it is only when psychologists concentrate on their own development that this space becomes accessible; for it is only then that psychologists can appreciate it and be confident that it can be entered without the psychologist losing her or himself (Wilkins, 1997). The extent to which therapists can be vulnerable, open and aware of themselves and their client is a product of their personal and professional development.

This chapter will review relevant literature around the process of becoming a professional through the internship training of psychologists. It aims to conceptualise professional and personal development, discuss the stages and themes involved in the development of a psychologist, explore the processes of self-care and self-awareness and their role in the personal development of an intern counselling psychologist, discuss the importance of multicultural training within the South African context and consider the role of reflection and reflexion in effective therapeutic practice. This is followed by an overview of the internship environment, the stages of intern development and probable stressors or obstacles an intern may experience during her or his internship. The importance of support, from peers, family and friends as well as supervisors and other professionals is emphasised throughout this discussion.

2.2. Defining Professional and Personal Development

Professional and personal development are important professional matters when considering counselling psychologists, yet they appear to be difficult to clearly define. Elman et al. (2005)

proposed a working definition of professional development being the process of attaining and refining skills and knowledge relevant to functioning as a professional. Professional development comprises of tasks such as establishing a professional identity, integrating the skills and attitudes of and as a professional and being situated within a professional community (Elman et al., 2005; Moss et al., 2014). Whereas personal development is concerned with personal attributes such as authenticity, multiculturalism, interpersonal engagement and reflection (Donati & Watts, 2005; Elman et al., 2005; Peters et al., 2011). Some aspects of personal development, for example self-care and fitness to practice, are centred in professional development thus intertwining the two dimensions (Donati & Watts, 2005). Professionalism, as a whole, is essential to the optimal functioning of psychologists as unlike other professions where practitioners have tangible tools, psychologists do not. It is their academic and practical training and personal attributes which serve as the primary instruments in the profession. Therefore professional development training should complement competency training although the latter is not considered a skill.

2.3. Professional Development

As described above, professional development is defined as the processes and activities designed to enhance professional knowledge, skills and attitudes of psychologists so as to improve therapeutic effectiveness. The field of counselling psychology is dynamic and continually expanding and as such professionals are encouraged to be concerned with enhancing their skill set and acquiring new skills rather than just maintaining their level of expertise at any given point (Elman et al., 2005; Wilkins, 1997). Classic theories and paradigms are continuously being re-examined and new techniques are being developed from empirical research. This means that as the professional knowledge base expands, new types of expertise are required by counselling psychologists. It is psychologists' responsibility to remain informed of new trends and to be prepared to continually refine their conceptual and therapeutic skills - even if they do not incorporate them into their practice. Novice psychologists should be encouraged to be active participants and life-long learners where their focus from established theories shifts to a focus on thinking and interacting with the established theory and new knowledge (Elman et al., 2005; Wilkins, 1997). Excellent ways of keeping abreast with new information is to read professional journals, engage in peer discussions, enter into a mentorship or supervisory relationship, and attend events organised by professional bodies.

Guskey (2000) extends on this and further defined professional development as an intentional, ongoing and systemic process. The purpose and intention of this process is to consciously bring about positive change and improvement, which may be continuous across time or an intense period which is characterised by a critical incident followed by a period of slow change (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992), to the professional. These periods of change may be referred to as turning points and may be positive or negative. Turning points may impact and alter a neophyte or seasoned psychologist's subjective appraisal of her or his purpose or meaning of life which in turn impacts on her or his professional identity and wellbeing (Bruner, 1994; Sutin, Costa, Wethington & Eaton, 2010). Professional development can be perceived as a process where the intern or psychologist has deliberate and planned goals making it easier to determine what information needs to be collected and to judge the process (Guskey, 2000).

Professional development can also be viewed systemically where the professional community is perceived as having an impact on the neophyte or experienced practitioner (Guskey, 2000). The professional community ought to be able to solve problems and renovate itself in order to support those in the field (Liddell et al., 2014). Interactions with seasoned counselling psychologists, supervisors or mentors can influence the intern's attitude and disposition towards the profession. Interaction with such individuals is encouraged as a professional identity can be established from these interactions (Guskey, 2000). Likewise, a commitment to the profession is likely to provide a certain amount of support to the community and to make a positive contribution to the counselling psychology profession (Guskey, 2000; Liddell et al., 2014). Furthermore, a systemic approach recognises that not only the professional community impacts the views and constructs of the counselling psychology vocation but also the perceptions of family, friends and society (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). However these perceptions are often based on misconceptions and misinformation and the professional or intern then has the task of having to elaborate and explain certain concepts to their beloved and the broader society (Watson & Fouche, 2007).

As students become novice professionals and transition into the internship environment, they are faced with changes in their professional role. They are suddenly expected to operate in a working environment and are required to adopt new skills, attitudes towards working, and patterns of interacting with their colleagues and peers (Ibarra, 1999; Sweitzer & King, 2009). This introduction to the world of work provides the new professional with the opportunity to

understand her or his role as a counselling psychologist in a more complete way than the student. The novice may explore how well her or his personal interests and strengths fit with the professional role (Sweitzer & King, 2009). It is imperative that congruence exists between the self and working style of the professional in order to strengthen the choice of professional role (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). The internship environment also provides an opportunity for the neophyte to engage with other professionals and may be considered as a socialisation period which involves the internalising of beliefs, values and norms of the counselling psychology profession (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Liddell et al., 2014; Sweitzer & King, 2009). This includes values such as respect for the client as an individual, valuing diversity, focusing of growth and development rather than pathology and remediation, providing a holistic approach to the treatment of clients, acknowledging the clients' ability to solve problems or make decisions, and being aware of societal issues or barriers in relation to the clients ability to self-actualise (Howard, 1992) to name a few. This enables the novice professional to form a professional identity and a commitment to the field. The transition from student to professional may cause changes to the individual's professional identity which may now be based on the fit between the concepts of the ideal therapist versus the real therapist (Ibarra, 1999; Gazzolaa, De Stefanob, Audeta & Theriaulta, 2011). Obstacles, such as the internship environment not meeting the individual's goals or needs, may exist within the environment and may impact on the creation of a professional identity (Gazzolaa et al., 2011). Neophyte professionals completing their internship may struggle to form a professional identity due to the above reasons.

With the integration of the personal self and professional self, the individual creates a professional identity in the context of a psychological community (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014). This professional community socializes the intern psychologist to the standards, expectations and rules of the counselling psychology field so that pride and commitment to the profession may be stimulated and instilled (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Gazzolaa et al., 2011; Gibson et al., 2010; Liddell et al., 2014). From this, the novice psychologist learns which professional attitudes, values, ways of thinking and problem solving strategies are acceptable (Gibson et al., 2010). It is for this reason that the profession of counselling psychology requires a clear sense of its own identity and that it is communicated and accentuated by leaders within the profession. As previously mentioned, the field of counselling psychology in South Africa appears to lack a coherent and cohesive professional identity (Young, 2013). Therefore, the academic and internship training environments have the responsibility of

emphasizing the unique aspects of counselling psychology without focusing on the tensions between counselling psychology and other disciplines, such as clinical psychology, so that the misconception of counselling psychology as being inferior is dispelled (Gazzolaa et al., 2011; Watson & Fouche, 2007). If the novice counselling psychologist is unable to successfully integrate into the professional community and does not develop a professional identity, role confusion may result which may affect the new psychologist's ability to practice effectively and ethically as a professional (Gibson et al., 2010; Liddell et al., 2014).

The creation of a professional identity can be understood as the lifelong process of viewing the self as a professional, feeling competent regarding skills and attitudes and feeling part of a professional community. The achievement of synergy between the professional and personal view of the self can be equated with the therapeutic self (Moss et al., 2014). The therapeutic self is the point where counselling psychology roles, decisions and ethics meet personal values, morals and perceptions (Gibson et al., 2010). An ethical and competent environment provides an intern with an opportunity to develop an understanding of the new professional role and redefine her or his identity within this professional environment (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Ibarra, 1999; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sweitzer & King, 2009). In other words, the intern is able to select a theoretical framework to practice from and changes her or his perspective regarding personal responsibility and professional practice. In addition, Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) referred to the development of a therapeutic self as an indication of movement from the narcissistic assumption that the position is all powerful to the therapeutic position where the client possesses the power within the therapeutic relationship, thus lessening the intern's performance anxiety when working with a client. Therefore, the change in perspective of personal responsibility and the development of the therapeutic self is an indication of the intern assumedly developing a more realistic perspective to replace the previous, and often tacit, idealistic one (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Furthermore, the intern's assessment of her or his professional functioning shifts from external sources, such as clients or supervisors, to a more internalised process (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Sommer, Ward & Scofield, 2010).

2.3.1. Stages of Professional Development

Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) proposed six therapist development phases, commencing prior to and continuing post the internship year, which provide a framework for this

discussion. These phases are: The Lay Helper phase, the Beginning Student phase, the Advanced Student phase, the Novice Professional phase, the Experienced Professional phase, and the Senior Professional phase. Emphasis, however, will be placed on the phases appropriate to the scope of study hence the phases relative to being an intern (i.e. phase 3). It is important to note that each professional may experience these phases differently and, as such, may differ with regards to their development.

Phase 1: The Lay Helper Phase

The Lay Helper is someone who is able to identify a problem quickly, provide emotional support and give advice based on her or his own life experiences and understanding of how best to assist someone in distress (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The individual may become over involved when attempting to assist which possibly impacts on the effectiveness of the helping process (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Over involvement may include the Lay Helper giving strong and specific advice which may not necessarily be in the best interest of the recipient.

Phase 2: The Beginning Student Phase

During this phase, the individual is confronted with and often overwhelmed by theories, research, clients and professional entities such as supervisors and personal therapists, as well as the social and cultural environment which the student is placed in (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Issues of suitability to the psychology profession are often raised and the individual becomes aware of the professional self and personal self (Costa, 2002). The student displays self-doubt regarding whether their personal characteristics are suitable for counselling psychology, whether they have the resources to complete the academic aspect of their studies and whether they are able to navigate the gap between theory and practice. One means of alleviating some of the anxiety is for the student to learn straightforward and established therapeutic techniques which can be applied to just about all clients (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Another approach to decreasing a student's anxiety is for supervisors and teaching staff to provide positive feedback and encouragement.

At this stage, professional competence and effectiveness are measured externally thus direct or subtle criticism, actual or perceived, may be detrimental to the student's professional development (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Criticism from clients, peers or supervisors may

be difficult for the student to manage however an attitude of openness to learning and a willingness to recognise the complexities of professional work facilitates professional development while a closed or defensive attitude fosters professional stagnation (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011).

Phase 3: The Advanced Student Phase

After fulfilling the academic requirements, students move to an internship within a professional setting and it is common for some interns to behave in a perfectionistic and excessively thorough manner (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Typically, interns function in a stressed state and are deliberate in their interactions while displaying little playfulness or humour. They seem to bear a tendency towards excessive or misunderstood responsibility where they may want to help as many people as possible and prove to their superiors and selves that they are able to fulfil the requirements of the internship position (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). An intern may also need to balance meeting the requirements of the academic and internship training with the elements required to practice therapeutically as many interns are still busy with the research component of their academic training program.

At the beginning of the internship, an intern may feel vulnerable and insecure regarding her or his abilities as she or he realise that there is still a lot to learn (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). At this stage, supervisors are crucial and a great source of influence and use modelling to help ease the anxiety and confusion which most interns experience (Costa, 2002). It is likely that non-confirming supervision experiences are more beneficial to interns as they navigate through the crevice between theory and practice and begin to master professional tasks (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The intern's dependency on the supervisor is likely to transform as the intern strives for autonomy and at this stage the supervision experience may bear some conflict (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). At this juncture, the supervisor should provide safe and reliable support coupled with an understanding of the intern's needs (Riggs & Bretz, 2006). Finally, as the intern's confidence escalates, the intern is likely to develop a collegial relationship with the supervisor (Nelson & Jackson, 2003).

Interns generally have an external focus as they model professional practice of supervisors or other psychologists, however there is an accompanying internal focus (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sommer et al., 2010). Both foci are likely to be explored in supervision

sessions as the supervisor has the dual role of modelling and assisting the neophyte with clinical professional matters, as well as assisting the intern to discover her or his own therapeutic self. Supervision enables an intern to explore aspects of professional development, such as therapeutic skills, counsellor or client resistance, issues of transference and countertransference, individuation, autonomy, along with themes included in personal development (Costa, 2002; Riggs & Bretz, 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003) from a secure base thus replicating facets of attachment theory and the parent-child relationship (Riggs & Bretz, 2006). The novice professional is therefore also able to explore and process personal feelings and emotions, which may be triggered by a specific client or event, in a space of mutual trust, agreement and understanding of the objectives for supervision (Costa, 2002; Riggs & Bretz, 2006). This practice of personal reflection should be encouraged to deepen the intern's insight and self-awareness and often an intern may find the supervisor becoming internalised through such conversations. This raises questions regarding the boundaries between a supervisor and supervisee however boundary distinctions often become blurred when an intern is expected to complete various tasks which arouse anxiety, uncertainty, vulnerability and insecurity and the supervisor is equipped to assist the intern through this tumultuous period (Costa, 2002).

Kottler and Swartz (2004) described three phases that novice psychologists undergo during the transitional phase from student to professional; namely, 1) separation; 2) marginality and 3) reintegration. The separation phase is where the individual is separated from the comfort of friends, family and from her or his usual social life. The intern is placed at a site which is generally located at a centre outside of their normal environment and they often spend a lot of time with their new colleagues and senior professionals (Kottler & Swartz, 2004) or working to complete the requirements for their academic or internship training. This phase may induce feelings of uncertainty and anxiety over the change process and being socialised into a professional community (Costa, 2002; Gerber & Hoelson, 2011). In the second phase or the marginal phase, the novice professional is presented with the need to confront personal change and growth, in addition to the existent pressure of fulfilling the internship requirements (Costa, 2002; Kottler & Swartz, 2004). This phase can be chaotic as the intern grapples with her or his sense of identity and each may employ idiosyncratic behaviours to protect them from emotional breakdown during this time (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011). The degree to which the intern is affected may depend on her or his sense of identity upon entering the internship year as well as the relationships which help keep this identity intact

(Kottler & Swartz, 2004). The third phase is when the intern is reintegrated with the new role and social identity (Kottler & Swartz, 2004).

Phase 4: The Novice Professional Phase

The novice professional phase involves the first few years after the student has graduated and she or he is practicing as a counselling psychologist (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Here, the professional attempts to establish her or himself as a counselling psychologist which often includes challenging situations. A conflict may arise as the novice psychologist experiences feelings of freedom and inadequacy (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). In order to curb feelings of inadequacy, the professional may seek out mentors or other professionals. The novice begins recognizing that multiple theories and conceptualisations may be required when assisting clients, especially multicultural clients, and she or he may engage in an exploration of the self and the profession of counselling psychology (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This exploration possibly includes the consideration of professional skills and limitations, values, attitudes and interests and forms part of the personal and professional integration process. This process can be a positive experience should the novice feel competent of her or his professional and personal capacities; or a negative experience if the novice questions her or his suitability to the profession (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Overall, the novice psychologist assumes the responsibility for her or his own professional growth and development plus wellbeing.

Phase 5: The Experienced Professional Phase

At this phase, the professional counselling psychologist has been practicing for years and has vast experience with a variety of clients. The professional is concerned with authenticity and coherence between the professional self and personal self and is more comfortable within the therapeutic relationship (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Therapeutic techniques are not applied in a rigid and “rule based” manner but are rather personalised and applied with a degree of flexibility (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Professional and personal development remains an objective in this phase, although the majority of learning occurs through reflecting on experiences with clients and in the personal life of the professional therefore theoretical knowledge becomes a base for interpretation (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Furthermore, experienced psychologists may seek additional learning

opportunities such as supervising, lecturing or engaging in further studies in related fields like anthropology or religion or alternative forms of artistic expression.

Phase 6: The Senior Professional Phase

The senior professional phase is typically characterised by seasoned counselling psychologists who have practiced for approximately 20 years or more and are approaching retirement (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This phase can be experienced with apprehension or enthusiasm as the professional realises what she or he can accomplish professionally, being aware of the boredom from performing routine therapeutic tasks or stagnating and intellectual apathy (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). These realisations, however, may be overcome and avoided with a continued commitment to professional development and growth by regular interactions with a supervisor and other seasoned psychologists, engaging in personal therapy and continuous learning or by conducting research. Commonly professionals within this phase of professional development have a good sense of self-acceptance and feel competent (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

2.3.2. Themes in Therapist Development

The appeal to psychologists for understanding the various aspects contributing to their professional development is that they are less likely to encounter the negative aspects, such as burnout, impairment and incompetence (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2013). Generally, many novice psychologists focus on the short-term goals of a developmental phase, such as gaining entry into a postgraduate or masters training program and then quickly shifting focus to completing the academic requirements of the course and graduating. However, developing an understanding of the themes involved in the life-span of a counselling psychologist enables the novice or professional to move from a state of conscious incompetence to a conscious competence with minimal anxiety (Cheetam & Chivers, 2005). Fourteen themes have been identified by Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003), who are the seminal authors on the topic of the development of a psychologist.

Theme 1: Professional development involves the integration of the professional and personal self

The integration of the professional and personal self involves coherency between the psychologist's personality and the theoretical orientation she or he adopts (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Furthermore this allows the psychologist to apply therapeutic techniques in a manner consistent with the personal self and the professional role the therapist has decided to embrace when working with a client.

The integration process can be interpreted as the alignment of the psychologist's professional identity with his or her professional or personal experiences (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). It is well known that some experiences may result in dramatic changes to how a psychologist approaches therapeutic work with clients. As psychologists are continually engaging with experience, either professionally or personally, it is likely that the values, beliefs and therapeutic assumptions and orientation may cease being a comfortable fit with the self-concept of the professional (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). There appears to be a movement towards functioning in a manner which is congruent with the psychologist's personal disposition.

Following the integration process is a higher ability to appreciate the therapeutic relationship and recognise that an effective therapeutic relationship is realised through the equal contributions of the psychologist and client (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). In addition, the professional is better able to balance the tasks of connecting with a client and practicing in an ethical manner. This means that the professional is better able to implement and adhere to professional aspects, such as boundaries, which prevent over involvement with a client (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theme 2: Shifting the focus of functioning from internal to external to internal.

The above integration process includes an external or internal focus of functioning, which influences how the professional works therapeutically. There appears to be three distinct steps characterising a method of functioning. Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) termed the first step the conventional mode and defined it by the pre-training period which is equivalent to the Lay Helper stage described above. This is where the lay helper uses her or his own interpretation, from personal experience and dominant social narrative, of what is an effective

way to assist someone and predominately provides emotional support in the form of sympathy (Costa, 2002). As there is a personal basis to helping, it is considered authentic and natural. Thus the focus is said to be internal as the individual is not guided by psychological theory or principles and she or he is not socialised into the professional culture (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

The second or training step is considered to have an external focus and a rigid mode of functioning (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sommer et al., 2010). As the lay helper enters a training program, her or his focus shifts from personal experience to theoretical knowledge and psychological-based methods and techniques of practicing (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). With the external shift, the student becomes less likely to use idiosyncratic ways of functioning and becomes more rigid. Generally, humour can be used as an index to assess the flow between natural and rigid therapeutic functioning as it is typically used when a psychologist feels confident and practices in an intrinsic manner (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

The post training or experienced stage is viewed as the third step when characterising methods of functioning. Here, a professional's focus gradually shifts towards a renewed internal focus once the professional has completed her or his training and accumulated some experience in a professional setting (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sommer et al., 2010). This step is driven by the disillusionment which confronts the novice psychologist when she or he realises that training did not completely equip them with all the skills required to deal with the challenges of practicing professionally (Costa, 2002). As a result, the novice professional is forced to explore her or his strengths and weaknesses through supervision or personal therapy (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This exploration potentially assists the novice psychologist to select a theoretical orientation which is coherent with her or his personal disposition (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As this renewed internal focus is based on personal and professional experience, it can manifest in the form of a more confident and flexible working style.

Theme 3: Continuous reflection is imperative for professional development

Reflection can be viewed as a continuous focused examination of the phenomena encountered as a professional in order to attain a more comprehensive understanding of

oneself and the other (Oelofsen, 2012). This examination is vital in avoiding professional development stagnation or in-congruency as the psychologist reflects upon professional and personal experiences as well as any feelings stirred during these events (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Through reflection, the professional possibly learns from the challenges encountered and alters her or his approach, beliefs or views going forward (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009). This process is imperative for psychologists at all stages of experience or professional development and will be discussed in more detail later.

Theme 4: A passion and willingness for learning actuates professional development

Most psychologists exhibit an eagerness and commitment to develop professionally. This curiosity to learning as well as to taking risks, within ethical boundaries, improves professional functioning and personal wellbeing (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Furthermore, it appears as though this commitment does not decline with experience. More seasoned psychologists seem to source opportunities to assist them in becoming more skilful therapists, revive their enthusiasm for practicing and develop the awareness and insight demanded by therapeutic work (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theme 5: Novice professionals rely on external expertise whereas seasoned professionals rely on internal expertise

As previously mentioned, novice psychologists focus their attention externally as they attempt to attain knowledge from more experienced professionals, such as supervisors, and observe examples of expert behaviour. At this stage of professional development, novice professionals have a preference for more didactic encounters as there is an uncertainty regarding their abilities and the belief that experienced professionals are more knowledgeable and hence more capable at their craft (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Novice professionals learn through imitating supervisors and seasoned psychologists. However, interns should reach a stage when they are balancing external and internal perspectives thus achieving a greater sense of autonomy as well as a more defined professional identity (Sommer et al., 2010).

In comparison, more seasoned psychologists focus their attention internally as they are more resolute regarding their learning with the aim of improving their existing repertoire of

therapeutic skills and reviving their enthusiasm for their craft (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theme 6: Professional development is a continuous process and can be inconsistent

Generally, professional development is viewed as a continual process aimed at increasing a psychologist's competence and skill. There may be periods where the process of professional development appears to be stifled however active reflection often reveals that significant strides have been made. Some professionals may experience professional development as a brief intense change which may have been initiated by a specific critical incident or turning point which is then possibly followed by a period of slower change (Bruner, 1994; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Furthermore, certain professional developmental themes, such as a lack of confidence in one's ability or dejection, may reoccur when new challenges are encountered. An intern may experience this recycling of themes once the internship year is completed and she or he proceeds to practice as an established and professional counselling psychologist.

Theme 7: Professional development is a lifelong process

Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) claimed that their study provided information on professional development such as a movement from dependency to independence or competence and the increased ability to handle difficulties or challenges. This information is required to establish a more holistic understanding of professional development. Furthermore, evidence of activities, such as supervising or lecturing, may provide additional situations which reinforce our understanding of professional development as a lifelong process (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theme 8: Novice professionals experience a higher level of anxiety than experienced professionals

It is known that many novice psychologists experience a higher degree of anxiety compared to experienced psychologists when commencing with their practical or clinical work. This anxiety is depicted as resulting from a combination of high performance standards, being unsuited for their chosen profession as a psychologist, having unrealistic expectations of their abilities or of having to help everyone, needing to prove oneself academically, lacking

professional or theoretical knowledge and competence (Donati & Watts, 2005; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Wilkins, 1997). The anxiety may increase when the novice professional focuses on and evaluates her or his professional performance (Lamb, Baker, Jennings and Yarris, 1982). In addition to this, novice professionals may lack confidence in their abilities and may initially feel challenged (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The anxiety is likely to decline over time and with experience as the professional gains confidence and a sense of competency.

Theme 9: Clients become a great source for learning and influence

Learning forms an integral part of professional development and clients' personal narratives about suffering, pain and coping with negative experiences in their lives inform and supplement existing theoretical knowledge (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This translates into the therapy room, particularly for an intern, as the professional and client can experiment with their individual learning in this space. Feedback and client reactions, especially negative feedback, to a professional's behaviour and therapeutic interventions have an influence on his or her therapeutic practice and may even cause the professional to question and change her or his preferred theoretical orientation (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Novice psychologists are particularly vulnerable to negative feedback and may experience this as threatening which is consistent with the previous comment of many novice psychologists having a higher level of anxiety (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theme 10: Professional development and functioning is influenced by personal experiences

It appears as though personal experiences at different life stages have a profound effect on professional functioning and development. The professional's perception of her or his relationships, any familial impairment or disability, a family crisis or personal trauma possibly carries a long term impact, either positive or negative (Riggs & Bretz, 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This impact results in the professional's choice of theoretical orientation, therapeutic style, choice of professional role, attitude towards hardships, ways of coping in therapeutic practice, ability to empathise with clients, greater insight into what constitutes an effective helper and an increased tolerance and patience (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theme 11: Professional development is boosted by meaningful interpersonal relationships

Professional development is propelled by meaningful contact between clients, seasoned psychologists, professional peers, friends and family members (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As earlier mentioned, interactions with clients appear to be paramount for professional development. This by no means disqualifies the impact of academic training and understanding of theoretical and empirical research. However, this may indicate that many new psychologists have a preference for learning in a relational manner, from supervisors or other professionals (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982).

Theme 12: Novice psychologists view academic training, the internship and seasoned professional with sentiment

As novice psychologists want to learn and model themselves on professionals they view as competent, they tend to be critical of more experienced professionals (for example teachers and supervisors). This leads to the idealization or devaluation of professionals (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Novice psychologists tend to admire experienced professionals who possess behaviours or personal characteristics perceived to be vital in therapeutic work, including intellectual acumen, strong therapeutic skills, and who apply professional values to their personal life (Kottler & Swartz, 2004; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The devaluation of professionals commonly occurs when a professional is perceived as being unfairly critical or when a professional is able to teach psychotherapy yet appears to be unable to practice it (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The practice of idealising and devaluation declines with the appreciation and acknowledgment of the professional's strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the idealisation of professionals lessens with an increased feeling of competence (Kottler & Swartz, 2004).

Theme 13: Experience drives the recognition, acceptance and appreciation of the uncertainty and variability of being human

This theme highlights the change in how an intern understands and accepts the uncertainty and variability that accompanies human beings. The change in perspective is likely to have resulted from experience and awareness that life can be unpredictable, that there is no best way of dealing with a situation and an increased tolerance for human variability. Insight, introspection, reflection and self-acceptance all contribute to this understanding (Ronnestad

& Skovholt, 2003). Furthermore, personal and professional experiences combine to impact this understanding in unique and sundry ways.

Theme 14: The transition of power from the psychologist to the client

The transition of power from the psychologist to the client occurs through experience with a variety of clients who present a myriad of challenges and the development of a therapeutic self. The successes and failures of these experiences enable the psychologist to move into a space of realism where her or his limitations are recognised (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sweitzer & King, 2009). The grandiose concept of a psychologist as being powerful and having a lot of knowledge leads to a period of disillusionment as the intern realises the demanding reality of the internship training and that professionals are not perfect (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009).

2.4. Personal Development

While professional development is concerned with developing skills and techniques, theory and research, personal development centres around other skills facilitating effective therapeutic practice; such as authenticity, intimacy, self-evaluation and interpersonal relationships. Personal development is the process of psychologists acknowledging and working with their own needs, fantasies, and resistances which may inhibit their effectiveness in the therapy room (Wilkins, 1997). In doing this, a psychologist is better equipped to accompany clients on their personal journeys, which can be frightening, painful and challenging. In addition to this, psychologists have an obligation to self-care and ensure that they have enough resources, energy and enthusiasm that are demanded from therapeutic work (Wilkins, 1997). Johns (2012) describes personal development during the internship year as the relationship between the intern counselling psychologist and the person engaging in the internship training program. As mentioned, the self is the psychologist's primary tool thus it is crucial that psychologists develop and maintain the self.

An element of personal development involves the acknowledgement that it is impossible to be a perfect psychologist and to know everything. Winnicott (1971) refers to a "good enough mother" as being one who "makes active adaptation to the infant's needs, an active adaptation that gradually lessens, according to the infant's growing ability to account for

failure of adaptation and to tolerate results of frustration” (p. 7). A psychologist can be compared to a “good enough mother” where the idiosyncrasies and imperfections of the individual add more value than being the ideal therapist (Wilkins, 1997). With the acceptance of her or his own idiosyncrasies, a psychologist can stop worrying about trying to be the perfect psychologist and focus on being completely present with the client. As psychologists are often viewed as parents, they model a way of being for their clients and by accepting one’s idiosyncrasies the client is able to accept and embrace her or his own individuality. Another benefit of working with an imperfect psychologist is the experience of an authentic encounter within the therapeutic relationship (Richards, Campenni & Muse-Burke, 2010; Wilkins, 1997).

An increased emphasis is being placed on personal development in postgraduate and internship training. Neophytes are encouraged to explore their own unique values, attitudes, manner of interacting with others, acknowledge strengths and vulnerabilities, identify needs or intolerances, generate a capacity for intimacy, recognize fears, responses and perceptions of different cultures, class and belief system (Donati & Watts, 2005; Johns, 2012; Riggs & Bretz, 2006). At the beginning of the internship training program it is likely that interns are incognisant of the impact of the self on the therapeutic relationship or functioning as a psychologist however this becomes more apparent with the progression of the internship and probably as the intern begins engaging in reflective activities. At this point in development, the intern may experience a period of uncertainty in her or his professional capability (Donati & Watts, 2005; Gerber & Hoelson, 2011). Through experience and continuous personal development, the novice psychologist may begin to synthesise the personal and professional self which is noticeable by a more flexible, creative and personalised approach to therapeutic practice (Donati & Watts, 2005; Wilkins, 1997). However, the distinction between the two selves blurs again as the novice becomes more experienced. The seasoned psychologist has an understanding of the inter-dependency between the two selves and how to effectively use this in a therapeutic manner (Donati & Watts, 2005). This illustrates the changing nature of the mutual relationship between the personal and professional self.

The manner in which a psychologist engages in personal development is dependent on her or his ideology, theoretical orientation and experience as a person and professional (Wilkins, 1997). Each individual will experience diverse and numerous life experiences from which they presumably learn from and reassess their current means of operating in the world and

understanding of their existence. Reflexive exercises, such as personal therapy, play an effective and often necessary role in a psychologist's journey of personal growth and development. Irving and Williams (1999) explained that personal development is concerned with the development of particular skills and qualities of an individual with a focus on enhancing professional effectiveness. Personal development, as with professional development, is a planned, specifiable and structured activity which can result in positive or negative outcomes from which the professional can evaluate and learn from (Donati & Watts, 2005; Irving & Williams, 1999; Johns, 2012). On the other hand, personal growth refers to a more generic process concerning the whole individual (Irving & Williams, 1999). It is an unstructured, non-specifiable and retrospective process concerned with becoming a certain kind of person rather than developing a skill set (Donati & Watts, 2005; Irving & Williams, 1999; Johns, 2012). The primary focus of personal growth is to enhance the wellbeing of the practitioner; which forms one aspect of personal development (Irving & Williams, 1999). Therefore, growth is something that comes about as a result of personal development.

2.4.1. Personal Development and Self-Care

All South African registered psychologists need to adhere to the ethical code of practice which highlights the core ethical principles of beneficence and non-maleficence (Department of Health, 2006). Academic and internship training institutions have begun promoting self-care and personal wellbeing as a crucial component to the training programs in an attempt to orientate novice psychologists to ethical therapeutic practice. Interns are particularly vulnerable to burnout and 'compassion fatigue' (Roop & Vitelli, 2003) as a result of the unique stress and anxiety experienced during the internship period (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This period requires an intern to meet multiple professional demands, many interns experience performance anxiety, may have difficulties with personal relationships and are likely to experience confusion and stress regarding their new role and the integration of the personal self and professional self to name a few; all the while providing therapeutic services to clients. As a consequence of this vulnerability, an intern may harm the client or become impaired which undermines her or his therapeutic efficacy. Therefore, it is important that interns engage in self-care to enhance their wellbeing.

Myers et al. (2012) defines self-care in terms of the activities, identified as physical, emotional, social support, psychological and spiritual, believed to constitute self-care.

Physical activity, such as exercise, is associated with physical and emotional wellbeing. Regular physical exercise has been shown to decrease anxiety and depression in addition to assisting with weight management and a decreased risk of illnesses like cardiac disease or diabetes (Myers et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2010).

Stressful events may impact an individual physically and psychologically to the extent that the individual loses her or his sense of identity. The interpretation of such events or turning points can result in depression and lack of self-worth to an increase in self-confidence (Sutin et al., 2010). Cognitive reappraisal is a strategy a neophyte may employ as a means of dealing with the uncertainty of the profession, evaluating their behaviour and emotional response to a specific turning point (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011; Richards et al., 2010; Sutin et al., 2010). Through cognitive reappraisal, the intern can evaluate the experience and possibly discover something positive out of a negative experience. This strategy can assist an intern to maintain a continuity of the self after having experienced a negative event and consequently results in a greater self-esteem and sense of wellbeing (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011).

During the internship period, a novice psychologist is very likely to benefit from personal and professional support systems. Professional support can be received from supervisors, other interns or peers and professional colleagues. Personal support is obtained from relationships with a spouse or partner, family members and friends. Support from professional and personal relationships aid in reducing the possibility of burnout which interns are particularly susceptible to (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011; Myers et al., 2012; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Through conversations with other interns and peers as well as during supervision, an intern is probably able to recognise and understand difficulties experienced with the internship training program (Richards et al., 2010). It is also important that interns form supportive relationships with professionals in order for their confidence as practitioners to grow and to validate their practice (Myers et al., 2012). According to Richards et al. (2010) it is important that personal support systems are not utilised as a means of dealing with professional concerns or stresses because it offers a different type of support. Personal relationships satiate the need to belong to a social group outside of the working environment as there is more to the individual than just being a psychologist (Richards et al., 2010). Other relationships offer comfort, companionship and provide a diversion to work, the internship and any other concerns (Sweitzer & King, 2009). It is therefore important that an intern establishes a

balance between their personal and professional lives to reduce symptoms of burnout or mental exhaustion and enhance her or his psychological wellbeing.

Psychological self-care refers to an individual engaging in personal therapy. Personal therapy is a safe space where an individual can explore personal conflicts or distress and impairments. A psychologist engaging in personal therapy most likely gains the understanding of the therapeutic process from the client's perspective (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Wilkins, 1997). In addition to this, personal therapy may also be a learning and socialisation experience where good and poor therapeutic functioning is modelled. A novice professional may internalise good therapeutic functioning which informs her or his practice (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Wilkins, 1997). Grimmer and Tribe (2001) also state that personal therapy enables the novice psychologist to better distinguish between her or his own issues and those of the clients. The novice psychologist gains a better understanding of when an issue is more relevant to supervision and when it is more appropriate to explore an issue in personal therapy. Furthermore, personal therapy enables a novice psychologist to develop an awareness of counter-transference and to manage boundaries therapeutically and effectively (Richards et al., 2010; Wilkins, 1997). By exploring such personal material in personal therapy and developing a greater understanding of the self and the therapeutic process, a novice psychologist's confidence to utilise the self in the therapeutic relationship increases (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Richards et al., 2010; Wilkins, 1997).

The spiritual component of self-care may include religious or spiritual behaviours such as meditation and can be described as an individual finding a sense of purpose and meaning in life and work as well as creating connections to other aspects of life with this understanding (Richards et al., 2010). Spirituality had been found to have a positive influence on the wellbeing and quality of life of an individual.

2.4.2. Personal Development and Self-Awareness

Self-awareness or self-understanding is probably a goal of professional and personal development. It is an individual's awareness or knowledge of her or his thoughts, emotions or behaviours and is likely a consequence of self-care activities (Richards et al., 2010). This leads to the intern's ability to identify her or his strengths and vulnerabilities hence utilising them effectively as well as anticipating and addressing challenges successfully. As an

individual is constantly growing and changing, self-awareness is a state that can never be achieved but, like personal development, it is a life-long process. Therefore, it can be described as a complex state which is socially embedded and constructed and should be approached with flexibility and open-mindedness (Donati & Watts, 2005).

There appears to be inter-related components linked to self-awareness which effect an intern's therapeutic practice. Donati and Watts (2005) described these components as 1) inner self-awareness which is an individual's awareness of her or his own thoughts, emotions, intuitions or fantasies; 2) self-knowledge which concerns the more stable aspects of an individual, such as personality, values, attitudes and interests; and 3) outer self-awareness refers to an individual's awareness of her or his behaviour and how this is perceived by others.

There have been studies which have connected mindfulness to self-awareness and wellbeing (Myers et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2010; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Mindfulness is a practice found in meditative traditions, such as Buddhism, and has recently been introduced to western culture and mental health practice (Myers et al., 2012; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Mindfulness can be conceptualised as a non-judgmental practice where an individual becomes fully aware in the present moment without allowing her or his mind to drift to other matters or concerns (Myers et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2010; Sweitzer & King, 2009). As an individual is focused on the present moment, she or he becomes more aware of her or his emotions, cognitions and self. An intern practising mindfulness is likely to enjoy the internship period and be as productive as possible as she or he attentively shifts from one task to the next with efficacy. This self-care practice has been shown to decrease stress and anxiety in interns (Myers et al., 2012) and increase an individual's capacity to cope with challenging or stressful situations, as well as improve an individual's quality of life and wellbeing (Richards et al., 2010; Sweitzer & King, 2009).

2.4.3. Multicultural Training

Multicultural training is important within a South African context which has a diverse population consisting of many different races, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, gender groups, disabilities and social classes. It is often a misperception that empathy and acceptance are all that is required for effective multicultural counselling however this leaves the

possibility for the imposition of psychologists' own values and beliefs onto clients as well as imposing western traditions onto cultures which do not subscribe to or cannot make sense of such traditions (Pretorius, 2012; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004; Wilkins, 1997). It is imperative for novice psychologists to explore and understand their own cultural identity, which includes their own cultural beliefs and values, as well as their world view and the acknowledgement of cultural biases (Peters et al., 2011; Sweitzer & King, 2009). In addition to this, it is important for psychologists to understand the relationship and history between different racial groups as well as how society operates in relation to race, various types of discrimination, stereotypes and differing power and privilege relationships (Jennings, Goh, Skovholt, Hanson & Banerjee-Stevens, 2003; Sweitzer & King, 2009; Wilkins, 1997). Multicultural issues cannot be addressed solely through empathy and acceptance but it concerns a difference in values and experiences as well as the understanding thereof. Peters et al. (2011) propose that the internship training institution can either reinforce or contradict a commitment by the novice to effective multicultural therapy. Therefore the academic and internship training institutions have the responsibility to train and develop culturally sensitive practitioners.

According to Jennings et al. (2003) there are at least three important variables influencing cultural competence among psychologists. These are: 1) ethnic match, where the ethnicity of the client and psychologist are similar; 2) service match, which refers to the psychologist using ethnic-specific principles and techniques when assisting clients of a different cultural; and 3) cognitive match, which refers to the psychologist and client thinking in a similar manner. With these variables in mind, it is concerning that many South African psychologists experience language difficulties when communicating with their clients (Pillay & Johnston, 2011). This need is being addressed by academic institutions attempting to practice post-graduate student selections which reflect the racial and language demographics of the country (Pillay & Johnston, 2011; Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). Further to this, Pillay and Johnston (2011) stated that the development of culturally sensitive environments through multicultural training must be addressed through supervision and didactic processes as well as systemically to influence policies and practices. Under- and postgraduate programs should be introducing new knowledge and psychological interventions into their programs; which are more relevant to the society being served. South Africans living in rural areas or townships do not identify with the current Euro-centric or Westernised practice of psychology which is targeted at the white, middle classes (Ratele & Mohamed, 2004). When considering psychological theory and interventions, psychologists should acknowledge and address any biases towards the

population being served. Reflexivity should be a crucial element in training programs and practising psychologists as critical reflection and debate may lead to change and the breakdown of current structures which are restrictive and maintain the privileged position of some knowledge.

Finally, professional and personal development explores how a psychologist approaches and engages with challenges encountered. Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) discussed the process of pre-mature closure which is an indication of stagnation and “pseudo-development”. Pre-mature closure is defined as a defensive process and appears when a psychologist struggles with mastering the challenges of work (Ronnestad and Skovholt, 2003; Wilkins, 1997). The psychologist is likely to appear as though she or he is functioning competently however she or he possibly experiences severe anxiety and feelings of incompetence which may result in reduced efficacy and an increased probability of impaired functioning and burnout (Wilkins, 1997). Examples of premature closure are when a psychologist decides to apply one therapeutic theory or method to a range of clients; or when a psychologist opts to work with a specific client group only; or when a psychologist chooses to specialise in a particular area, such as research, and only operates within that area (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). However, these choices may be considered as part of a psychologist’s professional or personal development if the professional is aware of the complexities which accompany the decision as well as her or his own limitations within this space (Jennings et al., 2003; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Therefore, professional and personal development is accompanied by an awareness and openness to the complex processes and, often, ambiguity underlying phenomena which can be explored through continuous reflection.

2.5. Reflection and Reflexivity

Besides the academic requirements, theory and internship process, an intern’s professional and personal development also encompasses reflection. Oelofsen (2012) describes reflective practice as being a thoughtful process aimed at reviewing the events or actions which occurred within a therapeutic setting either in real time or retrospectively. It is a means of sifting through the doubt and messiness of a situation to come to a more coherent and clear view of a situation (Oelofsen, 2012; Pollard, 2008). It is important for intern counselling psychologists to reflect on their work with clients as this is where a large part of learning occurs (Ronnestad & Stovholt, 2003). Reflection is a means of connecting and integrating the

theory of psychology to the practice of psychology thus aiding interns in crossing the divide (Wilkins, 1997). Psychologists develop insight into the relevance of their learning and gain confidence in their therapeutic skill set and abilities through therapeutic experience (Ghaye, 2007). Reflecting on these experiences can occur during supervision sessions or in a more personal setting and involves a critical debate regarding an event and the professional's response to it. Hence, it is easy to discern why reflective and reflexive practice have an important part to play in the creation of the intern counselling psychologist's professional development and identity (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Reflective practice is not only for intern psychologists but is a continuous essential practice for all professional psychologists to engage in at all phases of their professional development.

It may be worthwhile, at this point, to discriminate between the concepts of reflection and reflexivity. Reflection (reflection-in-action) is a spontaneous and immediate reaction to an event where a professional uses her or his existing knowledge and skills to adapt to the situation and manage it effectively (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009; Oelofsen, 2012). This process involves introspection as the individual focuses on thoughts, bodily sensations or emotions in the moment. This is compared to reflexivity (reflection-on-action) where the professional retrospectively thinks about an event and applies theory in order to make sense of the incident or turning point and to learn from it (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009; Oelofsen, 2012). Engaging in critical reflection enables a professional to judge the impact of her or his own background, assumptions, biases, ideological and socio-political contexts as well as self-narratives based on personal experiences (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009; Finlay, 2008). In practice, reflective and reflexive practice is often a dual process as if a professional were to solely engage in reflective practice, it would likely be routine, insipid and serve as an instrument which the professional uses for egocentric purposes and as a means for self-justification (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009; Finlay, 2008). Alternatively, the sole use of reflexive practice possibly leads to theorizing rather than experiencing the therapy process which can be perceived by the client as the professional being absent and distant (Dallos & Stedmon, 2009; Finlay, 2008). Thus the therapeutic objectives of facilitating change and of the client having an authentic and meaningful experience would not be met.

Although there are various models of reflection, such as Gibb's reflective cycle and Kolb's experiential learning cycle, all models include three fundamental processes (Finlay, 2008; Wilkins, 1997). Retrospection is the first process and this is where a professional thinks about

a situation after it has happened. A professional should consider all aspects of a situation, such as feelings, facts about the event and responses to behaviour, with an open mind. Secondly, the process of self-evaluation involves the critical analysis of the actions and feelings which were stirred up in a situation. Finally, the process of reorientation occurs where the results of the self-evaluation process are used to affect how future situations are likely to be approached.

2.5.1. Benefits and Concerns of Reflective and Reflexive Practice

A benefit of reflective and reflexive practice includes insight into one's therapeutic style thus developing a greater self-confidence in therapeutic abilities and skills (Ferraro, 2000; Gerber & Hoelson, 2011). In addition to this, a professional who frequently engages in reflective and reflexive practice is likely to have a good understanding of her or himself in relation to the profession (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Wilkins, 1997). Self-awareness and self-insight, through reflective and reflexive practice, is particularly important for the professional development of intern psychologists as an intern not only becomes aware of her or his own feelings in the therapy but also becomes cognisant of how her or his responses affect the professional self and the client (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011; Wilkins, 1997). Furthermore, interns gain insight into their strengths and limitations through critical reflexive debates with peers, supervisors and other professionals which may motivate them to develop new therapeutic skills.

There are a few concerns, however, for professionals who are practising mechanical and unthoughtful reflection and reflexion. When supervising interns, supervisors should be aware of the emotions which may be stirred-up during reflexive discussions (Finlay, 2008). Reflecting in the moment is likely to involve feelings and, at times, those feelings can be strong and deeply personal. The practice of reflexion has the potential to evoke feelings which were experienced in the moment or arise as a result of evaluating the event. These feelings may be harmful and supervisors ought to take care to manage interns effectively. Additionally, an intern who strives for improvement and who perceives supervision as being a critical space, may develop feelings of self-disapproval as a result of some reflections or reflexions (Finlay, 2008). It is the supervisor's task to navigate this problem with sensitivity and to discriminate between and address personal and work related matters (Finlay, 2008). A further concern is the uncritical application of reflective and reflexive practices which may

enforce and maintain current prejudices and dominant cultural discourses, such as socio-economic status, gender issues and power relationships, rather than challenge such practices and promote empowerment (Ferraro, 2000; Finlay, 2008). Finlay (2008) highlights another concern relative to the practice of reflection and reflexion within a training environment. Supervisors should consider whether interns are developmentally ready to engage in critical reflection or reflexion. Commonly, neophytes follow therapeutic models in a step-by-step fashion as they lack the confidence and experience to trust their own instincts. This can apply to reflective and reflexive practice as well which results in ineffective practice. A supervisor ought to assist novice psychologists to create meaning out of their analysis as well as help them understand that reflective and reflexive practice will improve with experience and continuous practice.

Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) proposed that if a psychologist does not engage in frequent reflective and reflexive practice, stagnation may occur. Therefore, continuous reflection is considered as good practice for professional development and the creation of a professional identity as well as being crucial in a psychologist's own personal developmental journey. Furthermore, the self-awareness attained through the process of reflection and reflexion leads to a greater sense of wellbeing further advocating why effective reflective and reflexive training is vital at academic and internship training institutions.

2.6. The Internship Environment

An internship programme, in South Africa, is required to be a minimum period of 12 months of full-time practical training for psychologists with adequate supervision, sufficient professional staff to provide training and a multi-professional team context (HPCSA, 2010). According to the HPCSA, the main purpose of the internship is to provide interns with the opportunity to “integrate, apply and refine student psychologists’ attitudes, competencies and skills that are necessary for independent functioning as a psychologist in a variety of settings” (HPCSA, 2011, p. 2). It can be described as a period where interns develop the relationship between theory and practice or experience. As the neophyte progresses through the internship, she or he is likely to realise that theory is more abstract and relatively objective compared to human experiences which can be described as subjective (Wilkins, 1993). Besides learning new skills, the intern may gain the supplementary experience of working as a professional member of a team, being involved in administrative duties and developing

programs for other professionals or the public (Wilkins, 1997). In addition to this, interns should be encouraged to be civic individuals and engage in community orientated tasks or projects. As this is a period of limited professional awareness, skills, and a developing professional identity, the internship environment should be experienced as a nurturing environment yet sufficiently stimulating and challenging thus facilitating independence and competence within the profession (Cole, Kolko & Craddick, 1981; Costa, 2002; Mahoney, 1998). The internship environment however should not be too stressful or too pressurizing as this may impede the individual's performance and ability to learn from the training experiences which are on offer. Therefore, the internship year provides intensive training while assisting with the transition from student to intern to professional, independent counselling psychologist.

2.6.1. Stages of Intern Development

The internship training environment is often perceived as new, frightening, and unpredictable. The manner in which an individual adjusts to the transition from student to professional can be compared to the developmental milestones from childhood to adulthood (Kasow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982). Lamb et al. (1982) proposed a development model for understanding the stages of an internship appropriate to a counselling centre setting. It is recognised that the length and content of each stage may vary between interns due to variables such as the internship training site setting, the number of interns present as well as the ideology and values of the internship site. Furthermore, these five stages are characteristic of interns who are able to navigate their way through the internship training and successfully complete it. The five stages of a professional internship are 1) pre-entry preparation; 2) early intern syndrome; 3) intern identity; 4) emerging professional and 5) resolution.

1) Pre-entry Preparation

This stage is where the individual prepares for the internship year by sending out applications and, hopefully, being invited to an interview. The selection process is likely to leave the person with feelings of, excitement, anxiety and ambiguity regarding the upcoming year (Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Simultaneously, internship training sites need to contest with losing their first choice of applicants, selecting a balanced group of interns and being placed on hold while interns consider other options (Lamb et al., 1982). Once the intern has accepted an internship position, there is a feeling of certainty with an accompanying

sense of apprehension regarding the future (Lamb et al., 1982). Many individuals relocate for their internship training which can be anxiety provoking as these individuals are often leaving their support structures, for example family, friends, academic training facility and possibly a personal therapist (Kaslow & Rice, 1985). The adjustment to the new environment may be difficult for some. This adds to the existing concerns regarding the internship environment and the new role the intern will need to fulfil (Sweitzer & King, 2009). In addition to these concerns, the new intern is likely to be anxious about her or his competence and whether she or he can actually meet the demands and expectations of the new role (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Here, the intern takes her or his first steps toward the transition from student to professional.

2) *Early Intern Syndrome*

As the orientation of the internship training site begins, there are three visible overlapping phases, namely sizing up, establishing a place in the site and undergoing the initial evaluation (Lamb et al., 1982). The sizing up period is where the interns identify and start incorporating the norms of the internship training site and start postulating about the other interns. Additionally, interns are learning a new bureaucratic system and, for many, this will be their first job (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985). This stage also marks the beginning of the novice psychologist's search for a professional identity (Lamb et al., 1982).

Moreover, this stage finds the neophyte attempting to establish personal and professional relationships with supervisors, other professional staff members, and other interns as a means to satiate personal needs (Lamb et al., 1982). These relationships may prove a valuable source of support for the intern as the internship year progresses. The novice professional intern may depend on these relationships to guide and assist with feelings of being overwhelmed, uncertainty and confusion by the numerous, and often unfamiliar, expectations and demands of the internship environment (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Cole et al., 1981). The quality of mentorship and supervision has long term effects on the intern's professional development and it appears to assist with clarifying her or his professional role within the internship environment as well as in moulding his self-concept as a professional counselling psychologist (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; HPCSA, 2010).

Post orientation, the intern commences assigned tasks and starts delivering services to clients. However, the intern is concurrently focused on an important aspect of the internship year; the evaluation process (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982). The evaluation process is an additional reminder to the intern that she or he is transitioning towards professional and feelings of performance anxiety may be reawakened (Lamb et al., 1982). A novice psychologist may consider the evaluation of her or his professional abilities as an evaluation of the complete self which is likely to cause anxiety, insecurity and vulnerability (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). Attempts by the intern to integrate the professional and personal self, under these conditions, is difficult as most of the intern's emotional energy is spent on trying to mask an image of incompetence, ignorance or helplessness from supervisors and peer interns (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). This mask performs the further function of preventing the intern from being authentic in her or his relationships with professionals, interns and clients.

3) *Intern Identity*

The intern seemingly immerses her or himself in the intern role and fulfils the expected duties once she or he has successfully concluded the previous two stages. According to Lamb et al. (1982) this stage occurs over a period of time and there are three processes that seem to occur while the intern is forming her or his identity as an intern; these are a realization of strengths and limitations, a period of self-doubt and self-confrontation, and an increased role differentiation.

Realisation of strengths and limitations

There are numerous events within the internship experience to prompt interns to acknowledge, appreciate and identify their strengths and weaknesses (Lamb et al., 1982). The participation in such tasks reflects the intern's increasing comfortableness in taking professional risks and sense of belonging to a professional team.

Self-doubt and self-confrontation

There seems to be a period of introspection, self-doubt and self-confrontation after the intern receives feedback of their performance, as a professional, from supervisors or other professionals (Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Following such feedback, there is a possibility that the intern may become pre-occupied with her or his limitations. It is possible that included in this feedback are comments regarding aspects of her or his personality and

ways of interacting (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982). The intern will most likely experience self-doubts and insecurities about whether she or he is worthy of being in this position (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Over a period of time, the intern is likely to overcome such feelings and develop a more cohesive and secure identity (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). This change is probably more successful when it occurs within a supportive environment. The supervision space has been likened to Winnicott's concept of the "holding environment" which is necessary for healthy development (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Winnicott, 1971).

Role differentiation

As the neophyte proceeds through the internship year, she or he begins to identify with professionals she or he wants to learn from and be mentored by (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982). These professionals have the ability to interrupt the intern's developing self-confidence and create anxiety and conflict if the intern experiences them as critical, intolerant or imposing of their values, beliefs or therapeutic methodologies (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). On the other hand, if the neophyte experiences them as nurturing, supportive and "good enough", these professionals may facilitate the growth in self-confidence and establishment of a professional identity as a counselling psychologist (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985).

Furthermore, the group of interns are no longer referred to as a collective but their different qualities are recognised and the competitive feelings often experienced at the beginning of the internship year diminishes as each intern is acknowledged for her or his uniqueness (Lamb et al., 1982). This may lead to a more cohesive intern group however personal friendships may develop between particular interns and professionals as well as among interns themselves.

An additional consideration of this stage is that although the intern may feel more comfortable in her or his identity, the mid-year evaluation and progress report cause great anxiety. Interns hope that the feedback by their supervisors to their collaborating academic institution is positive however this also emphasises the next development stage (Lamb et al., 1982). Interns are likely to do well to start reflecting on their experience of the internship training and the developing professional.

4) The emerging professional

At this stage, the intern begins to function more independently when working with clients and delivering services. This newly established independence provides the novice psychologist with more confidence to apply certain therapeutic techniques or interventions without first confirming with a supervisor (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Supervisors should be encouraging interns to trust their instincts when attempting to discern the needs of their client at a particular moment in the therapy room. Initially, the intern was learning new theories and techniques from their supervisors but with training and more experience, the intern may find her or himself becoming more confident to challenge the supervisor's opinions on theory and therapeutic treatment (Lamb et al., 1982). This type of engagement should be welcomed and encouraged as this helps to strengthen the intern's emerging professional identity (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Riggs & Bretz, 2006). Additionally, the confidence to participate in supervision sessions reinforces the intern's transition to a professional as literature had proposed a correlation between the supervisory alliance and the intern's development (Riggs & Bretz, 2006).

Additionally, as the intern begins looking for employment opportunities for the next year, she or he becomes aware that she or he is not working as hard in the internship or may be feeling disappointed with the internship experience. It is likely that interns' anticipations at the beginning of the internship year far exceed the reality of the experience (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Sweitzer & King, 2009). The majority of interns, however, appear to enjoy their internship year due to the opportunities to learn and experiment with novel ways of approaching psychotherapy plus the opportunity to work with an array of clients (Kaslow & Rice, 1985).

5) Resolution

The process of resolving or terminating the internship year can be difficult. The intern may be in denial and resist termination by attempting to hold onto long-term clients, avoiding discussing termination with clients or initiating conversations about participating in activities before completing the internship (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009). The intern terminating her or his relationship with clients is a way to achieve

separation from the internship. Occasionally, as with some clients, interns may struggle with the termination process.

Saying goodbye to interns and professionals, who have shared the intense and emotional roller-coaster ride of the internship year, is an integral part of separating and becoming an independent professional counselling psychologist (Lamb et al., 1982). As a result, there should be an opportunity for interns to express their feelings and find satisfying means of saying goodbye to avoid being left with a feeling of an unfinished internship experience (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Sweitzer & King, 2009).

The intern is encouraged to reflect on her or his career, theoretical orientation, strengths and limitations as well as how the internship experience has shaped the novice professional or how it contributed to professional growth and development (Lamb et al., 1982).

2.6.2. Possible Impediments in the Internship Environment

Each of the afore mentioned stages have their own obstacles which need to be overcome, to some extent, in order to progress to the next stage and successfully complete the internship year. An awareness of these impediments may not necessarily diminish the stress however it can enhance the growth and learning along the intern's journey. It is possible that a certain amount of stress may be beneficial to the intern's motivation and productivity however each individual has a different stress threshold and, if crossed, it may be detrimental to the intern's internship experience. This section highlights some of the common impediments novice psychologists may experience during this period of ambiguity.

Novice psychologists often feel overwhelmed at the beginning of the internship year. Even though they appear confident, they are likely lacking confidence in their professional abilities which possibly impacts on the quality of their work with clients (Kaslow & Rice, 1985). The intern may struggle to empathise with clients as she or he becomes focused on whether there are any visible signs indicating just how anxious she or he is (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). In addition to this anxiety, there is also fear relating to the uncertainty of how to respond to a client's concerns (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003).

As indicated previously, the evaluation processes can be stressful to an intern. This is partly due to the lack of clarity and the difficulty the profession has in defining what is an acceptable level for skills in practice (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). However, the evaluation of novice professionals is necessary as counselling psychologists often face complicated and unspecified problems when interacting with clients and it remains the professional's responsibility to ensure that no harm comes to the client as a result of the therapeutic process. Accordingly, interns need to meet uncertain standards of practice while supervisors scrutinise their professional work and often their personal style of interacting with a client (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003).

A third struggle likely to be experienced by a novice psychologist is the difficulty to express or regulate emotions. In order to practice effectively, psychologists have to be able to experience, understand, regulate and express emotions in a way that facilitates the therapeutic process (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). A psychologist should have the capacity to shift between being empathic, actively involved and separating from the client which can be challenging and requires a certain level of skill. It means that the intern ought to find the boundary between over-involvement and under-involvement which, if the balance is not found, can lead to strain and burnout (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). The development of flexible and adaptive boundaries is a process which takes time and requires the psychologist to pay attention to her or his self-care needs (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). During the internship period, it is important that the intern learns to not just focus on meeting the demands and expectations of the internship training and the counselling psychology or psychology profession but to engage in a holistic approach to healthy development (Bruss & Kopala, 1993).

The development of a professional identity may be difficult for some novice psychologists who feel insecure in their new role as a counselling psychologist (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). This places the neophyte at a vulnerable position and supervisors need to be aware that negative feedback can be detrimental to the intern's professional development. For this reason, supervisors should establish a relationship of mutual respect with the intern to promote the intern's self-confidence and self-trust (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Riggs & Bretz, 2006). In addition to this, supervisors should give thoughtful and constructive feedback to the intern, which includes a certain amount of recognition and praise of the intern's abilities (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003).

Skovholt and Ronnestad (2003) indicated that novice psychologist experience difficulty when realising that theory is perhaps more of a guideline than a solution to be applied to a particular problem. At this point, interns may be disappointed with their academic training as they feel unprepared and that their academic training was insufficient in teaching the skills and techniques required for professional practice (Pillay & Johnston, 2011; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). Alternatively, some interns may be questioning their personal characteristics and wondering if they are suitable for counselling psychology (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985). The intern may experience increased levels of stress due to the uncertainty of how to react in every situation however, practice allows for an increase in self-confidence along with the realisation of this unrealistic expectation (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). Therefore, an intern is likely to seek out an internship training site which offers a range of therapeutic experiences for the intern to train and learn (Cole et al., 1981; Pillay & Johnston, 2011).

The novice psychologist often feels as though she or he must make an impact in each session with a client however, realistically, this is impossible and only adds to the existing stress experienced by the intern. As described earlier, the intern is vulnerable and lacks professional self-confidence thus she or he is likely to associate the client's improvement with professional self-worth. This means that the intern's expectation of a good psychologist is one who the client appreciates and likes as well as one who facilitates improvement (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). In time, these expectations change and become more realistic. The intern realises that the change process is slow and complex with the psychologist only having a part to play (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). The intern disbands the notion of being powerful and responsible for the client's improvement and accepts that the client has the power and accounts for much of the change occurring in therapy (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). This realisation and acceptance alleviates the stress suffered by the intern.

To assist with the confusion and uncertainty of the internship environment and professional work, the novice psychologist is likely to seek a mentor or supervisor to learn various techniques and skills from. Mentors also provide the intern with support and aid their professional development (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Pillay & Johnston, 2011; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). A mentor or supervisor who fails to provide a supportive and tolerant environment while providing sufficient instruction for the intern to

feel confident can leave the intern with feelings of distress and fear (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Cole et al., 1981; Riggs & Bretz, 2006; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). These negative feelings impact on the intern's professional and personal development.

2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter explored various aspects of professional and personal development relative to counselling psychologists and psychologists in general. The stages and themes of professional development were outlined followed by a discussion regarding personal development, self-care and self-awareness. Reflective and reflexive practice were highlighted along with the benefits and concerns of such practice. The chapter concluded with a brief description of the internship environment, stages of intern development and probable obstacles present in the internship year. The next chapter provides the research design and methodology of this research study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The research design and methods section has been given context through the literature review outlined in the previous chapter. It is widely agreed that the theoretical underpinnings of a study need to be explored prior to deciding the research design and theoretical approach. A qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach was utilised in this study. Furthermore, the Critical Incident Technique provides a theoretical framework to the design.

This chapter aims to outline the processes undertaken in order to explain the methodological decisions made and the reasons for these decisions. In addition to the research approach and design, the chapter also outlines the method of data collection and data analysis as well as the generalizability and trustworthiness of the study. Furthermore, the ethical considerations are discussed in the sub-sections of this chapter.

3.2. Research Aims

The study aims to explore the experiences of three counselling psychology interns and the incidents which contributed to the transition from student to professional. It looks to identify, through the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan, 1954), general experiences which had an influence on the interns' professional development and professional identity.

Further, it seeks to investigate whether the professional training obtained at the internship site is sufficient in providing an environment conducive to the development of professionalism, which includes the underlying values and related skills. However, the study does not aim to use the interns' experiences as a means to evaluate the internship program. This may be of interest to the directors of internship sites and may be useful when considering the tasks which interns are required to fulfil in the internship program.

3.3. Research Questions

The research questions can be formulated as follows:

1. How do counselling psychology interns describe their development of a professional identity?
2. How are specific critical incidents identified and described by counselling psychology interns in relation to their emerging professional identity?
3. What is the impact of such critical incidents on the development of their professional identity?
4. Which factors at internship training sites are conducive to the nurturing of an emerging professional identity?
5. How do counselling psychology interns describe personal development in relation to their professional development and how does this relate to critical incidents that are identified and described as formative in their development as professional psychologists?

3.4. Research Framework

3.4.1. Qualitative Research

As mentioned earlier, a qualitative approach was followed in this study. However, it is important to recognise that there is no single or accepted method for conducting qualitative research as there are a wide range of methods and approaches under the umbrella of qualitative research. For this reason, an attempt to define qualitative research may be necessary. There seems to be a consensus that qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative approach primarily interested in understanding the meaning people ascribe to actions, decisions, beliefs or values within their social world (Fitzgerald, Seale, Kerins & McElvaney, 2008; Snape & Spencer, 2003). This means that researchers conducting qualitative research study phenomenon in their natural setting and attempt to understand the event in terms of how individuals create meaning from it.

Qualitative research has distinctive characteristics distinguishing it from quantitative research, such as aiming to provide a descriptive understanding of the way participants experience their world by being mindful of their experiences, perspectives and histories. Furthermore, it is postulated that social phenomena are processes rather than static events

(Fitzgerald et al., 2008). There are generally small samples participating in a study which are purposively selected on the basis of salient criteria (Sandelowski, 1995). The researcher becomes part of the research as she or he is in close contact with the participants. Data is collected through flexible methods or techniques that allow for exploration (Fitzgerald et al., 2008). The data gathered provides a detailed and extensive account of the participants' experiences in a situation and often leads to the development of explanations or of a detailed description of the event (Fitzgerald et al., 2008). In addition, there is a focus on the interpretation of the social meaning which represents how the participants experience their world or lived experiences (Fitzgerald et al., 2008).

There are two positions which define how researchers approach thinking about a phenomenon under study in qualitative research; one being ontology and the second epistemology. Ontology refers to the beliefs about what there is to know about the world or ways of constructing reality, such as whether there is a shared, social reality or multiple context specific realities as well as whether or not social reality exists independently of individuals conceptions and interpretations (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Within this, Snape and Spencer (2003) describe three distinct positions namely realism, materialism and idealism. These positions are referred as a means to provide more clarity for this study and may not necessarily apply to all approaches in qualitative research. In essence, realism is an external reality which exists independently of an individual's beliefs or understanding about it (Larkin et al., 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). According to Snape and Spencer (2003) materialism is an external world but only material items, like physical features, hold reality. Elements such as values, beliefs or experiences may arise from the material world; however they do not form it. Snape and Spencer (2003) essentially describe idealism as a reality that can only be known through social constructions and the human mind. A phenomenological paradigm is aligned with the latter however the distinction between the three positions is not as explicit in reality and often an event constitutes a combination of at least two positions.

Epistemology is concerned with the relationship between an individual and ways of knowing and learning about the social world or reality (Larkin et al., 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Here, issues such as whether reality can be known and understood and what would be the basis of our knowledge are addressed. There are relevant debates arising which concern the relationship between the researcher and the topic of interest. Qualitative research tends to

view this relationship as interactive; which means that the participants are affected by the research process (Larkin et al., 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Additionally, the researcher cannot remain objective despite all attempts (Larkin et al., 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). In order to counter this, researchers may make their assumptions known through reflection. A further debate centres on the issue of “truth” in qualitative research. Here, “truth” is viewed as a matter of consensus where if several reports confirm a statement then it can be considered true as a representation of a socially constructed reality (Larkin et al., 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Finally, knowledge may be acquired in two ways. Firstly, through a process of induction; the data collected may explore a research question which may lead to a hypothesis (Fitzgerald et al., 2008; Snape & Spencer, 2003). The second is a deductive process where; where a hypothesis is concluded theoretically through a process of gathering information to support the conclusion (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Generally, qualitative research takes the form of induction.

3.4.2. Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a common qualitative research orientation used to investigate complicated social issues and it is the chosen approach for this study. This theoretical approach is concerned with exploring participants’ “lived” experiences and focuses on the participants’ subjective meaning of the event or incident rather than how the event or incident exists external to the individual (Chamberlain, Camic & Yardley, 2004; Morrow, Castaneda-Sound, & Abrams, 2012; Reeves et al., 2008). Therefore the focus is on providing research accounts for specific situations rather than attempting to generate wider explanations (Reeves et al., 2008).

According to Morrow et al. (2012) there are four basic principles in phenomenological research. The first principle relates to a phenomenological attitude of entering research with an open and unbiased mind. This is achieved by bracketing, or setting aside, the scientific knowledge that the researcher has accumulated on the topic (Morrow et al., 2012). By doing this, the researcher is able to explore the event with a fresh perspective. Additionally, the researcher also needs to bracket her or his own understanding of the phenomenon. Through self-reflection, the researcher is able to develop an understanding of her or his own perspective of the phenomenon as well as engage empathically with the participants (Larkin et al., 2006; Morrow et al., 2012). The process of examining the phenomenon from all

possible angles is the second underlying phenomenological principle. By engaging in this process, the researcher is able to understand the core of the event identify as many variations as possible in order to distinguish crucial features (Morrow et al., 2012). Intentionality forms the third phenomenological principle and is concerned with concept of the subject not being separate from the object of its awareness (Larkin et al., 2006; Morrow et al., 2012). This means that participants form part of the phenomenon they are describing and vice-versa. Intentionality extends into the world, which is the fourth phenomenological principle, where participants are viewed as a self with a unique perspective surrounded by others in the world (Larkin et al., 2006; Morrow et al., 2012).

In line with the purpose of a phenomenological study and the principles highlighted above, the following procedures characterise a phenomenological study. Firstly, the researcher needs to identify the phenomenon of interest and formulate the research questions (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012). Typically, the most appropriate topics are those where the participants have a shared experience of a phenomenon. Next the researcher needs to reflect on her or his existing knowledge of the subject as well as any biases, feelings or assumptions about the topic (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012). This enables the researcher to bracket these perspectives and approach the participants' experiences with an open-mind. The third step is to select participants who have undergone the same phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012). Following this, the researcher gathers data through in-depth individual interviews with a few focused questions or thorough written descriptions of their experiences, such as a journal (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012). To analyse the data, the researcher becomes immersed in the data gathered (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012). This is done through transcribing the interviews and identifying crucial experiences which become themes. These themes are then used to detail the participants' experiences as well as the context of the experiences. Lastly, the essence of the experiences is detailed in a report (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012).

3.4.3. Critical Incident Technique (CIT)

Flanagan (1954) defined the CIT as “a set of procedures for collecting direct observation of human behaviours in such a way to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles” (p. 327). This study however required participants to explore positive or negative incidents which they view as being

significant for their professional development. Participants were encouraged to consider the incident in terms of a context, how the event was managed and the outcome of the event. Therefore this method assumes an alternative definition to Flanagan's as the CIT is now considered to be a qualitative procedure which facilitates the exploration of significant events or incidents, as identified by the participant, with the objective of trying to understand the incident from the participant's perspective (Chell, 2004). When exploring the event, cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors will be considered (Chell, 2004). This method is a useful tool within an interpretative or phenomenological paradigm (Chell, 2004) and is used across a diverse number of disciplines, such as counselling, health care, education and training, marketing, job analysis, performance appraisals and psychology to name a few (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005).

Initially, the CIT method was applied to studies in the Aviation Psychology Program of the United States Army Air Forces in World War II and was used to identify effective pilot performance (Flanagan, 1954). After the war, the CIT method was used to determine the job requirements which are necessary for success in industry (Butterfield et al., 2005; Flanagan, 1954; Woolsey, 1986). Flanagan (1954) described other ways which the CIT method had been used, such as measuring performance, designing equipment and counselling or psychotherapy to name a few.

Since Flanagan's early work on the CIT method, there have been certain deviations from the original method. The first deviation was to apply the CIT method to psychological experiences (Butterfield et al., 2005), such as in Woolsey's (1986) study which focused on applying the CIT method to psychological research. In this article, Woolsey (1986) advocated that the CIT method is consistent with the skills, experience and values of counselling psychologists. In addition to this, she stated that the CIT method is flexible and can be used to collect data on factual events, on qualities or attributes, as well as use critical incidents or turning points as a means to explore differences in experience (Woolsey, 1986). Therefore it can be utilised as both a foundational and exploratory tool in the early stages of research and it can also play a role in building theories or models (Woolsey, 1986).

The second deviation is the change of focus from direct observations to retrospective self-report (Butterfield et al., 2005). A major criterion for accuracy when using retrospective self-

reports is the quality of the participants' accounts. The accounts need to be detailed, clear and specific in order to be considered as accurate (Butterfield et al., 2005; Woolsey, 1986).

The manner in which the data is analysed is the third deviation. Although, researchers may utilize alternative methods for analysis, it is recommended that the researcher be mindful of the similarities and differences of the method compared to the original method (Butterfield et al., 2005). When analysing the data, the formation of codes and themes is central to the CIT method (Butterfield et al., 2005).

The fourth major change appears in the manner in which credibility and trustworthiness of the findings is established. Early studies do not seem to follow a standardised procedure for ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of a study whereas, more recently, a standardised procedure has been proposed (Butterfield et al., 2005). This procedure utilises professionals in the field of interest to confirm the researcher's finding thus reducing researcher bias (Butterfield et al., 2005).

3.5. Research Design

3.5.1. Sample

This study utilised a non-probability, purposive sample. This means that the participants were deliberately selected because they shared an experience thus enabling insight into the participants' experience of their internship as well as how the experience has influenced their professional development and professional identity (Appleton, 1995; Ritchie, Lewis & El am, 2003). The sample is not intended to be statistically representative however some diversity is necessary in order for the topic to be explored more extensively (Ritchie et al., 2003; Sandelowski, 1995). Diversity presents an opportunity to identify different contributory influences as well as allowing for the investigation of relationships between factors (Ritchie et al., 2003). A homogenous sample was selected to provide a detailed picture of the phenomenon thus allowing for a detailed exploration of the social processes contained in the internship environment (Ritchie et al., 2003; Sandelowski, 1995). Furthermore, the sample was selected based on ease of access thus forming a convenient sample (Ritchie et al., 2003).

Three individuals took part in this research study. The small number of participants can be deemed sufficient as the focus is on information-rich incidents or the experiences of interns

within their internship year rather than on the number of participants per se (Ritchie et al., 2003; Sandelowski, 1995). In addition, this sample size is consistent with the chosen methodology however caution is given in terms of generalizability (Larkin et al., 2006; Sandelowski, 1995). It can also be noted that the scope of study of this nature restricts the number of participants and the amount of data collected.

Each participant completed their mandatory internship training within the last year and is currently registered, with the HPCSA, and practising as a counselling psychologist. Participants were recruited from a renowned and respected internship training site, in South Africa. Initially, two internship training sites were identified for the study however the decision for the current sample was based on the availability of professionals who trained at one of the internship training sites. Participants were selected from the same internship training site because they would have received the same level of practical training and supervision however this study was not concerned with exploring the particulars of the internship training site program but rather critical incidents or events which interns described as significant for professional and personal development. The selection of participants from the same internship training site may also allow for the investigation into possible areas of academic training which may have impacted on professional development. It is worthwhile to note that internship training sites, in South Africa, need to be accredited with the HPCSA. This means that the HPCSA has outlined specific factors which internship training sites need to follow in order to be accredited and these sites are inspected, by HPCSA representatives, in order to ensure that the specific factors are being adhered to (HPCSA, 2010). As such, some equivalence of internship training sites, in South Africa, can be assumed. Additionally, interns do not necessarily accept internship positions at the same university as their academic training institution. In other words there is a collaborating university attached to the internship training site which tracks the interns' progress, but the intern is not necessarily expected to complete her or his internship year at the university where she or he obtained her or his masters degree.

Furthermore, all participants graduated from a South African university where the main medium of education is English, regardless of their home language. In addition, all of the participants practice psychotherapy in English. For this reason, the individual interviews were conducted in English. There was no exclusion criteria considered, when selecting participants, other than the above-mentioned.

The participants' demographics are as follows:

Table 1: Participants' demographics

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
1	Female	28	White
2	Female	26	Black
3	Female	25	White

The participants in this research study comprised of three female counselling psychologists who shared an internship experience. Their ages ranged from 25 to 28 years old. In keeping with the perceived ethnic ratio of most of the postgraduate programs in South Africa, two of the participants are white and one is black. All three participants were from the same internship training site and academic training institution.

3.5.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research and was utilised in this study. It commonly takes the form of a face-to-face conversation between the researcher and the participant therefore the interview is interactive in nature (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). This interview style allows for flexibility as the participants are given sufficient freedom to narrate their experiences, relevant to the research topic, spontaneously and produce accounts which are rich in detail (Legard et al., 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). In addition, it enables the researcher to establish rapport with the participants however the researcher has limited control of the interview (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

As this technique is interactive, the researcher and participants have a role to play in the interview process. The researcher is the facilitator and needs to ensure that participants felt comfortable to share their experiences and perspectives in sufficient detail without the researcher influencing their narratives (Legard et al., 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). It is likely that participants will feel more comfortable in a private location which is familiar or one selected by them (Legard et al., 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Wherever the interview is held, the environment needs to be private, free from distraction, quiet and physically

comfortable. Participants in this study opted to hold the interview in their home when they were alone. The researcher initially engaged in small talk with the participants to make them more comfortable and to establish a rapport before proceeding with the interview.

The participants' role is to provide in-depth responses to the questions posed by the researcher and in doing this reflect and think about raising any issues relevant to the research topic however not directly asked about (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Furthermore, participants need to consider how much detail is sufficient for the study (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In order to assist participants with these decisions, the researcher clearly articulated the objectives of the research study, asked relevant questions and behaved in an empathetic and interested manner (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The semi-structured interviews consisted of a small number of broad questions and then probing questions, such as “tell me more about that”, were used when the participant experienced any difficulty in elaborating their perspectives (Chamberlain et al., 2004; Legard et al., 2003). Probing questions permitted the researcher to explore the topic more in-depth plus explore the underlying reasons, feelings, opinions or beliefs (Legard et al., 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The same questions were administered to the participants in this study thus enabling the researcher to compare the interviews whilst the participants maintained their individual perspectives, thoughts and feelings (Chamberlain et al., 2004). The order of the questions was likely to vary and the probing questioning could not be standardised as the researcher was following the participant's narrative (Smith & Osborn, 2003). On occasion it happened that the interview drifted from the research topic, this being the participants' experiences of the internship year and how these have impacted on their professional development and identity, and the researcher needed to decide how much drift was acceptable. A considerable amount of latitude was given to the participants as an unpredicted discussion of an event may be crucial to the understanding of the research topic (Legard et al., 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

3.5.3. The Critical Incident Technique Method

The CIT method is used within a phenomenological approach and uses in-depth semi structured interviews to capture the feelings, thoughts and experiences of participants about an incident or event (Chell, 2004). During the interview, participants provide detailed

accounts of incidents or turning points which hold meaning for them, either positive or negative, as well as allow the participants to expand on how this fits in with their life experiences, current circumstances as well as their attitude on the matter. The CIT method is appropriate for this research study as it enables the exploration of incidents which influence the performance of intern counselling psychologists when navigating the internship year (Butterfield, Borgen, Maglio, & Amundson, 2009; Chell, 2004). Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to focus on how the participants made sense of their subjective world. Researchers have also demonstrated the CIT method to be reliable and valid for qualitative research (Andersson & Nilsson, 1964; Butterfield et al., 2009).

According to Flanagan (1954), “the critical incident technique does not consist of a single rigid set of rules governing such data collection. Rather it should be thought of as a flexible set of principles which must be modified and adapted to meet the specific situation at hand” (p. 335). This study followed the six unique parts to the CIT method as described in Chell (2004): 1) introducing the CIT method and starting the interview; 2) focusing the theme; 3) controlling the interview through probing questions and clarification of accounts; 4) concluding the interview; 5) considering ethical issues and 6) analysing the data.

- 1) Introducing the CIT method involved the researcher clearly explaining the aims of the research to the participants and ensuring that they understood the purpose and any probable benefits or shortcomings of the study (Chell, 2004; Flanagan, 1954). The aims of the study were clearly articulated as this guides what the individual is expected to accomplish in this process (Butterfield et al., 2009). In this research study, participants were selected based on their having completed their internship at a registered internship training site in South Africa, being available for an interview and being prepared to participate in an in-depth interview disclosing what incidents helped or hindered their professional development as a counselling psychologist. The purpose of the research was to identify critical incidents which influenced the development of an intern’s professional development and which elements of the internship training site were conducive to the development of a professional identity.
- 2) Focusing on the theme is the second part of the method and a time-line exercise was used to focus the participants’ attention on the events and obtain a chronological account of critical incidents (Chell, 2004; Flanagan, 1954). The researcher requested

the participants to select and provide a detailed recount of three events, whether positive or negative, from the ones mentioned. Some events were interwoven in time or in the mind of the participant therefore probing questions were necessary to untangling and understanding the essential details (Chell, 2004).

- 3) The third part involved the researcher taking control of the interview by asking general probing questions to gain clarification of the participants' narratives (Chell, 2004). General probing questions can take the form of amplificatory probes, which were used to encourage participants to elaborate further, such as "can you tell me a little bit more about that?"; explanatory probes, such as "what makes you say that?", were used to elicit participants views, feelings and behaviours; exploratory probes, such as "what did you feel when...?", assisted the researcher to explore the perspectives and feelings underlying participants behaviour and to identify the meaning the event held for the participant (Legard et al., 2003). In addition, exploratory probes, such as "what effect did that have on you?" were further used to explore and better understand the participants behaviours and experience (Legard et al., 2003). Clarificatory probes were also used to clarify terms used by participants; to clarify details and sequences; to challenge inconsistency in the participants' accounts and to clarify participants' position thus encouraging elaboration of an account (Legard et al., 2003). In addition, clarificatory probes also enabled the researcher to control the flow of the interview and remain alert to the participants' accounts (Chell, 2004).
- 4) Concluding the interview involved the interview coming to a natural conclusion as the participants ended their accounts and were provided with an impression that the interview was valuable (Butterfield et al., 2009; Chell, 2004; Flanagan, 1954).
- 5) Any concerns or ethical issues were addressed by the researcher before leaving the participant (Chell, 2004).
- 6) Data analysis and reporting is the last part and this research study entailed the collected data being analysed using thematic content analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Chell, 2004). According to Flanagan (1954) the "purpose of the data analysis stage is to summarize and describe the data in an efficient manner so that it can be effectively

used for many practical purposes” (p. 344). The aim of analysing the data is to increase the usefulness of the data collected without sacrificing its comprehensiveness, specificity or validity (Flanagan, 1954).

3.6. Data Analysis

3.6.1. Thematic Content Analysis

Thematic content analysis is widely used as a method of analysis for qualitative research which explores experiences and the meanings given to these experiences. This is one of the reasons that thematic content analysis was chosen for this study. Thematic analysis provides a more detailed and information rich account of the extracted themes or latent themes across the majority of the data collected relative to the phenomena under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, the themes will be identified via an inductive approach; which means that the themes are linked to the data collected however the researcher will not attempt to fit the identified themes into pre-existing theory or analytical pre-conceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

There is no universally correct method to follow when conducting thematic content analysis however Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined six stages most researchers follow, namely 1) familiarising yourself with your data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; 6) producing a report.

- 1) The first stage involved the researcher becoming familiar with the participants' narratives which was achieved by listening to recordings of the interviews and transcribing them (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcriptions provided detailed verbatim accounts of all verbal, and occasionally non-verbal, communication during the interview process and were an excellent way for the researcher to become familiar with the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher transcribed all interviews and utilised this as a means of immersing herself in the data. Each interview was recorded thus permitting the researcher's full attention to be placed on the participants during the individual interviews. Permission to record was obtained from all participants prior to commencing with the interview (refer to Appendix C).

- 2) The second stage comprised of generating initial codes which required reviewing the transcriptions and looking for similarities and general patterns in the content (both overt and latent) (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, the researcher immersed herself in the transcripts and identified the salient constructs which then formed broad codes. Codes represent a feature of the data which the researcher regarded as interesting and meaningful to the topic under study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The transcripts were then classified and organised according to these codes.
- 3) Stage three entailed searching for themes by reviewing the codes and organising them into patterns which may translate into possible themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Basically, the researcher began to think about the relationship between the codes, between the themes and between the different grading of themes. At the end of this stage, the researcher had a collection of codes which formed themes and sub-themes and some which did not seem to belong to a particular theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, the researcher did not discard any codes at this stage of analysis as there was uncertainty regarding whether the codes can be combined, refined or discarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- 4) The fourth stage consisted of exploring and refining the themes identified in stage three and eliminating those that the data did not sufficiently support (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). At this stage, the researcher read all the extracts for each theme and considered whether a coherent pattern appeared (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once a coherent pattern was evident, the researcher considered the validity of the themes in relation to the data collected as well as whether there was an accurate reflection of the meaning of the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- 5) Stage five was concerned with naming and defining the themes which means that the previously identified themes were further refined and sub-themes created (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage enabled the researcher to gather data-rich information and source evidence within the data. Additionally, the researcher possibly gained a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences. The researcher proceeded to identify the narrative of the theme, how the theme fits in the broader narrative of the data and in relation to the research questions posed (Braun

& Clarke, 2006). Any identified sub-themes were useful for giving structure to a complex theme and for demonstrating any grading of meaning within the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

- 6) The final stage involved generating a report which included the interpretation and analysis of the extracted themes and provided an understanding of the meaning of the themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of the report was to present a narrative across the themes and provide an argument in relation to the research questions and the theoretical constructs guiding the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Effendi & Hamber, 2006).

3.7. Generalizability and Trustworthiness

Generalisation is the act of making broad inferences from particular events or incidents under study (Appleton, 1995; Polit & Beck, 2010). In other words, how applicable are these research findings when transferred to the everyday practice of intern counselling psychologists in South Africa. A research study can be considered trustworthy if the findings generated provide accurate descriptions of the participants' experiences (Appleton, 1995; Kelly, 2006). Generalizability and the trustworthiness of the study reflects in the transparency and detailed account of the methods employed which also provides a platform to judge the creditability of the study (Appleton, 1995; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kelly, 2006).

As the study consists of the participants' narrative of their internship year, data was collected from semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D) and congruency between narratives was considered (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kelly, 2006). Congruency was achieved when parts of the narratives did not contradict other parts and when the narratives answered the research questions. Creditability of the study was increased through the explanation of any arising contradictions when the data was being interpreted (Kelly, 2006).

A further credibility check was a second interview conducted with all of the participants once the data was analysed up to stage five (as described in the thematic content analysis methods) (Butterfield et al., 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Here, the participants reviewed the interpretations made by the researcher and commented on the accuracy of the identified themes as well as how well their experience of the internship year was captured (Butterfield

et al., 2009). The second interview was conducted by email; it was not taped and it was not transcribed although records of this communication were stored along with the first interview records.

Furthermore, the researcher had continuous discussions with her supervisor to identify unnoticed researcher bias. The researcher needed to self-disclose and acknowledge any personal beliefs, assumptions or biases that may have influenced the outcomes of the study (Appleton, 1995; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Kelly, 2006; Morrow et al., 2012; Polit & Beck, 2010). This was done through reflective practice.

3.8. Brief Synopsis of Ethical Considerations

Participants were not considered a vulnerable group and the research study was not of a sensitive nature. There were no benefits to the participants however there was a minimal risk of distress, which could be alleviated. Participation was voluntary and participants were allowed to leave at any stage. Participants had the option of refusing to answer any question that they felt uncomfortable with.

The aim of the study was explained, via an information sheet (see Appendix A), to the participants when they were first approached. Informed consent (through a participation consent form and consent to be recorded form) was obtained prior to any research commencing with an individual. Refer to Appendices B and C for the consent forms respectively.

Participants were asked, at the end of the interview, whether there were any ethical issues or concerns or questions that they would like to raise or ask (refer to Appendix D). This was extended by the researcher stating that she can be contacted at any time should a participant want to discuss such matters.

Each participant was assured of anonymity and confidentiality however there is a limitation to this; the researcher has knowledge of who the participants were as well as each participant's responses. To maintain anonymity, all identifying criteria were removed from the interview transcripts as well as any excerpts from the interview. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that any persons named, during the interview, were treated with the same

degree of privacy and anonymity. All recordings and transcripts are kept securely in a locked cupboard, which only the researcher has access to, for safekeeping and will be destroyed five years after the completion of the research.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of qualitative research and outlined the theoretical framework employed to explore critical incidents as described by intern counselling psychologists in order to develop an understanding of the phenomenon under study. An outline of the research design, including sample and data collection, was discussed as well as the method for data analysis. Following this was a discussion highlighting the generalizability and trustworthiness of the study. This chapter concluded with a brief discussion regarding the ethical considerations of the study. Having provided an overview of the methods used to collect and analyse data, a description of the findings or extracted themes are integrated with existing theory and discussed in the following chapter.

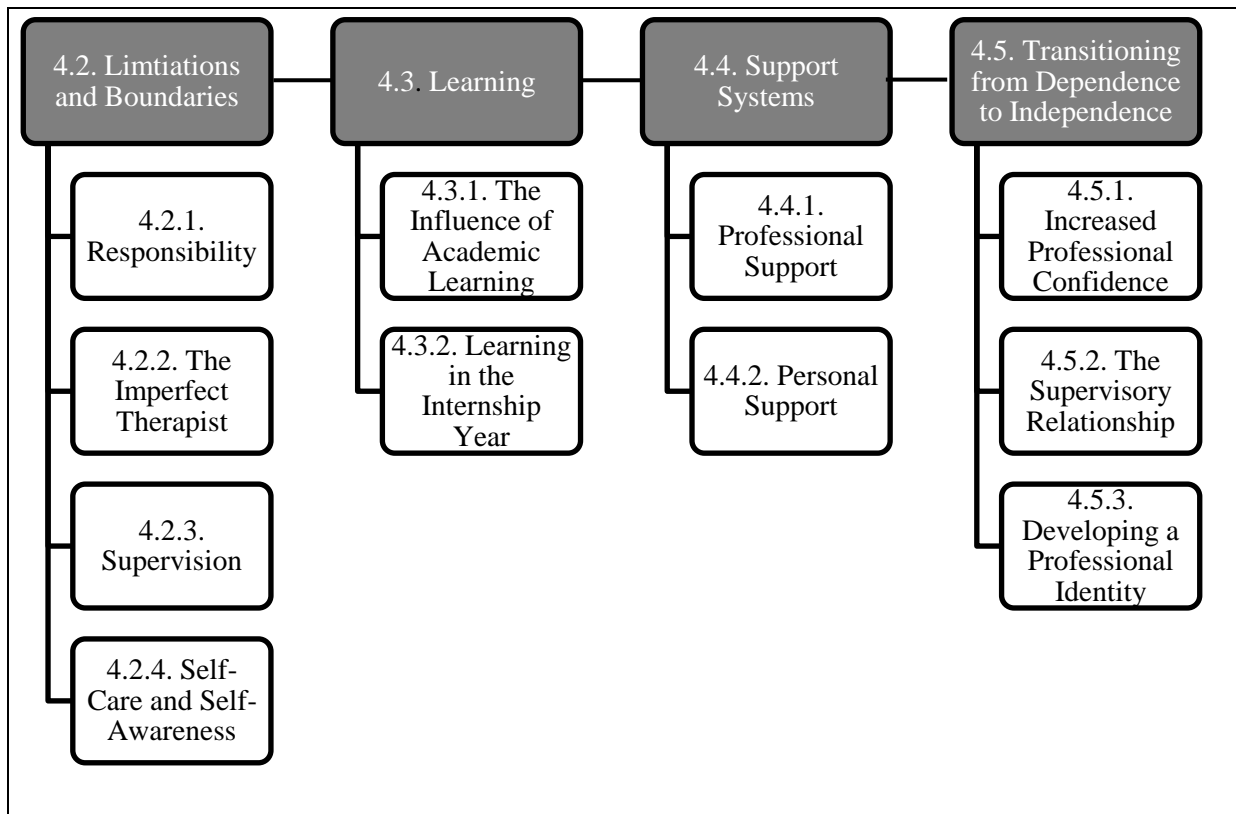
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

In the attempt to answer the research questions, this chapter provides an overview of the findings from the CIT interviews that were conducted. This overview combines an analysis of the most important findings of the study with a discussion around the significance of these findings as often happens with qualitative research unlike the separation of the two sections as is usual with quantitative research (Effendi & Hamber, 2006). This combination is possible as the data collected were sorted into themes and subthemes, as indicated in Figure 1, which were then interpreted by the researcher; as prescribed by thematic content analysis. Therefore these findings are already viewed through an interpretative lens and are hence not a representation of an objective “reality”. Interns’ experiences are discussed, under the themes of boundaries and limitations, learning, support systems and the transition from dependence to independence, and a qualitative analysis offers a detailed description of these themes and identified subthemes. Interpretations are made with reference to the literature presented in the preceding three chapters and attempt to make sense of the participants’ experiences. The discussion will be substantiated with statements from the interviews however all identifying details have been omitted as a means of maintaining confidentiality. It is also important to mention that not all participants necessarily experienced each of the themes or subthemes discussed.

Figure 1: Visual outline of the themes and subthemes identified



4.2. Limitations and Boundaries

It is necessary for a professional to be cognisant of her or his limitations and boundaries when working therapeutically so as to avoid or prevent harming the client, to prevent the acceptance of complete responsibility for the client and to practice self-care. Themes relating to these areas, such as the major theme of acknowledging responsibility as a dual task, being imperfect is likely to be therapeutically better, the balance between professional and personal matters in supervision and the importance of self-care emerged. These themes will be discussed with the help of the identified subthemes.

4.2.1. Responsibility

“...actually the biggest thing for me was the responsibility. Umm, so for me it was about the responsibility for other human beings’ lives, umm, that would make me anxious and it takes a while to get used to that” Participant 1

Anxiety is a common emotion experienced by most participants and the concern of being useful or being a good psychologist appears to be one of the causal factors. This concern

possibly explains why interns initially assume responsibility for their clients and have a false need to know everything. This supports Skovholt and Ronnestad's (1992) finding that, at the beginning of the internship, some interns assume perfectionistic behaviours with the proclivity for mistaken responsibility to assist others and, in doing so, prove that they are capable of being good psychologists.

"...I need to know exactly what's going on [with a client] and then I need to know what's the plan, what's going to happen, what am I, you know, my role and, umm, my intervention and...it has to work. Umm, so you take more responsibility, umm, for what is going on in the client as well and I guess it's like that fear of not wanting to do harm." Participant 2

Being a professional, it is the intern's responsibility that no harm comes to a client during treatment (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). Participants seem to be acutely aware of the consequences, for the client as well as for themselves, of making a mistake or of being considered incompetent. The anxiety or insecurity caused by conscious incompetence (Cheetam & Chivers, 2005) probably results in the avoidance of performing certain duties or limits interns to following recognised and established procedures and processes rather than experimenting and trusting their own instincts regarding a matter. This relates to previous studies indicating that this anxiety generally occurs in the initial stages of the internship year (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

"...and so if you get it wrong, I mean, something could really go bad like a student could commit suicide and complete a suicide..." Participant 2

"...I can be wrong and there's this whole being wrong and getting it wrong and then...possibly damaging a client..." Participant 3

"...you're just so scared, you know, of not wanting to be blamed, you know, for something."
Participant 2

"...maybe it is an insecurity of getting it wrong...and it is a limitation like that and almost a failing because if I wasn't insecure it probably would be easier for me [to administer assessments]."
Participant 3

Initially, it is likely that participants based their construction of a professional identity on their ability to be therapeutically useful or their idea of what constitutes a good psychologist and what a psychologist's job is. This construction of a professional identity and self-worth is linked to external appraisal by clients or other professionals and adds to the existing anxiety experienced by an intern (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). It is also likely that at this vulnerable stage, an intern has not developed a therapeutic self and is unable to separate the professional and personal view of the self (Gibson et al., 2010).

“You take it personal, like if I miss something, you know, you think it’s the worst thing, like “oh my gosh, I’m not a good psychologist”, whereas it doesn’t necessarily mean that...” Participant 2

*“I still definitely had a box of what a psychologist should be and what a psychologist looks like.”
Participant 1*

“It [not wanting to do assessments] is a limitation in terms of my knowledge, in terms of how useful I probably will be as a therapist because I probably might be more useful if I knew more about [a specific topic linked to a particular assessment] ...” Participant 3

“I was like “you can’t let the client go. My job is to, not make it better but you know I am supposed to walk this path with her” ...” Participant 1

With time and more experience, an intern is likely to learn from, understand and accept the mistakes made and limitations of their professional responsibility towards a client (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Participants perspectives seemed to change to a more realistic one as they accepted that inevitably mistakes will be made however *“...there’s always a chance, you know, to pick it up again if you missed it, you know, you’re going to get another second chance or someone else will be able to do it.” Participant 2*. The acknowledgment of professional limitations often comes with a feeling of relief and the intern is seemingly no longer as concerned regarding her or his professional performance (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). This leads to the recognition of equal responsibility within the therapeutic relationship, which is often empowering for the client as well as the professional. From this, many clients have the opportunity to re-author their lives and assume agency.

“...you realise...you’re not responsible for everything that is going wrong in your client’s life...and I guess learning to be comfortable with that, you know, it’s a process...they also need to take the responsibility as clients as people that are seeking help as well...you do what you can.” Participant 2

“But it [supervisor advocating referral if the client wants something that the intern is unable to give] suddenly allowed me, umm...to let it go a bit or maybe to take some pressure off myself. I realised I was putting a lot of pressure on myself to get her [the client] to see it how I wanted her to see it...and I thought “wow, that’s ok, I don’t have to work with everyone.”...it was empowering.” Participant 1

Implicit in the latter extract, appears to be the intern’s initial lack of trust in the client’s ability to identify what she or he needs in order to overcome the difficulties which have resulted in her or him seeking help. Attached to the afore mentioned feeling of relief, is most likely a new respect for the client; for their experiences and abilities to learn from those experiences; which are values held by the counselling psychology profession (Howard, 1992). There is also likely to be the recognition that a psychologist provides a client with companionship for a mere footprint of her or his journey (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). As a result, participants may have an increased ability to separate their sense of professional competence from what is in the best interest of the client and will have more confidence to enforce therapeutic responsibilities. The increased trust in the client is possibly accompanied by an increased faith in the therapeutic relationship as well as the capacity to recognise her or his limitations and accept them.

“...you need to trust the process and you need to trust yourself and you need to trust your clients as well and knowing when your duty is ended...” Participant 2

“I suppose respecting what clients want and also but at the same time respecting what I need in order to be a psychologist.” Participant 1

“I suppose in terms of referral and in terms of its ok if I don’t want to work a certain way and it’s ok if umm I’m not the best thing for the client I suppose.” Participant 1

“...but also I think that experience also with that client [is] about owning what I can and cannot do and being happy about putting my foot down and saying this is what...” Participant 1

Experience with a diversity of clients provides an intern with the opportunity “...to learn about clients who are wanting more from you.” Participant 1. Within a counselling centre, an intern most likely encounters clients who expect assistance as a means to avoid situations or duties. Such clients attempt to bend the intern’s existing boundaries and, with experience, the intern is likely to “...like figuring out what was psychologically necessary and what is them [clients] just pushing their luck and sort of me getting comfortable with me putting in the boundaries...” Participant 1. Related to this, interns possibly experience clients who place the responsibility of solving their problems onto the psychologist and often look to the psychologist to rescue them from a current situation. This is especially so within a South African context where many students at university have limited resources or experience a lack in agency. Here, interns possibly realise the importance of boundaries and acknowledging their professional limitations.

“So staying in your lane, the psychology lane...and also to learn to not get pressured by clients, I guess that’s what makes it difficult. Clients come in and like they need a quick fix and they need something to relieve whatever anxieties or whatever to solve issues they’re going through and so you take on that pressure, you put it on yourself and you feel responsible that you need to do something quickly for them whereas you don’t have to...” Participant 2

“I mean, they come to you, umm, because they want help ok and you can only assist them in only one aspect which is the psychological aspect but you also need time to actually help them...it’s a process.” Participant 2

Boundaries can be understood as the divide between what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when a professional is interacting with a recipient of her or his services. Additionally, boundaries aid professionals with traversing the fine line between over and under involvement with their client. With the correct support and guidance over time, an intern may learn to regulate professional involvement and utilise self-disclosure therapeutically (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). This achievement is concomitant with an increased professional self-confidence and self-awareness of one’s own emotions.

“...[my supervisor] really pushed me to use myself more in therapy...I gave myself permission to use myself and my experiences but also to judge...whether the client needed to know that or they didn’t. You know I wouldn’t automatically tell people or bring myself in but, I was free to, I suppose, if I felt it would be therapeutically valuable...I suppose it...set me free to use me if need be.” Participant 1

Linked to the above is the neophyte's ability to differentiate between personal issues and those belonging to the client and subsequently being able to relate to the client in a functional and therapeutic manner (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003). It seems that personal issues, when used therapeutically, provide the novice psychologist with unusual insight into the client's life and reveal blind spots (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). A neophyte has probably experienced a multitude of life experiences, distressing and pleasant, and is most likely to experience millions more which will affect their professional functioning. However, distressing experiences can "produce reflection and insight and provide an experiential base that fosters an empathic understanding of the client" (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992, p. 512). The below three extracts demonstrate a participant's professional development as she deals with a presenting problem and learns to distinguish between her personal issues and what is the client's issues.

"But remember...that oral exam [case study exam in mid-year of the masters training program] ...That really threw my confidence and I thought I'm never going to be able to work with death...I couldn't differentiate [between the client's story and my story] at all and it was very traumatic for me and, umm, it made me question whether I would ever be able to work with death stuff..." Participant 1

[In the internship year] "...it was a huge challenge because...like I knew what was her [the client] stuff and I knew what was my stuff, umm, but it was bringing my stuff up in my own therapy...it [working with this client] was significant I think because it was...trying to deal with that and trying to figure out and process whether it was ok that I wanted to keep seeing her and how much of the process was my stuff or her stuff." Participant 1

"Umm...so this client [in the internship year], I suppose, fixed that [concern over being able to work with death related issues]. Showed me that actually no, umm, a) ...that exam one was a story very similar to my own story and b) I just hadn't worked through much death stuff as I had by the time I met this client. Umm, so this client affirmed for me that I am actually able to separate myself and the client with death stuff and that I can work with death stuff..." Participant 1

"I do know that she is not going to feel like this forever. I mean it's horrific and awful but I liked that I was able to give her hope...I can't remember if I told her that my mom had died. I don't think I did...so I think that's another thing that allowed me to work with her." Participant 1

The increased ability for participants to differentiate between their own issues and the client's issues develops with experience and being self-aware. According to Skovholt and Ronnestad (2003) an intern is seeking a balance between being empathically attuned to the client but also being cognisant of self-care needs. Accordingly, participants may employ idiosyncratic behaviours to protect them from emotional breakdown during this time of personal change and growth (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011). This period relates to Kottler and Swartz's (2004) marginal phase of professional development.

"I don't think I let myself empathise with her completely. I definitely got very sad with her but I was definitely very defended, I was making sure that I was keeping myself in check...and with her...it felt almost...like I stepped into my psychologist role...was to focus on her and focus on theory..."

Participant 1

"...I suppose respecting what clients want and also but at the same time respecting what I need in order to be a psychologist." Participant 1

4.2.2. The Imperfect Therapist

"...I need to become "[participant's name] the psychologist" not some blank psychologist."

Participant 1

"...it's always that, umm, anxiety that, you know, you have to get it right..." Participant 2

"Initially I felt like I had to be the perfect therapist and that included being the perfect assessor, being the perfect everything." Participant 3

At the beginning of an intern's training, it is likely that she or he has a false conception of a psychologist as being powerful and having a lot of knowledge (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Donati & Watts, 2005; Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Participants appeared to place unrealistic expectations on themselves to fit this grandiose conception and to learn and know everything. There is also the possibility that imperfections are considered personal as the intern is unable to fit into the concept of the ideal therapist.

“You know like “if I’m going to be a psychologist, I’m going to be the best psychologist so obviously I’m going to do...what all the rule books say I must do.” Participant 1

“Umm, I think something in that [not liking to conduct assessments] initially I felt like it was a failing...” Participant 3

“...I was like “no, but I’m not supposed to. I’m supposed to be able to switch it off”...” Participant 1

The support received from other interns and the modelling of professionals in all probability permits participants to reframe imperfections as something that is human which can be therapeutically valuable. This indicates a step up on the personal development ladder. This is in agreement with Wilkins (1997) who noted that once an intern accepts her or his imperfections or idiosyncrasies, she or he can shift her or his focus on being present with and available for the client. In addition to this, the intern is able to offer the client an authentic experience within the therapeutic relationship (Richards et al., 2010; Wilkins, 1997).

“...[it was] really great to have a therapist who so went against my idea of what a therapist should be.” Participant 1

“Ja, forgetting that also part of being a psychologist is part of being a human being.” Participant 1

“I think that because I saw it [imperfections] in my friends I wasn’t ashamed of it and so, because I wasn’t ashamed of it I was able to, without bringing my own issues into the therapy room, I was able to acknowledge it and look at it as just a part of being human, umm, and work with it therapeutically with the client.” Participant 3

“I learn that when they [other professionals] were being real it didn’t really matter if they made some mistakes, umm, and that’s the important thing that I took with me...as a therapist.” Participant 3

Participants seem to illustrate an understanding of psychology being a part of the whole person however there needs to be a congruency between the personal self and professional self. Interns should be given the space to develop their own professional identity within the knowledge of their limitations and the acknowledgment that the perfect therapist is an illusion (Sweitzer & King, 2009). This indicates the integration of the person and professional aspects of the intern psychologist as referred to by Bruss and Kopala (1993),

Gibson et al. (2010) and Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003). These studies also indicate that the integration process allows the neophyte to select a therapeutic framework and techniques which are congruent with the person; which is supported by the third extract below.

“There’s no perfect therapist. We mould therapy to fit us not the other way round and I’m allowed to – I need to be [participant’s name] and fit psychology to me.” Participant 1

“It was tough for me because I wasn’t perfect...My idea of...the perfect therapist needs to know all and this [not enjoying doing assessments and placing a label on someone] helped me to be like, no I don’t need to be perfect and there is no such thing as perfect.” Participant 3

“...we would often get introduced to different ways of therapy and I didn’t feel like I had to...be the expert of every different type of therapy and use them all...and I felt fine with that because of acknowledging my limitations and acknowledging that I don’t have to be this omniscient therapist...” Participant 3

There is a possibility however that the acceptance of limitations can be a difficult experience, especially during the existing ambiguity experienced as a participant attempts to get socialised into the professional community. The socialisation into the counselling psychology community is an important part of establishing a professional identity and developing a sense of belonging thus avoiding role confusion (Gibson et al., 2010; Liddell et al., 2014; Moss et al., 2014). The acceptance of limitations and individuality at this stage probably requires greater self-confidence demonstrating an increase in personal development.

“I’m ok with my limitations, umm, and that was a struggle for me because no one else seemed to hate it [doing assessments] quite as much as I did...” Participant 3

Participants indicated that the exposure and experimentation with different therapeutic approaches allowed them to explore and develop self-awareness pertaining to their professional identity. This exploration is likely to allow the intern to transition from the concept of the perfect psychologist to that of the actual psychologist (Gazzolaa et al., 2011; Ibarra, 1999).

“...this [the introduction to different therapeutic approaches] helped me to know who I am, know what I like and, umm, you know, when I know who I am and what I like...” Participant 3

4.2.3. Supervision

“...and you know how supervision is, sometimes it becomes a little bit of personal therapy rather than supervision.” Participant 1

The internship period holds numerous academic and emotional challenges for the intern. The HPCSA (2010) indicates that an intern should receive regular supervision during the internship year thus providing assistance to the intern with professional and personal aspects of their development. Supervisors have the responsibility to assist interns broaden their understanding of the client as they traverse the gap between theory and practice, and this often includes reflecting on and discussing personal emotions stirred during a therapy session with a client (Costa, 2002; Riggs & Bretz, 2006; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Participants indicated that supervisors provided a supportive environment where interns felt it possible to openly address professional or personal issues stirred up by a client.

“...for me supervision was about a space where I could take whatever was going on, whether it was with me or with my clients, as long as it was impacting on my clients...” Participant 1

Furthermore, participants indicated that supervision was a comforting environment which also provided emotional support to deal with feelings of self-doubt and of being overwhelmed. Through such conversations, supervisors possibly assist the novice professional to overcome these feelings and develop a greater confidence in their professional abilities (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985).

“...when you feel like you’re starting to doubt yourself or you’re not coping, you use that space [supervision] as a kind of recharging kind of space, where...it’s not only about your clients but it can also be about yourself...” Participant 2

This leads to the potential for boundaries to be blurred as supervisors attempt to assist interns to navigate this ambiguous period. However, supervisors should take care to remain focused on the professional functioning of the intern.

“Umm, like [my supervisor] would often get cross with my personal psychologist and she was like “he shouldn’t be pushing you so much”...” Participant 1

Similarly, personal therapists need to be aware of the role they play when supporting the novice psychologist during the internship year. Many neophytes are likely to discuss their clients in relation to their feelings and personal therapists may need to remain focused on developing personal insight for the intern rather than providing treatment advice for a particular client (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Richards et al., 2010; Wilkins, 1997). One participant suggested that the boundary between personal therapy and supervision can become hazy.

“We [the participant and the participant’s personal therapist] would often speak about my clients...just at times it was sort of supervisory.” Participant 1

4.2.4. Self-Care and Self-Awareness

“Making sure that you are not burnt out...ethically you can’t be burnt out so that you’re able to give your clients your full attention and be the best therapist that you can be.” Participant 3

It is common for individuals entering the psychology profession to do so with the attitude of wanting to help others thus their focus is generally on the other. Self-care is considered a secondary practice and, as suggested by those interviewed, many novice professionals neglect this aspect. However, as an intern psychologist progresses through her or his internship, the concept of and need for self-care becomes clearer. This clarity is likely to develop over time and probably enables the intern to form flexible and adaptive boundaries (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 2003).

“I think it goes against our grain... you become a psychologist because you want to help people not because you want to help yourself...last year [the internship year] really hit home about how important it [self-care] is and that I will turn into a crazy person if I don’t [self-care] and then I can’t help anyone...” Participant 1

A person is multifaceted and has multiple interests (Richards et al., 2010) thus the wellbeing of a person depends on how well the individual attends to these areas. As Participant 1 said *“it’s about putting the right things into your life”* and practicing holistic wellbeing (Bruss & Kopala, 1993).

“I don’t choose for psychology to be my whole life...I have other parts to me and other parts to my life and I want to embrace those too and I can’t if I’m not self-caring.” Participant 1

Living an unbalanced and stressful life may lead to conditions, such as depression, which subsequently affects the professional capacity of a psychologist (Myers et al., 2012; Sutin et al., 2010). Practicing psychotherapy in such a state may result in the professional causing harm while treating a client (Ronnestad & Stovholt, 2013) thus self-care may be considered fundamental to being an effective and ethical practitioner. Personal therapy and reflection appear to be essential in creating a deeper self-awareness and in the professional’s ability to distinguish between the client’s issues and her or his own issues in the therapy room (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Wilkins, 1997). The participants in this study seem to support this view.

“I don’t know how people become psychologists without therapists...it [personal therapy] really helped just with my own personal stuff and then my own personal stuff impacting on my therapeutic work and, umm, and then often...my professional development.” Participant 1

“...it [reflection] helps me to become more aware of my own button...So it helps me to understand the client more thoroughly but that’s important to step away often, you get a lot more clarity and you’re able to really think about it, you’re also able to, umm, maybe once you’ve processed your own emotion, just look at the client by themselves, umm, without my own issues being in the way once I’ve realised it’s my button once that’s out of the way.” Participant 3

Another important boundary is the psychologist’s ability to leave work behind at the end of the day and not to carry the client’s emotions and painful stories home. This often proves difficult to master for a novice psychologist as she or he often wants to help the client as much as possible. However, participants became aware of the personal impact of this and started *“...making an effort to sort of come home and leave work at work...” Participant 1*. Engaging with friends and peers or being playful appears to have assisted the participants to separate from their professional duties; in between therapeutic sessions as well as at the end of the working day. This support is likely to assist a neophyte by reducing the possibility of burnout (Gerber & Hoelson, 2011; Myers et al., 2012; Sweitzer & King, 2009) as well as aiding her or his professional development and ability to implement boundaries (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

“Umm, and the silliness mainly just helped me after sessions to let go, a bit of self-care and that has been very important to not take the emotions home with me or try to not take the emotions home with me.” Participant 3

Interacting with and receiving support from friends and family allow an intern to be an individual outside of the psychology profession (Richards et al., 2010). Those interviewed suggest that their personal relationships provided comfort and support during a year that can be confusing and demanding in addition to improving their wellbeing. This is in agreement with Sweitzer and King (2009).

“[participant’s partner] was amazing...try as much as possible to be with [participant’s partner] as much as I could be...friends, definitely our sort of M2 [internship] circle, those lunches were unbelievable...so it’s not just like professional-ly stuff but also like personal friendship stuff...”

Participant 1

Novice psychologists should be encouraged to participate in some form of physical exercise as it has been proven that this alleviates many symptoms of depression and anxiety (Myers et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2010). Often, interns may feel as though they do not have the time for physical activity however Participant 1 points out that the benefits are likely to outweigh the costs of not being physically active.

“Yoga saved my life...and I can’t tell you the difference that it made...So that was about definitely the physical doing stuff but also...an emotional quiet space that’s safe and I’m allowed to just focus on me.” Participant 1

4.3. Learning

Learning is an integral aspect of becoming and being a counselling psychologist. This not only applies to the attainment of theoretical knowledge but also to learning about oneself. Below, the themes of academic learning, learning within the internship environment and the learning and creation of a therapeutic self are presented.

4.3.1. The Influence of Academic Learning

“...it [first crisis client experience] was also very validating to know that actually...we did actually get good [academic] training, umm, and just trusting ourselves and trusting that that knowledge is

there at the back of our minds and when we need it, it's going to come and we can access it and make decisions." Participant 2

All participants refer to a specific masters training course, which focused on the professional identity of a counselling psychologist, as being very influential in terms of socialising them to the counselling psychology profession. This course appears to have provided the interns with a sense of professional identity which differentiates them from other registration categories as well as understand the scope of professional practice. This possibly enabled the participants to develop a professional identity before entering the internship thus easing the transition.

"...like having learnt...what it means to be a counselling psychologist and understanding that...helps to like being comfortable to...being a counselling psychologist and when you have more understanding of what it is, what does it mean to be a counselling psychologist...and understanding your scope, that makes it...more easy to be...a psychologist, to be a counselling psychologist."

Participant 2

"...definitely the counselling psychology course helped a lot...I think it was...about that it found words for what I was feeling...I had this sense that we were...a little like rebellious...as counselling psychologists and like holistic...but I couldn't figure out why...so...actually our speciality is our diversity and the fact that our philosophical underpinning is what makes us different, that we sort of assume wellness and that we assume resilience...it gave me language to explain how I felt about being a counselling psychologist..." Participant 1

"...like sometimes they give you the right words like something you've always felt and then you learn about it and they give you the right words and I'll use that." Participant 3

The creation of a professional identity, even a rudimentary one, is imperative for a novice professional. A professional identity ensures that the neophyte considers the meaning of being relevant within the community she or he serves as well as for ethical practice (Pretorius, 2012; Young, 2013). It is likely that participants interviewed created a professional identity based on the values of the counselling psychology profession therefore echoing Young (2013) who mentioned that counselling psychology is an "expression of its values" (p. 429) which is a distinguishing factor.

“...for me a lot of it [being a psychologist] is based on my values. That’s partly why I chose to be a counselling psychologist.” Participant 3

It seems as though interns learn more than just theory during their masters training year as participants refer to practical elements, from lecturers, which they have internalised. Implicit in this is the trust participants seemed to have placed in the lecturers from the academic training institution. Participants appear to have confidence in their academic training as well as the knowledge and experience of the lecturers. This point appears to be in disagreement with Costa (2002) who mentions a novice psychologist reaching a stage of disillusionment regarding their academic training being sufficient to equip her or him with the skills required to perform professionally. Costa’s (2002) comment however refers mainly to theoretical training.

“...you get to actually realise that, like again, what they teach us in M1 [masters training] that’s it’s not a quick fix, it’s a process and it takes time...” Participant 2

The imparted realities of therapeutic practice may alleviate some of the neophyte’s anxiety when working with clients, it may challenge the misconceptions novice psychologists have as well as breakdown societal constructions of psychotherapy. Lecturers in academic training institutions are the entry points to a neophyte’s journey as a professional psychologist. This means that lecturers and academic staff possibly act as models of professional behaviour in addition to being probable catalysts for the modification of preconceived conceptions regarding the practice of psychology (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The below extract seems to confirm this.

“[at the beginning of masters training] I still definitely had a box of what a psychologist should be and what a psychologist looks like...and then [a senior lecturer and supervisor] walked in and had long hair and dressed a little bit like a hippie and...from that beginning of M1 [masters training]...my psychology box was challenged in terms of what kind of psychologist we can be and what a psychologist is.” Participant 1

Furthermore, interns may only learn the professional value of some practices, such as reflection, once they are in the internship year

“In MI [masters training] it [reflective and reflexive practice] was more like, umm, enforced on you...you had to do it and in the internship...you didn’t have to but you still did because you realised the value of doing reflections and the importance of that...” Participant 2

4.3.2. Learning in the Internship Year

“I think that I’ve learnt so many different techniques and different perspectives from different therapists and from having conversations with different therapists and having different therapists when I was a client” Participant 3

Participants appear to prefer experiential learning or modelling from professionals, such as their personal therapist or other professionals. This corresponds with existing literature and studies (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Wilkins, 1997). Personal therapists seem to play a greater role in an intern’s development than just assisting them to create insight. It appears as though personal therapists model therapeutic techniques and allow intern’s to create an understanding of what it feels like to be vulnerable and sitting in the opposite chair (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Wilkins, 1997).

“...sometimes you can only understand something properly when you experience it yourself. So you can understand it on an academic level and think that you’ve actually got it but, umm, when you experience it, you get it in a whole new way and that’s very important...” Participant 3

“It [personal therapy] really taught me... to really pay emphasis and acknowledge the things that some clients will just dismiss and let that be important...” Participant 3

Interaction with professionals within the counselling centre as well as other professionals encountered at professional gatherings, such as conferences, provides interns with the opportunity to not only learn but also to become socialised into the counselling psychology community (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Lamb et al., 1982; Liddell et al., 2014; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Participants refer to having enjoyed interacting with other professionals and learning from them. It appears as though novice psychologists not only learnt from these interactions but they also provided an opportunity to create a professional identity within the counselling psychology community.

“...learning from the more senior psychologists as well and the more junior psychologists. So getting to see how other people work and what is new, what is coming out in the psychology you know, and just learning and having that space to learn...You can actually go into a discussion with some people...and then you get resources as well.” Participant 2

“I was around a lot of other therapists [at a psychological conference]...and I was learning...a whole lot of different skills and perspectives that I think are very important to becoming a therapist and it also clarifies...what I believe...really helped me...understand how I work better as a therapist; to understand myself better in comparison to other therapists as well.” Participant 3

“...I think modelling has been extremely important in terms of my professional identity. So much of who I am as a therapist has been heavily influenced by the lecturers and the colleagues....and my therapists.” Participant 3

“It was nice to see...other counselling psychologistsand seeing how they’ve developed and...grown...as psychologists...and realise that you’re also going to get there at some point...you want to get there. There are people that have achieved...and they’re quite competent psychologists and they’re very good at what they do and very passionate...it also encourages you to be a better...practitioner...” Participant 2

The purpose of an internship is to prepare a neophyte psychologist for independent professional practice (HPCSA, 2010) thus an intern should be afforded the opportunity to develop her or his professional skills within a supportive environment. It seems as though participants valued a varied learning experience; for their professional as well as personal development.

“...at the clinic [the ²psychology clinic which is linked to the university and the masters training program] was much more admin...and the advertising and the following-up on clients...but it was also much more varied clients...it was kids and adults. And then the counselling centre was just sheer mass of students...That is probably where I learnt the most about self-care...” Participant 1

²The majority of academic training institutions, with a Counselling Psychology masters program, have a psychology clinic linked to it. It is likely that the different training institutions refer to this clinic by various names. For confidentiality purposes, this study will make reference to “clinic”, “the clinic” or “the psychology clinic”.

4.4. Support Systems

Support structures within the professional's life play a vital role and for an intern, the support received from the other interns and professionals within the internship may provide the intern with an opportunity to increase her or his confidence and, in doing this, an opportunity to grow and develop professionally. However, external support received from friends and family should not be discredited as the intern may need this as a means of maintaining her or his personal identity and as a means of creating much needed break from the chaotic nature of the internship year. For those interns who have relocated, it is possible that their fellow interns serve the dual function of peer and friend. On occasion, interns may form strong bonds which are similar to those found between family members. Support from supervisors, the counselling centre staff and the other interns formed a major theme

4.4.1. Professional Support

"...we [interns] were all in the same boat, umm, and we were all supporting each other."

Participant 3

"...at the counselling centre...you are part of the team...we [the interns] were equals so we were expected to do exactly the same work as everyone else was doing. And because of that expectation, we did it...they [the counselling centre staff] treated us like we could, and so we believed we could, and so we did..." Participant 1

"...the other...shaping factor around the counselling centre was how it was scary and it was terrifying at times but I never felt alone. I always knew that someone had my back and that, you know, if I felt out of my depth someone else would help me figure it out..." Participant 1

At the beginning of the internship year, novice psychologists probably enter the counselling centre feeling uncertain about what to expect. The need to learn a new organisational system also adds to this anxiety (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985). Participant 2 indicated that being orientated to the way in which the counselling centre operates alleviated some of the anxieties new interns possibly experience. Added to this, the orientation process provided the counselling centre staff with an opportunity to welcome the interns. This period matches the stage of Early Intern Syndrome, referred to by Lamb et al. (1982), where the

intern starts identifying with the counselling centre and adopts their norms and ways of working.

“...from the beginning as interns...getting that orientation into how the counselling centre works and...given that space to adjust to this new...environment and being your own therapist...open arms and support from everyone...showing you around, telling you how things work...You were prepared...They are so welcoming so that made it easier...to...fall into your own place and do your own thing and knowing that it’s not only your supervisor that is going to be supporting you but everyone else is supportive and everyone else is approachable...and you feel more like at home.”

Participant 2

Winnicott refers to a “holding environment” as a warm and nurturing environment with appropriate boundaries (Winnicott, 1971). A “holding environment”, in a supervisory and professional relationship, will possibly result in a trusting relationship, a sense of safety, mutual respect and the acceptance of individuality (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Winnicott, 1971). From the extracts below it can be assumed that those interviewed perceived their environment as a nurturing and safe space. It is also likely that the participants were sufficiently challenged thus enabling the novice professional’s competence and independence.

“I could take it there and she [my supervisor] would hold it. Umm, it wasn’t a critical space but...she’s not afraid to put her foot down so that was also great. I trusted her to call me out when – if...things weren’t going as they should be...but it was very nurturing...I felt completely supported ...professionally and personally.” Participant 1

“...it [supervision and support from other professionals] is about the affirmation, and that is me definitely; I need a lot of affirmation.” Participant 1

“...like just getting personal support where like [a supervisor] would do like the quarterly reviews where like she’s talking to you as interns like...checking in but also checking in on a personal level...So that was nice to know that...you had the space to go and talk about...whether you weren’t coping professionally or whether you weren’t coping personally...” Participant 2

The nurturing environment provided by the counselling centre staff seemed to assist the participants to relax and feel safe to make mistakes within their professional functioning.

Often, it is through mistakes that people learn the most and a relaxed environment most likely facilitates a learning environment and cements the concept of the ideal versus actual psychologist. The support received from the professional staff probably gave the participants the freedom to develop a sense of who they are as a psychologist and to increase their confidence to treat a client therapeutically.

“...I think, it’s helpful to have...welcoming people, umm, like we had at the counselling centre, umm, more accepting, more relaxed kind of people, umm, supportive environment...helps and makes it easy to adjust as well...it makes it easy to learn and to know that even if you make a mistake you are still ok...and there are still going to be people...there to support you and help you figure things out...”

Participant 2

“And when something was raised, it was always constructive criticism and I felt that it was a nurturing environment and I was allowed to make mistakes and that the world wouldn’t fall apart and it was very reassuring for me. That reassurance was important to me.” Participant 3

“Well I think if I didn’t have a nurturing environment, I would probably hate going to work, I would probably feel worse about myself, I would have a lot more maybe anger or my own issues that might be a little bit harder to put aside in therapy. Umm, so I might even project stuff onto the client at times. So I think it helps to prevent a lot of that.” Participant 3

Professional staff also provided participants with support and understanding regarding their obligation to complete the thesis component of their degree.

“...balancing research and internship...I think it was a very difficult thing to do because of the environment...and how you forget that you also have the academic responsibility...A thing that helped with the research was the support that we had, you know, at the counselling centre where we were given time to actually focus on our research.” Participant 2

It seems as though the structure provided by the supervisory “holding environment” was open to and valued diverse opinions (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Supervisors appear to model professional behaviours which seemed to minimise participant’s feelings of being overwhelmed with certain cases thus enabling the intern to focus on the situation at hand. Participants mention being able to create their own suggestions for therapeutic treatment which indicates that supervisors trust the participants’ professional abilities. This sense of

trust most likely leads to a participant developing a greater trust and confidence in their own professional abilities.

“I get quite anxious; especially as a new psychologist...but she [my supervisor] is...direct and logical...and I use a lot of that now...I think...because there are so many crises, you get very good at being...”ok, so this seems like a scary situation but here are actually our options. We can do this, this or this. Ok, if we do this, then this is going to happen...or in this situation this is actually the protocol” ...” Participant 1

“...so it was a lot about what do you think should happen, umm, what’s your gut... Umm, so that faith in me that I knew what I was doing even if I didn’t feel like it.” Participant 1

Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) mention the role other interns have in building of an intern’s confidence to perform professionally. The acknowledgment and acceptance of differences among the interns probably enables the intern to realise her or his strengths thus creating a professional identity which is separate to the group (Lamb et al., 1982). Participants in this study mention that their peer support commenced during the masters training program, which was the first opportunity for a novice psychologist to practice professionally. Peer support appears to be highly important and aids in developing self-confidence in the participants professional abilities in addition to creating a professional identity.

“...we [intern group] would really validate each other and give very good constructive criticism and I found that support...helped me feel more confident as a therapist...and to be assertive of who I was and not have to question my ability as much...” Participant 3

“...having the support just helped me to feel, umm, less critical when I was examining myself and more supported and just didn’t add more pressure and anxiety in terms of relationships...it helped me to focus on what I think was important and deal with my own stuff.” Participant 3

The support obtained from interns and supervisors may have offered those interviewed a greater sense of professional confidence to take professional risks. It is highly likely that these risks were measured and considered in the context of what is in the best interest of the client. This is in accordance with Ronnestad and Skovholt’s (2003) study which indicated that exposure to various clients and an increased sense of professional self-confidence, is likely to make an intern aware of the consequences of mistakes but utilise this awareness to

inform therapeutic decisions and risks rather than limit them. However, there is a slight conflict with this study in that Participant 2 took a professional risk, with her first ³crisis client, and trusted her intuition early on in the internship year. This may be due to her trust in the academic training she received or it may be a personal self-confidence in her abilities or possibly both.

“...my first crisis client in the internship... I mean we are not supposed to go out; we don’t have to go out...but...I felt like...I must just go see this client. So I went out to see them...” Participant 2

“So the confidence was very important...I did seek supervision, but I felt confident in my ability as a trainee therapist to make these decisions and to assess...in the therapy room, I was the therapist and I had to confidently tell a client, umm, what I thought...and that kind of stuff takes guts and when you feel supported, then it’s a lot easier...” Participant 3

“But it was also nice to be able to have [my supervisor] supporting me. Umm, because the death issue stuff is a big thing for me and always is going to be a big thing for me. Umm, so it was nice to sort of go through that with [my supervisor] supporting me, umm, knowing that I can work with it.”

Participant 1

In addition to this, the participants’ acknowledge that their intern group was unique in that they shared a close bond at the beginning of the internship year. These relationships often assist the novice practitioner with feelings of being overwhelmed and the uncertainty which accompanies the internship environment (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Cole et al., 1981; Myers et al., 2012). Participants mentioned that this bond was established in the masters training program and possibly alleviated the anxiety of entering a new environment. This implies that participants were already viewed as individuals during their masters training thus leading to a more cohesive group and enabling the development of personal friendships.

“...we [the intern group] were already a group from the year before so we...just naturally formed a group within this big group so it wasn’t as anxiety provoking as I think it would have been if I was an intern from elsewhere...joining other interns from other places. So that made it more easy to actually

³A crisis client refers to a client who calls into the counselling centre’s 24 hour crisis line which interns are responsible for managing. Interns are likely to assess the call for severity and direct accordingly.

get comfortable within the big team...” Participant 2

Those interviewed provide evidence of their supervisors encouraging them to challenge themselves professionally and support them while attempting to overcome perceived or real limitations. This may have assisted participants with aspects of their professional development, including their professional identity. This is in agreement with the literature which says that supervisors provide interns with valuable support to develop their confidence in their therapeutic abilities, in clarifying their role in the internship environment and establish an identity as a professional counselling psychologist (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; HPCSA, 2010). Furthermore, Riggs and Bretz (2006) refer to a supervisor understanding the professional and personal needs of a novice professional and the resultant insight into professional functioning and creation of a professional identity.

“...it was just in terms of my own working, just through sheer experience working as a psychologist, learning that it was ok to use me and especially with [my supervisor] pushing me...to be in the room...so somehow that box and me came together and ...actually I’ve thrown that box away...”

Participant 1

“...I was able to speak to my supervisor about it [not wanting to place a label on an individual], in the internship, and she was very understanding...I felt that because I understood where my problem with this was I was able to communicate it and work with my supervisor to make it a less traumatising process [internship] for myself.” Participant 3

4.4.2. Personal Support

“So, that was a difficult part as well of the internship to lose, umm, friends...” Participant 2

“You get to go into the masters programme and then you create the friendships and you don’t realise when you go into the internship how like important they are actually...” Participant 2

“...you realise how much you actually shared with them [the other interns], not just professionally but also personally...” Participant 2

All participants acknowledged the emotional support provided by the other interns; who were friends in addition to peer professionals. Participants refer to personal support aiding their

wellbeing and reducing the possibility of burnout which supports existing information supplied by Gerber and Hoelson (2011), Myers et al. (2012) and Sweitzer and King (2009). Other interns are also likely to better understand the internship experience and difficulties associated with it (Richards et al., 2010). The professional and personal relationship shared among the interns most probably assisted with the participants' ability to address professional matters or anxieties. This support system is likely to have provided the participants with comfort and companionship during the tumultuous internship year (Richards et al., 2010; Sweitzer & King, 2009).

"...our [intern] group were phenomenal...that sort of like informal friendship, peer support was amazing...and often we would just run into each other's door going "can I have a hug?" and we would get a hug and then the next client would come in. Umm that was incredible." Participant 1

"...when we were all exhausted together, it's somehow relieving...you don't feel like it's just you and when you're able to have fun together and able to be silly together, which was a really important part of my masters [the masters training year as well as internship year] because...sometimes you really just have to be silly, and childlike and have fun...to let it go and, umm, that environment was nurturing and fun and sometimes we were all sad together..." Participant 3

"...I guess it was comforting to have those people [the other interns] around...for the professional development side because you were comfortable with them, you were friends with them, not just colleagues, it was easy to approach them when you need something, you know, quickly; to just get advice or to just get an opinion..." Participant 2

Lamb et al. (1982) refer to neophytes' need to separate from the internship experience and say goodbye to fellow interns. This is noted as an important part of the Resolution stage (Lamb et al., 1982) of intern development. Participant 2 makes reference to the difficulty experienced when having to say goodbye to the other interns who had shared an emotional experience and become good friends.

"...it was more like a family. I mean you start to create a family because of how hectic M1 [masters training program] is and how hectic internship is as well and so you start to rely on each other on an emotional level more than you, you know, have actually relied on other people..." Participant 2

“...when your internship fellows, your group or your people were leaving, you know. That was hard because we built relationships with each other and I think we were such a tight group so it was hard to see others go...” Participant 2

“...there’s a uniqueness in them, umm, and the emotional depth of it is also...it’s not like any other relationships...and I guess that’s what made it difficult when we separated, you know, because of the closeness we had formed in such a short time, you know, just one year of M1 [masters training program] and we were so close already...” Participant 2

4.5. Transitioning from Dependence to Independence

The journey to becoming an established counselling psychologist includes the transition from dependence to independence, which is accompanied by the professionals evolving sense of confidence and trust in her or his abilities. The themes of increased confidence and the role of supervision emerged as important contributors towards this transition.

4.5.1. Increased Professional Confidence

“...it’s not confidence in a formula...because that’s just not how therapy works. I have confidence in my ability to contain and handle whatever happens in therapy and I have confidence in my gut and that I must trust my gut instincts and follow it...” Participant 1

“...the confidence grew...I felt supported and my confidence was definitely enhanced from when I started practicing, but, umm, it started from M1 [masters training program] and I really continued to feel validated throughout my masters [master and internship year], from my colleagues...It started at the beginning and it didn’t stop...It was reassuring.” Participant 3

“Umm, but you get comfortable as the year goes, as you get comfortable in your own way of doing things. In your own learning and trusting that...You can put that in practice, you can be able to be the psychologist that you were trained to.” Participant 2

“Umm, and I guess that [to be a good psychologist] comes with trusting yourself and trusting, you know, yourself as a psychologist and the more you trust yourself the more other people are going to see and realise that you are a good psychologist...” Participant 2

Individuals who are accepted into a masters training program often feel as though they should not be there and struggle with their self-doubts about whether they will be able to fulfil the requirements related to becoming a counselling psychologist (Costa, 2002; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Those interviewed indicated that these self-doubts were present at the beginning of the internship year and lessened through experience and support from the supervisors and other interns. From this, it can be assumed that the participants developing self-confidence assisted them to overcome self-doubts regarding competency and suitability towards the profession.

“...obviously you’re anxious...because you’re not quite sure if you can do this. You...by some miracle, gotten selected and you’re secretly wondering if they made a mistake, and the only way to know they didn’t is through sheer practice and experience...especially, you know, those new experiences...those firsts of all the different presentations are, ja, anxiety provoking...” Participant 1

“I think in the beginning [of the internship year] you are more likely to be anxious because you just came out of training so you’re still kind of, you know, questioning and criticising yourself; doubting yourself in a sense. So, you know, you don’t really think that you have a lot, and you probably don’t have a lot, to offer but...it’s more anxiety provoking for yourself. It’s the internal anxiety if I can put it that way.” Participant 2

The path to developing an increased self-confidence is *“just a learning curve as well knowing that we have the tools and it’s a matter of accessing them, you know. Like you have the theoretical tools, you have the practical tools, umm, and, again, it’s just about trusting your gut, and trusting your instinct and doing what, you know, you feel is right for that moment, there is protocols and there is structure into how to go about so you’re not lost...” Participant 2*. However, at the beginning of the internship year, novice psychologists may rely on established practice and protocols to assist them when treating a client (Costa, 2002; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Participants suggest that this practice changes as they gain more experience and, as a result, more confidence in their abilities as a counselling psychologist.

“...when you...get relaxed you start to not rely on only just the protocol because...it’s not just about the rules and the regulations. You start...considering the protocol and your own gut feel...you start to be more flexible...At the beginning you are more rigid...but as you progress you start...[to] make the decision considering that...There might be different needs or different things that need to be

considered...you are more likely to be flexible in...your own...interventions and planning.”

Participant 2

Participants indicated that with time and experience, they are more likely to become more confident to practice in their own way, take professional risks and become part of the professional community by voicing their opinions or concerns. Furthermore, participants also seem to reveal a growing confidence in their ability to contain and deal with most situations that arise within the therapeutic relationship. This growing confidence in their competency is an important factor in the move towards independent professional functioning (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Sweitzer & King, 2009).

“So ja, but as the year goes then you start to relax into it and you start to be more engaged with whatever is presented as well, you start to also voice out your own opinions and understandings in a much more comfortable way...” Participant 2

“I feel like my job is bungee jumping...just because something worked with one client doesn't mean it's going to work with another. So every time I try something with a client, I just never know if it's going to work and you just have to...hope and trust that you will deal with the response in the appropriate manner, and somehow, through it all good will come or at the very least, no harm.”

Participant 1

“...it's just a matter of the more you trust yourself the more you are likely to be able to figure out what you need to do, you know, what intervention needs to be put in place for a client, umm and you think more rationally and your decisions are much more, you know, reliable in a sense because you are not in a panicked state, you're not anxious.” Participant 2

It appears as though the support of the other counselling centre professionals helped the participants gain confidence resulting in them emerging from the internship training without those initial feelings of being responsible for the client. These relationships may have been important to guide and assist the intern in navigating the expectations and uncertainty of the internship year (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Cole et al., 1981). Furthermore, the support received from the professional staff possibly allowed those interviewed to embrace their individuality as a counselling psychologist and reinforce a professional identity. Bruss and Kopala (1993) and Sweitzer and King (2009) mention that feedback from or interaction with professionals has the ability to minimise insecurities and self-doubts if it is provided in a sensitive and non-

critical manner. Such interaction is likely to promote professional confidence in order to overcome insecurities and develop a greater or more cohesive professional identity

“I felt fine with it [the feeling of responsibility] by the end of my internship...that was because I was fine with all that support; there was always a senior psychologist to talk to and a senior psychologist proof reading that my letters were alright...” Participant 1

“...the atmosphere that is created at the counselling centre makes it easy for you to fall...into the way of doing things and also getting comfortable with your own way of doing things. So that acceptance of individuality is nice so you know that you don’t have to be like someone else or agree with someone else, you can just be your own person, umm, and that’s ok.” Participant 2

By the end of the internship year, participants appear to have a clearer understanding of the therapeutic process and have developed a sense of their individual roles within the profession of counselling psychology. Aiding this, may be their gain in professional self-confidence to disperse of their initial insecurities and their own needs to control the process and establish trust in their own ability as a professional. According to Bruss and Kopala (1993), this leads to a greater sense of autonomy.

“...it’s just being comfortable within that [the theory or model you work from], you know, whatever you are doing and being comfortable in that. Comfortable means like confidence within yourself as a psychologist, confidence within yourself...confidence within your profession as well as a counselling psychologist.” Participant 2

“...I just know that I get into that room and I let go of control, let go my need for linear processes and my need for “I’m going to do X and therefore Y”, umm, and just trust that in being with the client in the moment we’re going to figure something out.” Participant 1

“...it was about embracing that messiness...or to embrace that it’s not perfect, well it is perfect but it’s messily perfect...It’s never going to simple and clear cut and... the reality that you never know what’s going to happen...that therapy can’t be made linear...” Participant 1

4.5.2. The Supervisory Relationship

*“I felt anxious and I also felt, it’s quite nice, I felt understood by my supervisor”
Participant 3*

“...it was a matter of come talk about anything that you want to talk about; if it’s a personal issue or a client issue, you decide, you know. It was like that throughout the year...” Participant 2

“...I always felt like a colleague...she [my supervisor] always treated me like a colleague...on the appearances, definitely colleagues...but...I was definitely very dependent on her and feeling like yes she’s making this safe...and by the end [of the internship] unconsciously that had gone and I really felt like we’re colleagues.” Participant 1

At the beginning of the internship year, it appears as though participants viewed themselves as being unknowledgeable and having little to contribute to the environment. However, it seems that by including the interns in decision making activities and respecting their opinions help them build confidence in terms of voicing their opinions within the psychology community. According to Bruss and Kopala (1993) such interactions are likely to promote an open relationship between the interns and the professional staff based on mutual respect. In addition to this, professional staff contributes to the neophyte’s developing professional self-confidence concerning their knowledge, skills and providing the space to trust their intuition.

“...I found it [support] was really important because at the end of every meeting...she [the internship site director] would go around and say “anything you would like to add?” and she would say your name and you could add anything and your comments or your criticisms or anything was really considered...I was really respected and my opinion was valued...” Participant 3

“...we would have a meeting and she [the internship site director] would give everyone a voice...so if anyone was going through something hectic, we always knew so we could support each other. Umm, there was definitely an open door policy so the senior psychologists were very happy for us to go in there any time” Participant 1

Those interviewed seemed to initially feel dependent on their supervisor’s knowledge and experience and possibly wanted to learn a lot more from their supervisor. This links to Theme 5 of therapist development where interns probably attempt to gain more knowledge from their supervisors and are likely to have a preference for didactic encounters (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This is largely due to their lack of professional confidence and belief that their supervisors are more knowledgeable.

*“I remember sort of during the third term thinking “*gasp* I’ve only got one term left of supervision, I’m never going to cope without it”, so I still felt quite dependant on her...” Participant 1*

“I think at the beginning...you feel like you need more from the supervisor, you know, you still need more guidance and you want to go and talk more into detail about a certain, you know, client in that sense because I think you are still kind of learning and still finding your feet in the therapy.”

Participant 2

One aspect of supervision is to encourage interns to challenge prescriptive theory and be open to various ideological principles (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). This exercise should be conducted in a supportive environment and the challenge should not be perceived by the intern as the supervisor being critical or intolerant (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). From the below extracts, it is likely that participants’ supervisors offered a varied perspective, when approached on a case, in the aim of broadening the participants’ understanding of the client and the therapeutic relationship. This supports Sommer et al.’s (2010) explanation of supervision being a space for interns to create meaning and supervisors to facilitate this process which may broaden their ways of understanding the case. According to Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) this interaction assists the intern with the development of professional skills and understanding of a therapeutic intervention in relation to a client.

“...when I reflect-on-action I was able to talk often with a supervisor...and that was very important in terms of giving me different perspectives of what the client’s going through...and I needed to have another perspective...in order to get that realisation [about what a particular intervention is like for a client or whether it was helpful]; which I’ve carried through and been more careful going forward.”

Participant 3

“...in terms of your skills and often even tools like if you reflect with a supervisor, they might say “look, do read this thing. This might help you” and you do and it’s another thing that you can put in your toolbox and next time someone brings a similar situation, you can...almost have a bit of a go-to in this sort of situation. Umm, or this has worked before, let’s see if it works again. Participant 3

“So it is a very supporting environment, umm, also, but you also learn to, umm, figure things out, it forces you to figure things out; to think about your clients, you know, and where you are having difficulties, to think about what you want to do with someone...” Participant 2

The supervisory relationship seems to have enabled participants to explore their own professional style of therapy as well as creating a professional identity. It appears as though the supervisor offered participants guidance rather than prescribed the treatment the intern should use with a specific client. This freedom to explore their own therapeutic abilities is likely to develop the intern's self-confidence and trust in her or his own judgement regarding therapeutic interventions and practice. With this increasing professional confidence and with experience, participants possibly challenged their supervisors regarding therapeutic treatment. This is in accordance with the Emerging Professional intern development stages and other literature which states that this engagement will probably aid the interns emerging professional identity should the supervisor support and encourage such discussion in supervision sessions (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Lamb et al., 1982; Riggs & Bretz, 2006). Additionally, this engagement possibly results in the development of a collegial supervisory relationship which reinforces the transition to an independent practitioner.

“...I guess supervision was more of a learning to be the therapist that you want to be and...it was providing that freedom...of being your own psychologist and...it was helpful in allowing you to build up confidence in yourself...learning to trust yourself, learning to trust your decisions, you know, about clients, and learning to trust your competencies...” Participant 2

“...supervision, in the internship...was more like guidance in a sense...[you] think about where you want to go [with a client] and it was more supportive...you learn to grow and to trust yourself more and...to develop and be your own therapist and not rely on the supervisor...and it provided a space...[to] become more of an independent...therapist...” Participant 2

“[my supervisor] really pushed me to use myself more in therapy...Umm, and so sort of with that guidance I started giving myself permission to bring more of my death stuff in but knowing that I could contain it. You know, knowing that it was going to stay focused on the client but that I am also allowed to bring myself in.” Participant 1

As mentioned, participants are likely to grow in self-confidence and eventually they are likely to shift from the perspective of the supervisor to a more internal perspective. This shift possibly assists them in achieving a greater sense of independence as well as a more defined professional identity (Sommer et al., 2010). At this stage however participants may still value the support of their supervisors to boost their emerging professional confidence and identity.

“...I think then the shift within the supervision would be you are not more depending on your supervision, you are more likely now to be more independent and show that independency to your supervisor...All you need is like support, to know that they’re there when you need them.”

Participant 2

Participants reiterated that with experience in the therapy room and support from the supervisor, they begin to gain confidence in their own professional skills and identity as a counselling psychologist. There is also an indication that participants experienced the increase in confidence as a gradual change over a period of time rather than an intense period of change. This seems to support Ronnestad and Skovholt’s (2003) claim that professional development is a continual process and it is likely that interns view a lot of their development retrospectively.

“Umm, but then throughout the year you then get comfortable and you get more confident in your abilities and you start to let go a little bit, you know. Being less dependent on the supervisor, and, I guess, then internalising the supervisor and you start relying on yourself.” Participant 2

“...I am not quite sure what shifted but, I suppose like with anything, nothing shifts instantaneously. It slowly grows and changes. So maybe it just sort of started that process of realising that I would be ok without her [my supervisor] ...I suppose it was quite subtle; the changes.” Participant 1

Although, some interns refer to a particular incident or a turning point which initiated change in their relationship with their supervisor and expedited the transition to independency (Bruner, 1994; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Participant 1 makes reference to a particular incident which led to her de-idealisation of her supervisor and, in accordance with Kottler and Swartz (2004), this incident was accompanied by an increased sense of competence. The de-idealisation process is possibly the intern’s acknowledgment of the supervisor’s limitations and that supervisor is only providing guidance in terms of her or his own understanding of the therapeutic process (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

“...I disagreed with [my supervisor] ... and...a turning point for me...[was] the de-idealisation of your supervisor and the de-idealisation of how much knowledge they have and how they know everything...and that was empowering, I suppose, and helped me own that [therapy] room as mine and...to embrace just the messiness of therapy.” Participant 1

“...[the disagreement with my supervisor] helped me [to] separate from [my supervisor]. I kind of, umm, feel like “oh yes, she’s the-knowing one, she’s the wise one, I must just hang on to everything that she says and I will be fine” but realising...I’m separate to her and that I’m allowed to be different to her...I was...trusting that mommy would make it all ok and be omnipotent and help me handle the anxiety of being an intern...it helped me...become my own psychologist, my own person, and...to learn to value my own opinions ...” Participant 1

By the end of the internship year, the intern should emerge with confidence in her or his professional abilities to function as an independent practitioner. It is likely that some of the supervisor’s or other professional’s behaviour or ways of thinking may become internalised thus informing the intern’s professional functioning going forward (Grimmer & Tribe, 2001; Wilkins, 1997). Comments from those interviewed support the previous comment and indicate that the participant’s particular internship training site provided sufficient experience and support to prepare the novice professional for independent practice.

“...you start to question yourself the way your supervisor would question you and you start to reflect on things more and, umm, and then start to go with your instinct as well; trusting your instinct as well.” Participant 2

“...but I remember by the end of the fourth term feeling like “ah, I’m totally ready for this. No problem” ...”Participant 1

4.5.3. Developing a Professional Identity

“...sometimes you will be a psychologist in your personal life and I hope that sometimes you’re a person in your psychologist life” Participant 1

“...our personal development is so interlinked with our ability to be a psychologist.” Participant 1

It appears as though participants were afraid to assert their individuality upon entering the internship. This is likely to be associated with their lack of professional confidence and feeling that they do not have sufficient knowledge to contribute anything meaningful (Kaslow & Rice, 1985; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As a result, participants seemed to conform to established behaviours and procedures. It is also possible

that by conforming participants were attempting to integrate into the counselling centre group.

“I mean, at some point [at the beginning of the internship] it’s more like norms and the way people do things and then we just follow and conformity.” Participant 2

“...not wanting to come and do your own different thing because you don’t know how people are going to take it. At the beginning but once I got comfortable, I could just find my own style...But that comes, I think, in the middle when you’ve already feel like part of the team...and you...are part of the group...” Participant 2

Participant 2 reflects the assumption by Ibarra (1999) regarding the development of a professional identity. It was previously mentioned that participants appear to want to prove their competency as a result of their feelings of insecurity and vulnerability (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). However, over time and with varied experiences, novice professionals gain insight into their professional preferences and abilities (Ibarra, 1999). This brings about a professional self-confidence and in turn, participants start developing a professional identity.

“...you don’t have to show off or prove yourself...but...like any other experience, it comes with being comfortable, it comes with time, it comes with practice...the more you see clients, the more you get comfortable with certain presenting problems and the more you get...confident in your own abilities...and then you start to realise that you can just be yourself and that’s ok.” Participant 2

Following this, participants appear to begin assimilating theoretical knowledge and information they feel is congruent to their personal self or personality (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 1992, 2003; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Their selectivity may indicate that the mistaken assumption of needing to know everything is no longer present. This possibly begins the integration process of the professional and personal self thus enabling the novice professional to work therapeutically in a manner which is consistent with their personal self and the professional role.

“...so in one sense I was taking from others but I was filtering it and deciding what to take, and what to accept, and what to learn, you know, like what skills I would like to adopt and which ones I wouldn’t; which ones felt incongruent, umm, and understanding that, you know, that can still work for other therapists to, you know, use those sort of skills even if it doesn’t work for me.” Participant 3

“I’ve adopted what has felt congruent with who I am, so the different techniques that when I practise them have felt...the way that I already perceive the world and perceive situations...” Participant 3

It appears as though the integration process enabled participants to acknowledge and accept their individuality. Gibson et al. (2010) argues that when novice professionals establish a sense of fit with the counselling psychology profession as well as the professional community, it is likely to validate their professional role. Related to this, participants’ may have shifted their appraisal of their professional performance from an external to an internal process. This is in accordance with claims by Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) and Sommer et al. (2010). Furthermore, the integration of the professional and personal self as well as the mentioned shift of focus may enable those interviewed to realise their and the client’s contribution towards the therapeutic relationship and implement professional boundaries (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

“...Sometimes it might be different to what another therapist believes and that’s also helpful in terms of knowing when to refer a client, umm, or just being aware that what I believe is different from another person’s, umm, or how my approach is different from another person’s. So it really helped me...understand how I work better as a therapist; to understand myself better in comparison to other therapists as well.” Participant 3

“In terms of owning how I work. That it’s ok that I don’t want to diagnose. And it’s ok...but that it’s also ok that she does want to be diagnosed.” Participant 1

“...so it was about owning how I work and being ok with how I work and also about cutting clients lose if that’s what they need, if that’s what they want.” Participant 1

Participants indicated a sense of relief following the integration phase and the realisation that being themselves is sufficient to be a good psychologist. Therefore, participants appear to shift from the concept of the ideal therapist towards a real therapist and are likely to discard the afore mentioned expectation of being the perfect therapist. This is likely to cement their professional identity and their ability to be authentic with the client (Ibarra, 1999; Gazzolaa et al., 2011) thus enabling the transition to an independent professional.

“...it was comforting...it was a relief to know that I can be myself and do things the way that I want and still be a good psychologist and I guess that’s what we want, to be good psychologists.”

Participant 2

Participants refer to interactions with counselling psychologists as being important in terms of socialisation but also in facilitating the establishment of their professional identities. This is against the backdrop of the counselling psychology community facing a period of transition regarding professional cohesiveness and relevancy in South Africa (Watson & Fouche, 2007; Young, 2013). According to Young (2013), employment opportunities and the status of the profession, which seem to be a concern among participants, will influence the formation of a professional identity. Thus, interactions with seasoned professionals may effect participants’ perception of and commitment to the counselling psychology profession in South Africa. Moss et al. (2014) and Liddell et al. (2014) warn against role confusion which may be a result of the unsuccessful integration into the professional community.

“...especially with the whole talk of counselling psychologists and their own identity and our scope of practice stuff and...having those conversations with counselling psychologists and seeing people that...believe in the integrity of counselling psychologists and are making it...are professionally growing and professionally advancing themselves means that...actually there is nothing wrong...with being a counselling psychologist...you can still learn and develop yourself.” Participant 2

“...to see people actually doing it and...it was more a relief kind...because you get worried...[with] all this talk about the medical aids not paying and all that...will bring about a lot of anxiety...and you wonder...what does it mean then to be a counselling psychologist, but to see confident and competent...senior psychologists just made it easy and also like validated the decision of becoming a counselling psychologist...and at the end you can be the psychologist that you want to be regardless of what category you are registered as in the HPCSA.” Participant 2

Those interviewed appear to describe their professional identity as an increased feeling of professional competency, authenticity and sense of belonging to a professional community. This is consistent with Gibson et al. (2010) and Moss et al. (2014) who refer to the creation of a professional identity as the integration of the personal self and the professional self within a psychological community. In addition to this, participants seem to have a greater understanding of the therapeutic process which is likely to lead to a greater understanding of their role as a professional. Consequently, it is likely that participants will be more flexible

and creative in their therapeutic work in addition to applying a personal approach (Donati & Watts, 2005; Wilkins, 1997).

“...I guess it would be like to be comfortable as the therapist that I am. Being comfortable within my own skills, umm, being comfortable within my own competencies, being comfortable within my own understandings of like therapy and being comfortable of my role as being a therapist and just comfortable in your own professional identity.” Participant 2

“Who I am as a person and what feels authentic to me...and I suppose what I value. ...I’m not going in pretending to be some sort of different therapist. I’m going to be myself,” Participant 3

*“My sense of who I am as a psychologist. That’s “[participant’s name] the psychologist” and that’s quite interlinked with counselling psychologist. As least for me it is my professional identity.”
Participant 1*

4.6. Conclusion

Interns’ experiences were outlined and discussed in this chapter. Four main themes, namely responsibility, learning, support and the transition from dependence to independence, were identified from the interviews conducted. Information from the Literature Review chapter (Chapter 2) was used to present these themes in relation to the professional and personal development of an intern. There appears to be an overlap of the themes and subthemes discussed which supports the understanding that the professional self and personal self of a professional are closely intertwined. The following chapter addresses the researcher’s personal reflection, the strengths and limitations of the study as well as the concluding comments. Implications for future research are also put forward.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on a summary of the findings of the research study. An overview of the emergent themes is presented noting the contribution to existing literature regarding professional and personal development of counselling psychology interns. Following this is a personal reflection from the researcher. The strengths and limitations to the study are discussed and, finally, the chapter provides recommendations for future research within this field.

5.2. Summary of Findings

The findings of the study attempt to address questions regarding critical incidents identified by counselling psychology interns which impact on their professional and personal development. There is a specific focus on the incidents which impact on the development of a professional identity as well as factors present at internship training sites which are conducive to the nurturing of an emerging professional identity. The themes extracted from the interviews conducted, namely limitations and boundaries, support systems, learning and the transition from dependence to independence, are briefly discussed in relation to these questions.

At the beginning of the internship, it is likely that those interviewed assumed responsibility for their clients. This appears in the form of the perfect psychologist and their misguided assumption that being very knowledgeable will enable this. Furthermore, the construction of a good psychologist is someone that is useful and able to help the client meet their objectives for personal therapy. Participants were possibly aware of the consequences of mistakes made in the therapeutic relationship and, as a result, were more likely to follow established processes and limit their risk taking. At this point in the internship, an intern is probably vulnerable and harbouring insecurities regarding their competency and suitability to the profession.

Over time and with experience, participants began to realise that an imperfect therapist is likely to be more valuable therapeutically. With this realisation and the support of

supervisors, participants were more likely to acknowledge and accept their limitations pertaining to their therapeutic abilities and responsibilities. They began to embrace their idiosyncrasies and their appraisal of professional abilities shifted from an external to an internal process. This shift in appraisal means that those interviewed were possibly able to enforce personal and professional boundaries more readily thus enabling them to practice more effective and ethical psychotherapy. Furthermore, the acceptance of limitations allowed those interviewed to recognize that the professional and client bears equal responsibility in the therapeutic process. This often brings about a new respect for the client, for their decisions and ability to learn from experiences. Participants possibly began to learn how to regulate professional involvement and utilise self-disclosure therapeutically. Linked to this was the ability to differentiate between personal issues and those belonging to the client and subsequently being able to relate to the client in a therapeutic manner. Additionally, those interviewed learnt to distinguish between what the client needs compared to what the client wants from the therapeutic relationship. The results related to this theme indicate an increase in professional self-confidence which is likely to lead to a higher degree of experimentation and exploration regarding participants' therapeutic orientation. Those interviewed also seemed to seek congruency between their professional and personal self, causing an increase in their awareness of their professional competency and aiding the creation of a professional identity.

The findings indicate that participants were likely to be curious and wanted to learn as much as possible from more seasoned psychologists within the internship environment but also while completing their academic training. This curiosity probably stemmed from the desire to be the best psychologist they can be. Participants referred to the importance of the professional identity academic course and the impact of this on their creation of a professional identity prior to entering the internship year. This course may have eased the participants' transition into the internship year as well as their socialisation into the professional community. Furthermore, there is an indication that participants trusted their academic lecturers and this is likely to have led to their trusting that their academic training provided a sufficient foundation to their ongoing learning. Besides the theoretical knowledge, academic lecturers appeared to have provided participants with practical advice which became internalised and is referred to as a means of alleviating some of the anxiety experienced when performing professionally. Furthermore, academic lecturers also challenged participants' misconceptions and societal constructions of what a psychologist

should be and modelled professional behaviour. This practice appeared to continue into the internship year as supervisors and professionals continued to act as models and participants appeared to prefer experiential learning. In addition to this, professionals at the counselling centre and supervisors provided a supportive environment which acknowledged variability thus enabling participants to accept their individual personal professional identities. The learning through modelling behaviour and theoretical knowledge probably aided the professional development of those interviewed by increasing their self-confidence in their professional abilities.

The support theme refers to the importance of professional and personal support received from supervisors, other professional staff, other interns and friends. These support structures are likely to be important in alleviating some anxieties experienced as novice professionals trying to overcome the challenges of the internship year. Participants also referred to the unique situation where the other interns became more than just peers and a close bond formed between them. This bond proved to be important in terms of the participants' wellbeing and in assisting each other with professional matters and anxieties accompanying the internship year. At the end of the internship year, saying goodbye to these friends seemed to be difficult for participants. The support received from the other interns was described by Participant 3 as them being "all in the same boat" thus indicating an understanding that accompanies this. Additionally, the support received from the other interns seemed to have encouraged participants to explore therapeutic approaches and techniques which are congruent to their personal and professional selves thus increasing their confidence in their professional abilities.

Professional support is initially provided by a welcoming atmosphere and an introduction to the counselling centre. The orientation process is viewed as important because it assists participants in reducing the uncertainty when they join the new work environment as well as enabling them to identify with the ways of working at the counselling centre. In addition to peers and professionals, supervisors possibly played a vital role in the professional development of participants. Through the provision of a nurturing, safe, trusting and supportive relationship, participants appeared to be able to challenge themselves professionally in an attempt to overcome perceived and real limitations. In conjunction with this, those interviewed refer to the supervisors as being accepting of individuality which most likely allowed for participants confidence in their own therapeutic abilities to develop as well

as the establishment of a professional identity within the counselling psychology community. Furthermore, supervisors functioned to broaden participants' understanding of their therapeutic role thus permitting them to make mistakes and to learn from them. This may have created an environment which encouraged participants' exploration of their therapeutic abilities and knowledge leading to their dismissal of the concept of the ideal psychologist and replacing it with the more realistic concept of what a psychologist is. This means that supervisors not only assisted in developing aspects of participants' professional capabilities but they also assisted participants in the creation of a professional identity.

The last theme discusses participants' transition from being dependent on their supervisors to becoming independent practitioners. This theme incorporated participants' increased confidence in their professional abilities as well as the socialisation aspect of a professional identity. When interns commenced their internship year, they seemed to lack self-confidence in their expertise and were likely to have the assumption that supervisors were more knowledgeable. Participants' insecurities and self-doubts appeared to have kept them dependent on the guidance of their supervisor as well as other professionals within in the counselling centre environment. As participants progressed through the internship year, they appeared to gain more confidence through practice which led to an increased trust in their professional abilities and judgement. There is a possibility that those interviewed experienced their increase in confidence as a gradual process due to the support and nurturance received from their supervisor.

Supervisors attempted to broaden participants' understanding of the therapeutic process and this insight possibly allowed participants to realise that supervisors provided guidance within their knowledge rather than being all knowing. This realisation may have led to the de-idealisation of supervisors and consequently those interviewed gained more self-confidence to perform professionally. Additionally, the supervisory relationship possibly changed to a more collegial one thus reinforcing participants' transition to an independent professional. Furthermore, this realisation within the supportive supervisory space is likely to have encouraged participants to explore their subjective therapeutic style and practice in a manner congruent with their personal self. The exploration of professional identity along with participants' increased self-confidence seemingly assisted in the development of a professional identity.

As those interviewed prepared to complete their internship year, their increased confidence in their professional competency and clearer understanding of their professional role within the therapeutic relationship most likely led to an increased self-assurance to function as an independent practitioner as well as accept their individuality within the counselling psychology community.

To conclude, the extracted themes reveal specific events which influenced the participants' journey from student to independent practitioner. These include the difficulty around saying goodbye to the other interns when such close bonds had been formed, the counselling identity academic course participants attended while completing their masters training and the moment when interns realise that their own unique therapeutic style and approach is "good enough" when grounded in psychological theory. Other examples of specific events are the emphasis placed on reflective and reflexive practice, although participants seemed to view the value of this retrospectively as well as the point when participants began the de-idealisation process and the understanding that their supervisors are not omniscient. It is relatively clear, when considering the themes, that some themes are not specific incidents but rather more fluid process occurring throughout the year. Such process comprise of a supportive and understanding supervisory relationship, the continuous support received from professionals and the other interns as well as the participants experiences in their own psychotherapy sessions. Additionally, there is the process of becoming socialised into the counselling centre and also the broader psychological community. From this it is evident that during the internship period, those interviewed described critical incidents as specific events and more fluid processes thus confirming Skovholt and Ronnestad's (1992) assertion regarding professional development. This means that the process of growth and change is promoted by a combination of specific events and an accumulation of related events. The combinations of specific or critical moments in conjunction with the processes are what contribute in the professional and personal development of interns.

5.3. Personal Reflection

When conducting qualitative research it is vital for researchers to approach their data with an open and unbiased mind. This means that researchers need to acknowledge and reflect on their existing knowledge of the subject as well as any biases, feelings or assumptions about the topic (Groenewald, 2004; Morrow et al., 2012). Additionally, it must be noted that the

researcher cannot remain entirely objective when engaging in qualitative research and that the aim of this type of research is to provide a descriptive understanding of the participants experience (Larkin et al., 2006; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

The impetus for this study was my experience as an intern. This experience was challenging and confusing and resulted in my asking many questions regarding my therapeutic ability, myself as a psychologist, and as a counselling psychologist. I was able to relate to participants experiences as I shared this experience with them, albeit figuratively as I did not practically share an internship with them. The ability to relate enabled me to develop a more in-depth understanding of their accounts of being an intern. As a result, I needed to maintain an open mind and avoid the assumption that participants will reflect my subjective experiences as critical incidents in their own development as an independent professional.

Another consideration is that the shared experience may have influenced the manner in which participants related to me. It is likely that participants elevated their impressions of their internship experience as a comparison to my own internship experience. In addition to this, they may have wanted to avoid being too critical and painting an unfavourable picture of the internship training site. Most of the incidents spoken about were positive experiences however two participants each spoke about one negative experience. The third participant made reference to a difficult experience rather than a negative one. Therefore it is likely that the participants viewed their internship year as an overall positive experience and I feel that I did not prevent them from speaking freely.

Being a novice researcher, there were occasions where it was extremely difficult to “bracket” my own experiences. On the one hand, my biases and assumptions may have directed the focus of my interview questions and the information obtained from participants. On the other hand, cognisance of having to remain as unbiased as possible may have resulted in rigid questioning based on existing literature. These assumptions, along with my inexperience, also had the potential to result in deductions of information that may not have been present in the data or formulating superficial descriptions of the phenomena under study. Furthermore, my shared experience and assumptions meant that I was able to ‘fill in the gaps’ in the information provided by participants during the interviews. This means that there is the potential for the exaggeration of certain themes with information that was not reflected in participants’ accounts. In saying this, the findings were largely supported by the literature

which not only supports my “lived” experience but also validates my interpretation of the data as a researcher.

My history with terms relating to race or ethnicity sees me using them with little awareness beyond the superficial and visible definitions. Spending the majority of my childhood in a changing South Africa, I was quite suggestible regarding race and ethnic ideologies. I encountered differing beliefs and as a means to balance this conflict, terms associated with race and ethnicity became adjectives rather than constructs leading to power, abuse and discrimination. Even though I am presently trying to be more thoughtful on the deeper definitions and associated social plights of these terms, I occasionally find myself naively neutralising them to simple definitions. In addition to this, as a 33 year old white female, I need to be aware of my position of privilege and what this has enabled me to achieve, for example pursue graduate studies with the only condition being financial and, often, being perceived to be better or more competent than others purely due to my skin colour or cultural practices.

The above two points are problematic in that I had preconceptions of which critical incidents would be considered important by the participants. These particular preconceptions, unlike the previously mentioned ones, seemed to have been based on race and culture; the race and culture not only of the participants but also of the social context in which the counselling centre is situated in. For example, I thought that the negotiation of cultural differences or existing cultural gender practices would have been a critical incident for the black female participant in particular. The necessity to be actively aware of my position required me, at times, to have conversations with people who are more conscientised on the topic of race and ethnicity.

From the above, it can be determined that this study was not completely objective, despite an awareness of my assumptions and biases. However, my ‘lived’ experience enabled me to understand the participants’ accounts more comprehensively and easily become familiar with the collected data. Therefore, it may be presumed that my role as the researcher provided an extra depth to the findings which emerged from the study.

5.4. Strengths of the Study

Presented in this study, is an overview of existing literature regarding the professional and personal development of novice psychologists. Concurrently, it provides the experiences of counselling psychologists during their internship year and how these experiences have influenced their development as professionals. As a result, the information generated may be useful for internship sites as a supplement to the internship program as well as create a base for future research, based on the recommendations provided, within the South African context.

The use of qualitative data strengthened this research as the use of individual interviews allowed for experiences of each participant to be explored thus eliciting information rich accounts of these experiences. The choice of a phenomenological and qualitative approach was appropriate as the research was interested in exploring the “lived” reality of counselling psychology interns in South Africa. In a similar way, the use of semi-structured interviews enabled researcher flexibility when conducting the individual interviews thus creating opportunity for the most salient incidents of the internship experience to spontaneously emerge. Individual interviews also enabled participants to share their unique and personal experiences pertaining to their internship year and their professional and personal development.

The researcher’s personal journey as an intern can be considered a strength as she had an understanding of the concepts used during the interviews. In addition, it strengthened the interpretation of the data collected as she was able to relate to aspects of the participants experiences of their internship year. In an attempt to avoid projecting her own ideas onto the information collected, the researcher engaged in reflexivity.

This study does not encompass all information pertaining to the experiences of counselling psychology interns in South Africa. Instead, it focuses on critical incidents, according to counselling psychology interns; which aid or hinder their professional and personal development. As reviewed by the literature, this is an under-researched area and there is little information concerning the way that counselling psychology interns, in South Africa, experience their professional and personal development as they prepare for independent practice. Therefore, this study, which identifies critical incidents regarding professional and

personal development as well as the establishment of a professional identity in the internship year, will hopefully contribute to the literature relevant to experiences of intern counselling psychologists within a South African context.

A final thought regarding the study's strengths pertains to whether the methodology employed allowed for the findings to meet the objectives of the study and answer the research questions detailed in Chapter 3. In reviewing this, the researcher firstly considered whether the participants' subjective experiences were seriously considered in regards to their "lived" reality; whether the researcher made sense of these experiences through interaction with and by listening carefully to the participants; and finally whether the qualitative research techniques used to collect and analysis the data were appropriate. The researcher feels that these considerations have been suitably satisfied thus the discussion concerning the experiences of counselling psychology interns provided a wide-ranging view of incidents which influence their professional and personal development during the internship year. In addition, this discussion provides an overview of how the environment at the internship training site aids interns' development of professionalism and socialisation into the counselling psychology community. As mentioned in section 5.2., the research questions were well addressed through the responses of the participants. This arose through their accounts of specific events as well as general processes, such as the supervisory relationship, which occurred during the internship year.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study should be considered with the limitations in mind. The researcher acknowledges certain limitations pertaining to the scope of study, the methodology used in the study and the practical realities which are likely to occur in research studies but particularly with novice researchers. Firstly, it is unclear to what extent the findings of this study can be generalised to the broader counselling psychology intern population within South Africa. The sample size was kept small due to the scope of study as well as to obtain information rich experiences of interns during their internship year. This enabled the researcher to focus on the quality of the information obtained rather than the quantity. In addition to this, the sample was purposive rather than randomly selected. The findings indicate common themes among all three participants however these findings are limited and may be described as indications only.

The interpretative stance of qualitative research may be considered a limitation as other researchers may interpret the findings or themes differently to the researcher. Braun and Clarke (2006) mention that researchers need to recognise their decisions when selecting and editing excerpts from the interviews collected. It is likely that the researcher's biases or assumptions influenced those decisions. As a control measure, the researcher attempted to discuss the findings in relation to existing literature. The researcher also attempted to approach the analysis of data with an open mind.

The reliability of the data is dependent on the researcher's competency and ability to conduct interviews and control for researcher bias (Appleton, 1995). The researcher was the only person conducting participant interviews and acknowledges that her inexperience with research and specifically the CIT method may have impacted on the results obtained. In an attempt to reduce this impact, the participants were requested to comment on the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of the findings and whether this captured their experience of the internship year.

A further limitation exists in the lack of diversity of the sample group. Firstly, the sample group consisted of three female participants all within a narrow age range. Having male participants or participants at different ages may alter the incidents that are considered critical to professional or personal development thus this study is unable to compare gender group and age differences across their experiences in the internship year. Furthermore, all participants completed their postgraduate training at the same academic training institution thus receiving the same training going into the internship. Following from this is the pre-existing bond, between the interns, which formed during the academic training program and the results regarding intern support. It is likely that these results may not be easily extrapolated to other interns who, at the start of their internship, did not know their fellow interns.

5.6. Implications for Future Research

Considering the above-mentioned limitations, some implications for future studies can be made. Participants referred to the importance of the counselling psychology professional identity seminars in their masters academic training and the impact this had not only on their professional identity but also on their socialisation into the professional community. It is

known that not all South African masters training programmes provide such seminars. It may be beneficial to explore the effects of socialising novice professionals at the academic training stage rather than when they enter their internships.

A further recommendation is to improve on the generalizability of these findings by increasing the sample size group. The review of the literature by the researcher revealed the apparent lack of research regarding the incidents which novice counselling psychologists, in South Africa, consider important for their professional development and the creation of a professional identity. This is of particular importance given the current context of the counselling psychology profession in South Africa and the attempt to establish an identity separate to the other registration categories. Linked to this is the inclusion of counselling psychology interns from multiple internship sites as well as the influence of other registration categories, such as educational psychologists, who complete their internship at the same internship training site. The other area for potential research could be to explore the gender group differences in the experiences of counselling psychology interns in South Africa.

New research questions or topics may follow from this study, such as the inclusion of personality characteristics of novice psychologists and what the contribution of these traits to their journey of becoming a counselling psychologist is; or whether an intern will repeat a certain developmental stage if this has already been addressed in her or his personal life and, if so, how does the duration of the development stage and degree of stress experienced compare to other interns.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information Sheet

Good day

My name is Beverley Teixeira and I am a psychology masters student at Rhodes University. I am currently doing research in fulfilment of my degree of a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology.

The objective of my research is to explore the experiences of counselling psychology interns and the negative or positive incidents which influenced the successful transition from student to professional. Specifically, this research looks at particular events during the internship year which contributed to the psychology intern's development of professionalism and competence. This research is important in understanding how psychology intern's view professional development and what factors are influential in the establishment of a professional identity.

Participants in this study will be individually interviewed regarding the events during their internship year which had an impact on their professional development and competence as a professional Counselling Psychologist. The interview should be approximately an hour and a half and will take place at a convenient and suitable location which is to be agreed upon between the participant and myself. A few weeks after the interview, participants will be asked via email to provide impressions or opinions on the themes which arose from all of the interviews. The study will be conducted under supervision of Jan Knoetze (j.knoetze@ru.ac.za).

Consequently, I herewith invite you to participate in this research project and to partake in an interview to be facilitated by myself. The interview will be transcribed and analysed by me and my research supervisor and myself will be the only people with access to the transcriptions and tapes. All recordings and transcriptions will be kept locked safely in a cupboard and will be destroyed two years after the completion of the study if the findings are published. If no publications happen within six years of the completion of the study, the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed at that stage. If you agree to being interviewed, please

complete the attached consent forms (the agreement to participate in the study and the permission to be recorded in an interview).

On completion of the research, my thesis will be kept in the library at Rhodes University. Findings are expected to be presented at conferences in the future and, in addition, it is hoped that they will also be used in future journal articles. If it is requested, a summary of the paper would gladly be provided to participants in this study.

Please note that your identity will be kept confidential and any identifying information will be altered in order to maintain your anonymity. Kindly also note that you may withdraw from the research study at any time and that you would be under no obligation to answer any question that will make you feel uncomfortable.

There are no particular risks or benefits for those participating in the research, aside from the opportunity for participants to share their stories. However, I will be available should any participant feel the need to discuss and process feelings that have arisen during the interview. Additionally, if you have any questions about this research study, you are welcome to contact me on the details provided below.

Regards

Beverley

Cell: 072 140 0924

Email: g12t4179@ru.ac.za

APPENDIX B

Agreement between Student Researcher and Participant

I _____ (participant's name) agree to participate in the research project of Beverley Teixeira on professional development amongst Counselling Psychology interns.

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a masters degree at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted on 072 140 0924 or g12t4179@ru.ac.za. The research project has been approved by the relevant ethics committee(s), and is under the supervision of Mr Jan Knoetze in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted on j.knoetze@ru.ac.za.
2. The researcher is interested in exploring particular events during the internship year which contributed to the counselling psychology intern's development of professionalism and competence.
3. My participation will involve partaking in an individual interview regarding the events during my internship year which had an impact on my professional development and competence as a professional Counselling Psychologist. The interview should be approximately an hour and a half. A few weeks after the individual interview, I will partake in an email interview where I will provide my impressions or opinions on the themes which arose from all of the interviews.
4. I may be asked to answer questions of a personal nature, but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
5. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
6. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
7. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (Date):

Participant: _____ Researcher: _____

APPENDIX C

Permission to Record the Interview

Rhodes University – Department of Psychology

<p>USE OF TAPE RECORDINGS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES</p> <p>–</p> <p>PERMISSION AND RELEASE FORM</p>

Participant name & contacts (address, phone etc)	
Name of researcher & level of research (Honours/Masters/PhD)	
Brief title of project	
Supervisor	

Declaration		
<i>(Please initial/tick blocks next to the relevant statements)</i>		
1. The nature of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me	verbally	
	in writing	
2. I agree to be interviewed and to allow tape-recordings to be made of the interviews	audiotape	
	videotape	
3. I agree to take part in and to allow tape-recordings to be made.	audiotape	
	videotape	
4. The tape recordings may be transcribed	without conditions	
	only by the researcher	
	by one or more nominated third parties:	
5.1 I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be erased once the study is complete and the report has been written.		
5.2 OR I give permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study and for them to be utilised for the following purposes and under the following conditions:		

Signatures		
Signature of participant		Date
Witnessed by researcher		

APPENDIX D

Interview Schedule

1. Tell me how you understand professional development.
2. Tell me how you understand personal development.
3. Please can you give me some critical incidents, or turning points, in your internship year, which had an impact on your professional or personal development?
 1. Which three were the most significant in terms of your professional and personal development or professional identity?
 2. Tell me a little bit more about the event.
 3. Why was this event important?
 4. What was the impact of this event?
 5. When did this event occur?
4. Tell me whether you think reflection and reflexion is important and why.
5. Describe your professional identity journey.
6. Are there any questions or concerns or issues you would like to raise or discuss?