

1. Abstract

What do therapists experience in the minutes before or between sessions with clients? Do trainees experiences of their developing congruence change during their training? Whilst there is a robust ongoing debate around evolving conceptions of congruence (inter-personal or intra-personal), very little research considers the congruent/incongruent therapist in pre-session or as a significant dimension of trainee PCEP's experiences.

This qualitative study by a PCEP Trainee used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of semi-structured interviews involving 6 participants. The sample were trainees in PCEP with a range of clinical experience, enrolled at 3 institutions, working in a range of public and private sector work settings across a range of client groups with different presenting issues. Participants were invited to comment on the research topic in relation to their chosen modality and how far it figured in their course of training.

The study found numerous themes and sub-themes in accounts of their pre-session experiences, including change over time, consideration of context, using PCA and PCEP language, evocative imagery. The range and depth of trainees experiences suggests this aspect of developing therapist congruence is worthy of further study and that some trainings do not address this very relevant topic directly or explicitly. This research also offers a robust critique of the study to invite and inform further PCEP research on this cornerstone concept within the development of PCEP.