

Final version to be published as: Wiggins, S., Elliott, R., & Cooper, M. (in press). The Prevalence and Characteristics of Relational Depth Events in Psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy Research*. © Taylor & Francis. This is an author post-print and is not the final published version of record.

The prevalence and characteristics of relational depth events in psychotherapy

Sue Wiggins, Robert Elliott, & Mick Cooper

University of Strathclyde, Counselling Unit, Glasgow, United Kingdom

Abstract

We introduce two complementary measures of relational depth, defined as a state of profound contact and engagement between client and therapist. Using an internet-based survey of client and therapist accounts ($n = 342$), judges rated relational depth as present in over a third of significant therapy event descriptions. Participants also completed the Relational Depth Inventory (RDI), for which we report reliability, validity and factor structure. Relational depth events were more likely to occur in the presence of strong therapeutic alliance, and with female participants, but client or therapist role and therapy duration were not related to relational depth content or RDI. RDI items for connectedness, love, respect and intimacy were most strongly associated with relational depth content.

Running Head: Relational Depth Events

Keywords: Relational Depth, significant events, measurement, therapy process, therapeutic alliance

In his influential formulation of the nature of healing therapeutic relationships, Carl Rogers (1957) proposed that six conditions need to be in place for therapeutic personality change: (1) psychological contact; (2) a client experiencing a state of incongruence (feeling vulnerable or anxious); (3) therapist congruence or genuineness, (4) therapist unconditional positive regard and (5) therapist empathic understanding; and (6) communication of the therapist's unconditional positive regard and empathy to the client. This formulation inspired self-report measures such as the Barrett-Lennard Relationship Inventory (BLRI; Barrett-Lennard, 1986), which was designed to measure the client's perceived levels of therapist regard, empathic understanding, unconditionality and congruence. It also inspired a whole area of process-outcome research (see reviews by Bohart, Elliott, Greenberg and Watson, 2002; Sachse and Elliott, 2001), the results of which generally indicate that empathy accounts for between 7% and 10% of therapeutic outcome and that the client's perspective (compared to therapist's and observer's) of therapist empathy best predicts therapeutic outcome.

The relationship between therapist and client is most commonly seen today as a working alliance characterized by an emotional bond and agreement on therapeutic goals and tasks (Bordin, 1979). The Working Alliance Inventory (WAI; Horvath and Greenberg, 1986), for example, was developed and designed to capture Bordin's (1979) concept of the therapeutic alliance. Development of this and other measures has elicited a large number of studies on the relationship between alliance and outcome. Recent meta-analyses of this research (Martin, Garske and Davis, 2000; Horvath and Bedi, 2002) have found a small to medium effect size, generally accounting for 4 - 5% of the relationship between alliance and outcome.

Yet another view to the therapy relationship has recently emerged in the form of the concept of *relational depth*, which was first proposed by Mearns (1996, 1997) as an extension of Rogers' (1957) facilitative conditions of therapeutic change. Mearns (2003) later went on to propose that relational depth serves as a distinctive hallmark of the Person-centred approach at its best, describing it as 'an extraordinary depth of human contact' (p.5). A more comprehensive definition of relational depth comes from Mearns and Cooper (2005), who described it as 'a state of profound contact and engagement between two people, in which each person is fully real with the Other, and able to understand and value the Other's experiences at a high level' (p. xii).

Working alliance, the facilitative conditions and relational depth thus all attempt to describe key aspects of the relationship between therapist and client. Relational depth can be seen as an upward extension of working alliance and the facilitative conditions, beyond "good enough" to higher levels of relational quality. Whereas working alliance and the facilitative conditions arguably provide the setting for therapeutic work, relational depth can be seen as pointing toward corrective or psychologically transformative relational experiences, times when both client and therapist relate more fully. Where liking, compatibility and collaboration are central to working alliance, relational depth involves such emotional qualities as psychological intimacy, mutuality, presence (genuineness, openness and engagement by both parties), affirmation (a 'reaching out to the client's otherness) and 'meeting without words' or close mutual communication and attunement with the other. Mearns (2009) states explicitly that relational depth is not the same as the therapeutic alliance; as a 'personal challenge' for both client and therapist, relational depth has the potential to be a frightening and uncomfortable experience and therefore may not feel like a positive experience.

Mearns and Cooper (2005) proposed that relational depth is characterized by a coming together of all six of Rogers' (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions, as well as presence, realness, affirmation, client openness, mutuality and, potentially, a 'meeting without words' (p.47). They also proposed that relational depth takes two forms: a particular general quality of a relationship, and specific moments of encounter. They described the first as a lasting quality of 'an enduring sense of contact and interconnection between two people' (p.xii), even when those two people might not be in close proximity. For the second, they used words such as '*moments*', '*times*', and '*experiences*' to describe particular, relatively short-lived encounters where there is a deep sense of connection.

An experience of relational depth is characterized by each party perceiving themselves as being fully real with the other as well as understanding and valuing the other (Mearns and Cooper, 2005). Each party also perceives the other as being fully real with them whilst also valuing and understanding them. Therefore, theoretically, relational depth is conceptualized as a mutual experience that each participant intuitively shares with the other as well as being an inner experience or perception of each participant.

Although the term relational depth has so far only been used within the person-centred tradition, parallel concepts have emerged in other theoretical approaches, especially among psychodynamic researchers and therapists. Stern (2004), for example, proposed that "moments of meeting" are experienced in psychotherapy, and put forward a comprehensive taxonomy of different types of "present moments". He defined such moments as small momentary events that actually have the duration of several seconds but which happen within a single subjective now. He stated that "moments of meeting" are a particular type of present moment which consist of two people experiencing an inter-subjective meeting where each party is aware of what the other is experiencing.

Safran (1998) has also written of relatedness, or more specifically "moments of relatedness." He suggested that such moments may be the indirect result of a rupture in the therapeutic alliance that has provided the therapist with an opportunity to explore the client's

barriers to relatedness. Such barriers occur within and outside of therapy. He went on to say that such exploration leads to the client accepting their own and the therapist's separateness. This, in turn, "allows clients to have more authentic moments of relatedness in which they relate to the therapist in a more spontaneous way and come closer to accepting the therapist as he or she is..." (p. 250).

Psychodynamic theorists have also put forward the idea of a "third space" or "analytic third" which is seen as a third subjectivity created by dialectic and by and between the first and second subjectivities: the analyst and analysand (Ogden 1994). Moodley and Lijtmaer (2007) stated that a cross-cultural analytic stance tends to support the analytic third "within which disclosure is possible beyond technique and skill and supports the development of empathy, compassion and relational interaction" (p.49). This idea arguably has parallels to the idea of relational depth as a combination of empathy, compassion, acceptance and congruence.

Another important construct relevant to relational depth is that of the 'real relationship' as put forward by Gelso (2010) and defined as the transference-free aspects of the client-therapist relationship. Gelso (2010) describes it as "the personal relationship existing between two or more persons as reflected in the degree to which each is genuine with the other and perceives the other in ways that befit the other" (p.12-13). Although clearly related as a concept to relational depth, the real relationship refers generally to accurately presented and perceived aspects of the therapeutic relationship, as opposed to the transference. As such, relational depth can be understood as a particular kind of real relationship, that is, one in which client and therapist value each other positively and experience a level of intense or deep psychological contact.

Cooper (2005) initiated empirical research on relational depth, interviewing person-centred therapists. He reported that all the therapists in his sample had experienced moments of relational depth with their clients and that there were many commonalities amongst therapists' descriptions. Such commonalities during these moments included heightened feelings of empathy, acceptance and receptivity towards clients; powerful feelings of immersion in the therapeutic work; increased perceptual clarity; and greater levels of awareness, aliveness and satisfaction. Therapists also reported that during such moments of relational depth they experienced their clients as highly transparent, articulating core concerns and issues, and reciprocating the therapists' acknowledgement of them in a flowing bi-directional encounter. McMillan and McLeod (2006) focused on clients' experiences of relational depth by interviewing ten therapists about their experiences when they had been clients. Their results concluded that 'letting go' was central to the client's experience of relational depth. The authors suggested that where therapists experience relational depth in terms of the relationship, the client's experience of such is more often about themselves and of a willingness to let go and be free to express themselves with their therapist.

Most recently, Knox (2008) utilized semi-structured interviews to enquire about clients' experiences of moments of relational depth. Results bore some similarity to those of Cooper (2005) where descriptions of moments of relational depth included feelings of aliveness, realness and openness. However, differences were also found, with clients' experiencing their therapists as holding, accepting, 'really real' and as offering something over and above what they had expected. Such moments were considered by clients to be highly significant.

This study follows the definition of relational depth as an important event or moment, thus making it an example of significant event research, some of which is relevant to the present topic. For example, Elliott's (1985) cluster analytic study identified a category of helpful within-session events that he referred to as personal contact. Timulak's (2007) qualitative meta-analysis of studies on client-identified helpful significant events reported

nine key categories, in which personal contact also emerged as one such key event category. Within this category, Timulak cited three studies, including one by Moreno, Fuhrman and Hileman (1995), which found that during group therapy clients reported that relationship (e.g. 'I felt more connected with her') was one of the main reasons why they found an event during therapy important or meaningful.

To date, however, there have been no published quantitative studies on relational depth and no existing questionnaires specifically assess it, either by self-report or by content analysis of client or therapist descriptions of significant events. Although there is a 'depth' subscale on the Session Evaluation Questionnaire (SEQ), Stiles, Gordon and Lani, (2002), this is a general measure of the connotative meaning of sessions and is thus not focusing on assessing a deep connection between two people. The depth subscale of the SEQ could refer to a deep therapeutic relationship, or it could refer alternatively to some other form of psychological or emotional depth experienced in the session.

Clearly, research on relational depth would be greatly enhanced by the development of valid, reliable measures. Furthermore, none of the previous qualitative studies shed light on its prevalence (either in general or in relation to significant therapy events) and its possible correlates. In light of the apparent gaps in research into relational depth, the main objectives of this study were (a) to determine the extent to which moments of relational depth appeared to be present during significant therapy events; and (b) to investigate the reliability, validity and factor structure of the first questionnaire measure of relational depth. In addition, we also wanted to test a new content analysis measure of relational depth in descriptions of significant events. This will be used as a means of assessing the validity of the measure and to explore some possible associated characteristics (gender, role and therapy duration) of relational depth events of which there is no known literature on these characteristics at the time of writing.

Method

Participants

Eighty (23.3%) participants were male, 257 (74.9%), were female and 6 (1.2%) did not indicate gender. Of the 343 participants who took part in this study, 189 (55.1%) took part as therapists, 152 (44.3%) took part as clients and 2 (.6%) did not indicate. Of the therapists, 56 (29.6%) reported to be male, 131 (69.3%) reported to be female and 2 (1.1%) did not indicate. Of the clients, 24 (15.8%) reported to be male, 126 (82.9%) female and 2 (1.3%) did not indicate.

Ethnicity and socioeconomic status were not recorded. Note that due to the recruitment procedure (see Procedure below), it is likely that many of the clients in this study were actually therapists drawing on their experiences as clients. It should also be noted that a precise estimate of response rate cannot be calculated as it is not known how many people viewed the online questionnaire. However, due to the nature of the website software and its administration, it is known that 798 began the questionnaire and 343 completed and submitted their responses. It is also known that a total of 2,250 emails were sent (en masse) to various therapists listed on counselling and psychotherapy listings (such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy). Therefore, we can say, as a very rough estimate, that the response rate was between 15% and 43%. This does not account for any individuals who may have viewed the survey website by chance and it does not account for those who may not have received emails due to spam filters.

Measures

Relational Depth Inventory (RDI). The RDI used in this study was earlier developed as part of an earlier unpublished study (available from the first author); space limitations preclude detailed description. Item creation involved raw data of over 300 client and therapist descriptions of their experiences and definitions of moments of relational depth. These descriptions were subjected to grounded theory analysis and questionnaire items were formed to represent the categories of the analysis. Thus, questionnaire items were designed to assess moments of relational depth. The RDI was presented as ‘The Relationship Between Therapist and Client’ and began with a question that asked potential respondents to describe, in their own words, an important event they had experienced during a therapy session. Then the respondent was asked to rate this significant event using a five-point scale (1: “not at all”, 2: “slightly”, 3: “somewhat”, 4: “very much”, 5: “completely”) indicating the extent to which they experienced each of the specific qualities represented by the 64 questionnaire items. The questionnaire also asked for demographic data such as gender, role (whether client or therapist) and therapy duration overall (less than a month, 1-6 months, 6-12 months, 12 months – 2 years or over 2 years). Items were derived from counsellor and client descriptions of relational depth.

The RDI was designed to be different from other relational measures. Although the closest comparison is the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI), there are important differences between the two, both conceptually (as described above) and operationally (focus on a specific relational moment vs. the overall relationship). There are many examples of these differences in each measure’s items. Where the WAI has items assessing liking, respect, appreciation and care, the RDI assesses stronger qualities of intimacy, love, mutuality and connection. In addition, where the WAI focuses on the tasks of therapy and the collaboration between client and therapist on goals of therapy, the RDI focuses on less tangible aspects of the therapeutic atmosphere such as spiritual and transcendent experiences.

Relational Depth Content Analysis. A rating manual was created that plainly set out instructions for rating significant event descriptions for presence of relational depth (see Appendix). Training consisted of reading the manual as well as discussion between raters. The manual defined a relational depth event as, a moment, a series of moments, an experience, or feeling during which the participant appears to be describing “a state of profound contact and engagement between two people [between themselves and the other person], in which each person is fully real with the Other, and able to understand and value the Other’s experiences at a high level”. The scale was designed to be predominantly a clarity scale and not an intensity scale. Instructions in the manual asked raters to assign a score from 0 to 3 to the narrative descriptions of events, depending how clearly relational depth was deemed present (0: “clearly not present”; 1: “probably not present”; 2: “probably present”; 3: “clearly or strongly present”).

Pairs of raters rated three sets of descriptions. Raters were all trained therapists as well as being researchers. There were three raters in order that there was not the same two raters for all descriptions. Two raters were PhD students (including the first author) and one a university professor. Interrater reliability was then calculated for each of the three sets of ratings, with a mean Cronbach alpha (equivalent to ICC (2,2); Shrout and Fleiss, 1979) for the three sets of ratings of .79 (mean r or ICC (2,1) = .66).

Further instructions were added as to what to do if there were discrepancies between raters. This was done so that there would be one score per participant so that statistical analyses could be conducted using the scores as a variable. Here, the manual instructed raters in the case of 1-point discrepancies to average the final score (e.g. if one rater assigned a score of 1 and another a score of 2, the final score should be averaged to 1.5). If discrepancies were more than 1 (e.g. one rater assigned a 1 and the other a 3), raters discussed

the case until consensus was reached. Ratings of the significant event descriptions resulted in Relational Depth Presence scores ranging from 0 to 3 (with increments of 0.5). This therefore can be seen to be a continuous variable and will be referred to as *RD Presence* from here on.

To dichotomise the variable RD Presence, significant events were dichotomised at mean ratings of 1.5 (exactly halfway on the scale): One hundred and eighty-two events were rated as having a presence of relational depth greater than 1.5 (i.e., probably, clearly or strongly) and will be referred to as *RD Events* (relational depth events); 116 events were those rated at less than 1.5 (probably not or clearly not) and will be referred to as *Non-RD events* (non-relational depth events). Twenty-three events resulted with halfway-point mean ratings of 1.5; in these cases, the mean ratings were retained for all analyses, with the exception of the discriminant function analyses, where the raters met to decide whether to designate each event as either an RD Event (n= 5) or Non-RD Event (n = 18).

Working Alliance Short Form-Revised (WAI-SR). The revised short version of the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI-SR; Hatcher & Gillaspay, 2006) was added in order to explore the relationship between working alliance and those events characterised by relational depth. This version of the Working Alliance was the latest short version and consisted of 12 items. Each item utilised a 5-point Likert scale instead of the usual 7-point scale used in previous short versions. There were 4 items addressing Bond, 4 addressing Tasks and 4 addressing Goals. The WAI-SR items were presented after the 64 relational depth items to clients only.

Procedure

After ethics approval, a website was constructed using the survey software package SurveyMonkey. Links to this website were sent to colleagues of the researcher and to therapists listed on therapist directories including the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy website. In order for the online questionnaire to be strictly anonymous, neither email addresses nor Internet Protocol (IP) numbers, were collected by the researcher or the administrators. Potential respondents gave their informed consent by clicking on an 'I agree' option of the questionnaire item which asked whether they agreed (or not) to give their informed consent to continue. The RDI questionnaire asks respondents to focus on an important event that happened in a particular therapeutic relationship during a therapy session, either with a client or therapist. This meant respondents could respond to the questionnaire from the perspective of a client (from their experience as a client) or from their perspective as a therapist. A question therefore asked 'In the particular relationship you have in mind, were you a therapist or client?' If a respondent clicked to indicate they were a therapist, the WAI-SR items would not be presented to them and would be skipped.

Responses were collected securely by the software administration package and automatically downloaded into a spreadsheet for later analysis using statistical software.

Results

Frequency and nature of client-described relational depth significant events. Out of a total of 144 descriptions of significant events reported by clients, 50 (34%) received RD Event Presence ratings of 2 or higher (i.e., relational depth probably or clearly present). Twelve event descriptions (8%) were rated as clearly present (a score of 3) and 38 (26%) rated as probably present. This suggests that relational depth is clearly present in 8% and probably present in 26% of what clients consider to be significant events in therapy. Examples of each of the four levels are given below:

Level 3 client examples (clearly or strongly)

Participant 150: *There was an interpersonal connection in the moment and my perceptual awareness changed.*

Participant 183: *My therapist cried with me.*

Participant 279: *For as long as I needed to, my counsellor was prepared to hold my hands. ... My realisation was that she was giving me something very special.*

Level 2 client examples

Participant 81: *A session where I was able to be myself as a small child and to gain the ability to comfort myself without feeling embarrassed by the process and where I felt emotionally held by the therapist.*

Participant 166: *In the past I had been very manipulative (because I had not felt very empowered). This was normalised by my counsellor and I felt less bad about myself with less shame and guilt.*

Level 1.5 (midpoint) client examples:

Participant 74: *the feeling of being understood*

Level 1 client examples

Participant 85: *This situation was a setting about the structure of my family. We did body therapy and I had to assemble the different persons and their relations to myself and each other.*

Participant 190: *remembering a traumatic event in my childhood.*

Participant 313: *confession of a long held secret.*

Level 0 client examples

Participant 79: *the therapist used a word that I felt it pathologised me and I felt shocked and offended*

Participant 80: *realisation of differences in moral values and politics between my therapist and me. I understood her to be far more conservative than I and began to experience her as possibly being judgmental. The therapeutic environment did not feel as safe as it had before.*

Participant 195: *when the therapist told me what my problem was and wasn't prepared to hear my side of things, he wasn't prepared to hear what I thought my issue was.*

Frequency and nature of therapist-described relational depth significant events. Out of a total of 176 therapist descriptions of significant events, 67 (38%) were assigned a score of 2 or 3 indicating that relational depth is probably or clearly present in 38% of therapist significant events in therapy. Of these 24 (14%) were assigned a score of 3 indicating a clear or strong presence of relational depth and 43 (24%) a score of 2 indicating relational depth was probably present. This indicates that relational depth is probably present in 24% and clearly present in 14% of therapists' significant events experienced during therapy sessions. As with the client descriptions, examples of each of the four levels are given below.

Level 3 therapist examples

Participant 17. *The relationship was such that in a pause of silence there was enormous depth.*

Participant 93. *... we felt very close to each other.*

Participant 94. *...we met beyond our roles.*

Participant 162. *We felt a deep connection in the silence.*

Level 2 therapist examples

Participant 142: *Being sexually abused as a child was an experience the client felt able to share and how it had impacted upon their relationship with their father.*

Participant 210: *For what felt the first time in a long time the client saw themselves differently, heard themselves affirming their own values*

Level 1.5 (midpoint)

Participant 153:): Where a client wasn't feeling any empathy towards their children, but then in a particular session that all changed and she started to see her previous relationship through the eyes of her children.

Level 1 therapist examples

Participant 1: *The client shared the affects that the loss of his child had on his relationship with his partner.*

Participant 44: *She was nervous but was opened to an experiential exercise. My client was talking about her grandchild. I was very focused on it*

Participant 179: *I expressed how I long to reach out to the person behind the laughter and jokiness, but have difficulty with this.*

Level 0 therapist examples

Participant 31: *I did not feel I was connecting with this client at all.*

Participant 45: *The client became very angry with me because I would not give her the answer. Her experience of me was withholding.*

Participant 184: *I felt angry and needed to tell her she was playing with my beliefs.*

Relational Depth Inventory Analyses

Preliminary analyses. Items were retained or eliminated following standard procedures as outlined by (for example) Kline (1999). Pearson correlations were first run (using the data from the whole sample of clients and therapists) to test for redundancy (high correlations) among RDI items, in order to avoid inflation of internal consistency and artificial factors. Ten items correlated very highly ($>.7$) with multiple other items and were therefore omitted; theoretical relevance was also a factor in decisions to drop items. An example of a pair of highly intercorrelated items is, Item 7 (“an atmosphere that was meaningful”) and Item 9 (“the other person valued me”).

Relational Depth Inventory Scale Analyses. Next, because the RDI is conceptualized as measuring a single relationship experience, reliability analyses (Cronbach’s alpha) were run to test for internal consistency on the 54 non-redundant items (this excluded the 10 redundant items which each had multiple correlations with other items) and to identify inconsistent items. Seven were found to reduce internal consistency: Items 13 (“opposing feelings at the same time”); 22 (“scared”); 25 (“weird feelings”); 26 (“angry”); 27 (“paradoxical”); 32 (“sexual”); and 34 (“vulnerable”). Cronbach’s alpha rose from .95 to .97 when these items were dropped. It should be noted here that although these items did not contribute to the internal consistency of the RDI general factor variable, six of them (not including Item 32, “sexual”) comprised Factor 4 (Scared/Vulnerable) and did yield a consistent subscale among themselves. This indicates that experiences associated with being scared and vulnerable may not be associated with experiences of relational depth or they may make up a different dimension of relational depth not consistent with the main factor here.

Factor analyses. In order to understand relational depth and its possible subfacets in the RDI, exploratory principal axis factor analyses were conducted on the 54 non-redundant questionnaire items (KMO = .94; Bartlett’s test, $p < .001$). The eigenvalue = 1 criterion was used initially, resulting in six factors; however, examination of the scree plot indicated a five factor solution. We were looking for simple structure, so we used a varimax rotation; the five-factor solution was fully interpretable and accounted for 53% of the overall variance. These results, including factor names and item loadings on their main factor, are shown in Table 1.

Each factor was named appropriately according to the items (especially higher loading items) it comprised. Factor 1 was named *Respect, Empathy & Connectedness* where the first two highest loading items referred to the informant's perception of their contribution to the relationship, e.g., Items 52 ("Respect for other") and 35 ("Empathy for the other person"). Other items included those that implied connectedness Item 46 ("Intimacy") and 24 ("Connected"). This was the largest factor with 15 items. The internal reliability of this factor was very high with an Alpha value of .94.

Factor 2 was named *Invigorated / Liberating* due to there being many items that implied this quality. The highest loading item was Item 21 ("Revitalised"), with other high loading items being Item 1 ("Liberated"), and Item 59 ("Empowered"). This factor had nine items and its internal reliability was very high with an Alpha value of .91.

Factor 3 was named *Transcendence* as most of its items concerned encounters that went beyond everyday experiences, for example, spiritual experiences. Item 29 ("Inexplicable Atmosphere") and Item 51 ("Timeless Atmosphere"), were the highest loading items. Item 23 ("Magical") and Item 43 ("I was transcendent"), were the next two highest loading items. This factor's internal reliability was very high with an Alpha value of .90.

Factor 4, was named *Scared / Vulnerable* due to the highest loading two items being Item 22 ("Scared") and Item 34 ("Vulnerable"). These six items yielded an internal of reliability of .79. It should be noted here that in a subsequent analysis, the items in this factor were found to be inconsistent with the rest of the scale (see Relational Depth Inventory Scale Analysis).

Factor 5, *Other person empathic/respectful*, was the smallest factor having only 3 items referring to the other person's contribution to the relationship: Item 37 ("Other empathic towards me") Item 6 ("Other respected me") and Item 61 ("Other was available to me"). This factors' internal reliability was high with an Alpha value of .82.

In addition, factor analyses were carried out separately for clients and therapists, the results of which can be found in Appendix II. Each of these analyses resulted in three-factor solutions with many similarities and differences. For both clients and therapists, there was a 'Respect' factor with Item 52 ("Respect for other") as the highest loading item (Factor 1 for the client sample and Factor 2 for the therapist). In addition, this same 'Respect' factor in each case (for clients and therapists) also included items concerning the relationship including Item 46 ("intimacy") Item 24 ("connected") and Item 41 ("mutuality"). The main difference in this factor appeared to be that for therapists there were items assessing concern for other such as Item 35 ("Empathy for other), while for clients there were items that reflected being cared for, such as Item 6 ("Other respected me"), Item 28 ("Other trusted me") and Item 37 ("Other empathic towards me).

In addition to a respect factor for both clients and therapists, another factor in each analysis included items concerning experiences of transcendence such as Item 23 ("Magical") and Item 10 ("Spiritual"). However, for clients these items were much lower down the factor with many items assessing invigorating experiences much higher. For therapists, the reverse was true where items assessing invigorating experiences were much lower than those assessing transcendence. Therefore for clients this factor was named "Invigorated /Transcendence" and for Therapists "Transcendence/Invigorated."

Profiling significant events with a presence of relational depth.

In order to produce a profile of relational depth events, we ran a discriminant function analysis (DFA) using the 54 retained RDI items as predictors of group membership (this included the seven items that were dropped from the main scale in the internal consistency analyses). The groups in question were cases that were earlier rated, in the content analysis, as RD Events and Non-RD Events. The discriminant function significantly differentiated

between RD Events and Non-RD Events (Multiple R = .44, Wilk's Lambda = .56, $df = 54$, $p < .00001$), indicating that the questionnaire items, as a whole, successfully predicted presence vs. absence of relational depth in significant event descriptions. The discriminant function successfully predicted group membership for 83.2% of cases (80.50% accuracy for RD events and 84.90% for non-RD events). (We also conducted a DFA using the five retained factors instead of items; the discriminant function significantly predicted group membership [Multiple R = .20, Wilk's Lambda = .80, $df = 5$, $p < .00001$], but with a lower rate of accuracy: 71%. However, we report the item DFA here because we were interested in a more differentiated description than the factors gave us.)

Interpretation of the function was made using Pearson correlation coefficients between items' and RD Presence ratings, with RDI. Items were considered to be significantly correlated with RD Presence if their Pearson correlation coefficient was at least moderate in size (.30 or above; Cohen, 1988). A total of 26 items met this criteria. It should be noted that for each participant the 26 RDI items were totalled and mean average calculated for use in subsequent analyses. This therefore constitutes another variable and will be referred to as RDI Index from here on.

Frequencies were also calculated for RDI Index score; 11% of respondents scored below a 2, 20% scored from 2 but less than 3, 46% 3 but less than 4, and 23% were 4 to 5. This indicates that 23% of respondents experienced relational depth either 'very much' or 'completely' and 46% experienced it 'somewhat' to 'very much' indicating a higher rate than the content ratings would suggest.

Table II contains various statistics for every questionnaire item. The first column gives Pearson correlation coefficients for correlations between each item's score and its RD Presence rating (RD Presence ratings were content ratings of significant event descriptions). The second column gives correlation coefficients between item score and RDI Index score. The next 4 columns give the item means and SDs for those descriptions classified as RD Events vs non-RD Events (RD Events and RD non-Events refers to the dichotomized cases where a rating of less than 1.5 was classed as a non-RD Event and more than 1.5 an RD Event). The last column shows effect sizes for the difference between RD vs. non-RD Events. The two items that most strongly discriminated between RD Events and Non-RD Events were Item 24 ("Both of us were connected in some way"), and Item 11 ("Love"). The Pearson coefficients for the correlation between these items and RD Presence were .47 and .46 respectively. The effect size (Cohen's d) for the difference between RD and non-RD Events was .90 and .92 respectively for these two items. After these two items, the next most discriminating items were Item 46 ("Intimacy") and Item 39 ("A still atmosphere") with effect sizes being .82 and .76 respectively. The Pearson correlation coefficient for these items was .40 and .37. One item, "Angry" (Item 26), yielded a negative correlation of -.37 with RD Presence, indicating that an absence of anger was associated with the global impression of relationship depth.

Convergent validity: Working Alliance (WAI-SR) and RDI Index. In order to explore the convergent validity of the RDI, Pearson Correlation Coefficients were calculated in order to assess the extent to which the RDI Index (i.e., the mean score across the 26 retained RDI items) was associated with both RD Presence (i.e., content ratings of significant events for relational depth presence) and the WAI-SR. It should be noted, that as therapists did not complete the WAI-SR, correlations involving the WAI-SR were performed using the client sample only. For RD Presence and WAI-SR a medium correlation was found ($r = .33$, $N=142$, $p < .01$) indicating that relational depth events are, to a moderate degree, associated with working alliance. There was a moderate to large correlation between RD Presence and RDI Index ($r = .50$, $N=320$, $p < .01$) suggesting that the RDI Index is assessing relational

depth in significant events to a considerable degree. For RDI Index and WAI-SR, a large correlation was found ($r = .72$, $N=150$, $p < .01$) indicating that relational depth events, as assessed by the RDI items, are more likely to occur where there is strong therapeutic alliance.

Factors influencing the presence of relational depth in significant events

Informant Role: Client vs Therapist. In order to investigate differences in RD Presence and RDI Index between clients and therapists, we used independent samples t -tests. The difference between RD Presence for therapists (mean = 1.40, SD = .92, N = 176) and clients (mean = 1.23, SD = .97, N=144) was small and not significant ($t = 1.604$, $df = 318$, $p = .11$; $d = .18$). This result indicates relational depth was no more or less likely to occur for clients than therapists during significant events in therapy. For RDI Index, however, therapists' scores (mean = 3.48, SD = .75, N = 187) were higher than clients' (mean = 3.01, SD = 1.02, N = 152) and the difference was medium-sized and significant ($t = 4.71$, $df = 2.70$, $p < .001$; $d = .52$). This suggests that the RDI Index as a whole is more sensitive to differences between clients and therapists than RD Presence ratings.

In order to understand the factors and role more clearly, T-tests were conducted to investigate differences between clients and therapists on each of the resultant five factors from the factor analysis. For differences to be significant, p values would have to be equal to, or less than, the Bonferroni adjusted significant level of .01. Results are shown in Table III. As can be seen, there were significant differences between clients and therapists on three of the five factors. These indicate that therapists, compared to clients, were more likely to experience respect, empathy and connectedness (Factor 1) during significant events in therapy. It also suggests that clients, compared to therapists, were more likely to experience being scared and vulnerable (Factor 4) and more likely to experience the other person as being empathic and respectful toward them during significant events.

Informant Gender: Males vs Females. The mean RD Presence rating for male respondents was 1.13 (SD = .85, N = 76) and for females it was 1.38 (SD = .97, N = 240). Although the effect size was very small ($d = .14$), females' descriptions were rated significantly higher than males' ($t = 2.17$, $df = 141.03$, $p = .03$), indicating a slight gender effect in favour of females. For RDI Index the mean for females was 3.30 (SD = .95, N = 256) and for males was 3.18 (SD = .80, N = 79), but this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -1.04$, $df = 333$, $p = .30$, $d = .13$).

Role x Gender Interaction. In order to investigate whether there was a gender x role interaction on RD Presence or RDI Index, two 2 (role: client vs therapist) x 2 (gender: male vs female) univariate ANOVAs were conducted. For RD Presence, a significant interaction was not found [$F(1, 331) = .01$, $p > .05$] suggesting that role and gender do not interact significantly to affect whether relational depth is present during significant events in therapy. For RDI Index score, a significant interaction was not found [$F(1, 331) = .19$, $p > .05$] indicating that role and gender do not interact in relational depth experiences assessed by the RDI Index. Please see Table IV for means and standard deviations. Effect sizes for gender comparisons ranged from a d of .16 to .35.

Therapy duration. It should be noted that therapy duration referred to overall length of therapy and not necessarily how far into therapy the significant event happened. We used a between-subjects one-way ANOVA to look at whether Therapy Duration (divided into five levels) was associated with ratings of relational depth in significant event descriptions (RD Presence); we found no significant difference ($F(4, 310) = 1.55$, $p = .19$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$). A Pearson correlation was also performed and the correlation between RD Presence and Therapy Duration was also not significant ($r = -.03$, $N = 321$, $p = .649$). This indicates that presence of relational depth is not influenced by overall duration of therapy (i.e., longer did not mean deeper events).

Discussion

In the current study we have provided rich evidence about the nature of relational depth on a larger scale than previously, using two new quantitative measures of this conceptualization of therapeutic relatedness, each of which can be used either as a continuous variable or index for studying associations with other variables (such as therapeutic alliance or gender) or as a dichotomy, for identifying significant events marked by the presence of relational depth. We have also laid out likely sub-factors of relational depth and established a strong but not identical relationship between therapeutic alliance and relational depth. We have shown a limited role for gender as a determinant of relational depth events.

Our factor analytic results would suggest that relational depth is composed of a number of possible elements, especially those associated with deep relational experiences such as love, connectedness and respect. In addition, experiences of transcendence appear to constitute a specific component of relational depth, labelled by informants as “spiritual” and “magical”. This implies that relational depth can include experiences that go beyond everyday therapeutic encounters.

The various analyses presented here suggest that relational depth may be a distinct and potentially valuable concept for explaining the power of therapy to bring about client change. It is our view that concepts such as intimacy and spiritual feelings are not well addressed in most understandings of the therapeutic relationship. We hypothesise that the relational depth concept may be potentially useful as an upward extension to working alliance.

Items assessing respect, intimacy, mutuality, feeling at one with the other, and meeting of minds strongly characterized relational depth presence in the discriminant function analyses, thus supporting Mearns and Cooper’s (2005) account. The item ‘being in the moment’ also correlated with relational depth presence and suggests that the experience of relational depth is more a short-lived event than an enduring experience. The items ‘still atmosphere’ and ‘timeless atmosphere’ were also associated strongly with relational depth presence and would appear to be characteristic of particular moments rather than general relational processes. This finding also supports Stern’s (2004) idea of moments of meeting in which each party is aware of what the other is experiencing. This is consistent with the notion that therapeutic relationship is developed or highlighted via momentary intersubjective events. Being available and being real were also important elements of relational depth, consistent with previous research, notably Knox (2008), who found that clients experienced their therapists as providing psychological holding and being real during times of relational depth.

The results of the discriminant function analyses of the RDI also showed that experiences of connection and love are highly characteristic of relational depth. The word “connection” was frequently used by Mearns and Cooper (2005) in describing relational depth and this result is consistent with their theory. However, these authors make no mention of the experience of love and this result was largely unexpected. Nevertheless, Mearns and Thorne (1999) noted that training to be a person-centred counsellor involves a process of freeing one’s ‘loving self’, while Keys (2007) has argued for the central role of the experience of love in therapy, proposing four different dimensions of therapeutic love: unconditional positive regard, contact/perception, empathy, and congruence. In putting this forward she indicates that the emergence of love in therapy functions as a healing quality in the therapeutic relationship. The result reported here (where the item ‘love’ correlates with relational depth presence), is thus quite consistent with the person-centred view of relational depth as being a combination of all six of Rogers’ (1957) necessary and sufficient conditions.

The strong association between RDI Index and WAI-SR, indicates either that Relational Depth is more likely to occur in the presence of a good therapeutic alliance or that

there is substantial conceptual overlap between relational depth and therapeutic alliance. This high correlation does not preclude the idea that relational depth may be a higher or upward extension of working alliance, tapping a different region of the relational continuum. However, further research is needed to explore the nature of this overlap and to test whether this is the case.

The RDI is a symmetrical measure of therapeutic relationship in significant events. Therefore it is interesting to compare client and therapist views obtained with it. For example, significant events rated as indicating a presence of relational depth were no more likely to occur for clients than therapists. However, therapists did score higher on the RDI Index than clients, indicating that it might be more sensitive to role differences more than the content analysis measure (RD Presence).

Moreover, it is evident that clients and therapists in the study experienced relational depth differently on the five RDI factors obtained for the whole sample. Given the different roles of each party in the therapeutic relationship, therapists focused on empathising and respecting the other (Factor 1), while clients experienced receiving of empathy from the other (Factor 5). This is hardly surprising. In addition, in the separate factor analyses, Item 1 (“liberated”) was part of one of the main factors for clients but not therapists. This is consistent with McMillan and McLeod (2006), who found that ‘letting go’ was an aspect of the client’s experience of relational depth.

The separate factor analyses for clients and therapists would seem to confirm that there is a difference of experience between these two groups. This would be particularly relevant with regard to the empathy items where for clients ‘other empathic towards me’ was a high loading item and ‘empathy for other’ much lower. The opposite was true for therapists. However, results of the separate factor analyses need to be treated with caution due to the lower sample size in each analysis. Further research comparing client and therapist experiences of relational depth would thus be useful as would the development of separate RDIs (for clients and therapists).

Experiences of being scared and vulnerable, reported by some participations in the prior qualitative studies used for item generation, were not associated with the other aspects in the reliability and factor analyses, suggesting that such experiences are not part of the main relational depth construct. Relational fear/vulnerability may be an important but separate phenomenon found in a subset of clients and therapists. Mearns and Cooper (2005), for example, talk about the fear in the client when they may begin to engage at relational depth; in other words the client may see the offer of ‘an in-depth understanding as both deeply attractive and deeply terrifying’ (p.52). Mearns and Cooper here are acknowledging the fear that may be felt by a client when they are being fully understood by their therapist; trusting another person may feel risky for the client especially if they have been unable to trust others in other areas of their lives. The presence of this ‘scared/vulnerable’ factor as an independent aspect of relational depth parallels the identification of a roughness/distress dimension of therapy process alongside depth/value/effectiveness in research by Orlinsky & Howard (1977; 1986) and Stiles and Snow (1984). In addition, Process-Experiential/Emotion-Focused Therapy incorporates a strongly relational task referred to as “Empathic affirmation at vulnerability” in which a deep relational connection is offered to a client who is in an intensely vulnerable place (Elliott, Watson, Goldman & Greenberg, 2004). With this in mind we recommend further research on the phenomenon of relational fear/vulnerability, e.g., with socially anxious clients.

There are several limitations with this study. First, many of the participants who responded as clients were likely to have been therapists drawing on their experiences as clients; this is largely because emails were sent to various directories of therapists. Clients who are also therapists are likely to have been trained to value the role of the therapeutic

relationship, and to have developed more nuanced perceptions of therapy than clients who are not also therapists. While this is likely to make them more sensitive observers of their therapy experiences, it also means that they may represent a somewhat different population than nontherapist clients. Nevertheless, since therapists tend to be high utilizers of therapy (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005), a sample biased toward such clients is not entirely unrepresentative. Research in progress with non-therapist client samples should throw light on this issue. Second, the title of the questionnaire explicitly pointed to the relationship between client and therapist. This may have elicited relationally-oriented therapists and significant event descriptions, thus artificially increasing the proportion of relational depth significant events. Further research using other methods of eliciting significant descriptions, such as the more neutrally-worded Helpful Aspects of Therapy Form (Llewelyn, 1988), is needed to test whether these estimates of the rates of relational depth events are accurate.

Third, the authors made no attempt to collect data on the modality of the therapy and this may present difficulty in interpreting the results regarding the prevalence of relational depth events.

Fourth, participants were asked to recall an event that could have been months or years in the past. The reconstructive nature of memory may suggest that what was recalled concerned the characteristics of a more enduring relationship rather than the event. Although this is a possibility, the RDI is designed to elicit episodic, autobiographical memory rather than general, schematic memory, by asking participants to think about an event that ‘stands out in your mind’ and also to describe how they felt ‘at that moment’.

Fifth, the online administration of the questionnaire may have excluded potential participants who were not computer literate or not comfortable with technology. In addition, over-zealous spam filters may have prevented some participants from receiving recruitment emails and links in the first place.

Sixth, dichotomizing RD Presence content ratings at the scale midpoint in order to designate RD events was problematic from a measurement point of view, because of loss of information, unreliability leading to misclassification of events, and the unimodal (rather than bimodal) nature of the distribution. Despite the variable RD Presence being a continuous variable, we dichotomised it for several reasons: (a) it was useful to be able to have a specific criterion for identifying RD Events for further study; (b) the RD Presence content rating scale facilitates an accurate and logical method for doing this (i.e. 1.5 is the dividing line between ‘probably present’ (1) and ‘probably absent’ (2)); (c) in the literature to date (e.g., Knox, 2008; Cooper, 2005) moments of relational depth have been described as discrete events: there is either a moment of relational depth or there is not.

Finally, it is worth noting that even for the events rated as containing relational depth, we do not know that relational depth was the factor responsible for their having been experienced as significant by participants. In other words, what we are calling relational depth may have only been incidental to these events.

All these methodological issues and others call for further research to resolve them. Indeed, the two research instruments introduced here, the RD content analysis method and the RDI, offer numerous possibilities for further research, for example, using more naturalistic samples of clients and more fine-grained psychometric analyses (e.g., Item Response Theory). Among other things, this would make it possible to test our hypothesis that the RDI offers an upward extension to instruments like the WAI. It will also be important to study convergent and predictive validity of the RDI in a new prospective sample of clients, correlating it with other measures of relationship (e.g., Working Alliance Inventory) or session depth (i.e., the Session Evaluation Questionnaire), and therapy outcome. Other future uses of RD content analysis ratings and RDI include (a) prospective, longitudinal studies in which clients are asked to report on the occurrence of relational depth at regular intervals; (b) cluster analyses

of different types of relational depth events, using client descriptions of important events or patterns of RDI item endorsement; (c) use of RD content analysis or RDI to identify relational depth events for detailed analyses using methods such as Comprehensive Process Analysis (Elliott et al., 1994); d) identification of relational events by having an empirically-based cut-off on the RDI itself (e.g. Shaffner, 2011). The RDI could also be used to investigate associations between relational depth and the depth subscale in the Session Evaluation Questionnaire (Stiles, Gordon and Lani, 2002).

In terms of clinical implications of the relational depth concept, to this we will only add it is our view that therapists practicing in a variety theoretical orientations may find it important to be able to work at higher levels of relatedness with their clients. For these therapists, our results suggest that they may need to be open to experiencing intimacy, love and possibly even transcendence. “Love” here is not meant in any romantic sense but rather as a therapeutic, humanitarian love (cf. Greek *philia* or perhaps even *agape*). Such experiences may not be possible for therapists who would wish to keep a professional distance, but nevertheless open up possibilities for genuine transformation via the therapeutic relationship.

In conclusion, we have introduced two new research instruments that assess relational depth, an alternative characterization of the therapeutic relationship. We are sometimes asked why such a new conceptualization is needed. These two instruments, one for analyzing qualitative accounts, the other a classic quantitative self-report measure, operationalize an alternative metaphor for therapeutic relatedness. As such, they offer several advantages: First, they underscore and differentiate what Bordin (1979) referred to as the bond aspect of the working alliance. Second, they offer a potential upward extension for therapeutic relationship concepts and measures, which tend to suffer from ceiling effects. Third, they help bridge the gap between therapeutic alliance and significant events approaches to psychotherapy research, and in this way they open up the development of therapeutic relatedness to more precise description and explanation. Finally, they point to the role of the therapeutic relationship not only for allowing and supporting therapeutic work but also as genuinely transformative in itself.

References

- Barrett-Lennard, G.T. (1986). The Relationship Inventory now: Issues and advance in theory, method, and use. In L. S. Greenberg & W. M. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A research handbook*. New York: Guilford.
- Bordin, E. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance. *Psychotherapy, 16*, 252-260.
- Bohart, A.C., Elliott, R., Greenberg, L.S., Watson, J.C. (2002). Empathy. In J. Norcross, *Psychotherapy Relationships That Work* (pp. 89-108). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Cooper, M. (2005). ‘Therapists’ experiences of relational depth: A qualitative interview study’, *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 5*(2), 87-95
- Elliott, R. (1985). Helpful and Nonhelpful Events in Brief Counseling Interviews: An Empirical Taxonomy. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 32*(3), 307-322.
- Elliott, R., Shapiro, D.A., Firth-Cozens, J., Stiles, W.B., Hardy, G., Llewelyn, S.P, & Margison, F. (1994). Comprehensive process analysis of insight events in cognitive-behavioral and psychodynamic-interpersonal therapies. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 41*, 449-463.

- Elliott, R., Watson J., Goldman, R., & Greenberg L., (2004). *Learning Emotion focused therapy*. Washington. D.C. APA.
- Hatcher, R. L. & Gillaspay, J. A. (2006). Development and validation of a revised short version of the Working Alliance Inventory. *Psychotherapy Research*, 16(1): 16-25
- Hilton, J. (2006). Moments in relating or relational depth – a rose by any other name? Unpublished manuscript.
- Horvath, A.O. & Bedi, R.P. (2002). The Alliance. In Norcross. J.C. (2002) (ed) *Psychotherapy Relationships That Work: Therapist Contributions and Responsiveness to Patients*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Horvath, A. O., & Greenberg, L. S. (1986). Development of the working alliance inventory. In L. S. Greenberg & W. M. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A research handbook*. New York: Guilford.
- Keys, S. (2007). Love in Therapy. Mary Kilborn Lecture <http://www.strath.ac.uk/counsunit/features/presentations>
- Kline, P. (1999). *The handbook of psychological testing* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Knox, R. (2008). Clients Experiences of Relational Depth in Person-Centred Counselling. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 8(3), 182-188.
- Llewelyn, S. (1988). Psychological therapy as viewed by clients and therapists. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 27, 223-238.
- Martin, D. J., Garske, J. P., and Davis, K. M. (2000). Relation of the therapeutic alliance with outcome and other variables: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Consulting and Clical Psychology*, 68, 438-450.
- McMillan, M. & McLeod, J. (2006). Letting go: The client's experience of relational depth. *Person-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapies*, 5, 277-292.
- Mearns, D. (1996). Working at relational depth with clients in person-centred therapy. *Counselling*, 7, 307-311.
- Mearns, D. (1997) *Person-centred counselling training*. London : Sage.
- Mearns, D. (2003). *Developing person-centred counselling* (2nd edn.). London: Sage.
- Mearns, D. (2009). *Relationship, Needed But Also Feared The Challenges of Relational Depth*. Retrieved January 18, 2011, from www.davemearns.com/RELATIONSHIP.pdf
- Mearns, D. & Cooper, M. (2005). *Working at Relational Depth in Counselling and Psychotherapy*. London: Sage.
- Mearns, D. & Thorne, B. (1999). *Person-centred Counselling in Action*. London: Sage.
- Moodley, R. & Lijtmaer, R. (2007). Beyond the Boundary of Analytic Revelation: Culture, Self-Disclosure (Analyst and Patient) and Anonymity. *Psychologist – Psychoanalyst*, 27, 49-51. American Psychological Association.
- Moreno, J.K. Fuhriman, A., & Hileman, E. (1995). Significant events in a psychodynamic psychotherapy group for eating disorders. *Group*, 19, 56-62.
- Ogden, T. (1994). *Subjects of Analysis*. London: Karnac Books.
- Orlinsky, D.E., & Howard, K. I. (1977). The therapist's experience of psychotherapy. In Gurman, A. S. & Razin, A. M. (Eds.), *Effective psychotherapy: A Handbook of Research*. New York: Pergamon.
- Orlinsky, D.E., and Howard, K. I. (1986). The psychological interior of psychotherapy: Explorations with the Therapy Session Report Questionnaires. In L. S. Greenberg & W. M. Pinsof (Eds.), *The psychotherapeutic process: A research handbook*. New York: Guilford.
- Orlinsky, D.E., & Rønnestad, M.H. (2005). *How Psychotherapists Develop: A Study of Therapeutic Work and Professional Growth*. Washington, DC: APA.

- Rennie, D.L., Phillips, J.R., Quartaro, G.K. (1988). Grounded theory: A promising approach to conceptualization in psychology? *Canadian Psychology*, 29, 139-150
- Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 21(2): 95-103.
- Sachse, R. & Elliott, R. (2002). Process-outcome research on humanistic therapy variables. In D. J. Cain & J. Semman (eds), *Humanistic Psychotherapies: Handbook of Research and Practice* (pp. 83-115). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Safran, J.D. (1998). *Widening the Scope of Cognitive Therapy: The Therapeutic Relationship, Emotion and the Process of Change*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson
- Shaffner, S. (2011). Unpublished MSc dissertation.
- Shrout, P.E. & Fleiss, J.L. (1979). Intraclass Correlations: Uses in Assessing Rater Reliability. *Psychological Bulletin*, (86), 2: 420-428.
- Stern, D. N. (2004). *The present moment in psychotherapy and everyday life*. New York : W.W. Norton.
- Stiles, W.B., Gordon, L.E., & Lani, J.A. (2002). Session evaluation and the Session Evaluation Questionnaire. In G. S. Tryon (Ed.), *Counseling based on process research: Applying what we know* (pp. 325-343). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon
- Stiles, W. B. & Snow, J.S. (1984). Counseling session impact as viewed by novice counselors and their clients. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 31, 3-12.
- Timulak, L. (2007). Identifying core categories of client-identified impact of helpful events in psychotherapy: A qualitative meta-analysis. *Psychotherapy Research* (17) 3. 305-314.

Table I. Results of varimax-rotated principal axis analysis on the 54 retained relational depth items

Factor					
Items	1. Respect, Empathy & Connected ness	2. Invigorated /Liberating	3. Tran- scen- dence	4. Scared / Vulnerable	5. Other person empathic/ respectful
52.respect for other	.78	.20	.09	-.14	.24
35.empathy for the other person	.73	.13	.11	-.06	-.14
28. the other person trusted me	.71	.14	.12	-.05	.25
46.intimacy	.67	.13	.37	.09	.18
24.the both of us were connected in some way	.67	.18	.36	-.15	.15
50.equality	.66	.23	.15	-.21	.08
41.mutuality	.64	.23	.21	-.19	.25
43.I was at with the other	.63	.21	.40	-.19	-.02
54.I was being real	.62	.42	.04	-.01	.15
8. a sense being in the moment	.59	.31	.18	.04	.22
45.immersed	.56	.21	.32	.16	-.01
12.a meeting of minds	.56	.33	.19	-.19	.24
4.there was give and take	.53	.23	.08	-.17	.23
63.aware of experience	.51	.42	.17	.13	.05
15.centred on the present	.50	.31	.21	.02	.03
14.a sense of privacy in the relationship	.46	.02	.24	.16	.29
2.we had shared things in common	.39	.27	.13	-.31	.13
21.revitalised	.18	.75	.25	-.12	.15
1.liberated	.07	.68	.13	-.19	.33
59.empowered	.20	.66	.16	-.08	.37
56.exhilarated	.22	.65	.37	-.05	.06
16.energised	.38	.64	.16	-.09	-.05
64.enlightened	.35	.61	.27	.03	.14
60. a transformative atmosphere	.38	.55	.36	-.03	.17
38.happy	.15	.54	.23	-.35	.17
48.spont	.44	.51	.25	-.01	-.05
3. a sense of flow (a sense of smooth and continous change in myself)	.29	.50	.31	-.25	.14
47.in touch with self	.47	.50	.03	.04	.20
17.courageous	.40	.49	.08	.12	.11
31.self-value	.39	.43	.11	-.04	.38
29. an inexplicable atmosphere	.08	.08	.70	.28	.02
51. a timeless atmosphere	.36	.21	.70	-.09	.06
23.magical	.20	.43	.68	-.01	.02
40.I was transcendent (going beyond my ordinary limits)	.21	.40	.61	.14	.07
33.an awesome atmosphere	.27	.40	.59	.02	.01
39.a still atmosphere	.23	.06	.59	-.15	.28
30.a silent atmosphere	.05	.03	.58	.12	.08
20.in an altered state	.07	.26	.56	.18	-.09
11.love	.34	.21	.55	-.09	.34

10.spiritual	.27	.36	.51	-.11	.15
55. a unique atmosphere	.42	.22	.49	.13	.10
62.soulful	.44	.33	.49	.15	.22
36.expansive (unrestrained)	.34	.46	.46	.00	.07
32.sexual	.08	.05	.18	.05	.13
22.scared	-.11	-.12	.04	.74	.01
34.vulnerable	-.04	-.12	.16	.69	.08
13.opposing feelings at the same time	.01	-.09	-.07	.64	-.04
27.paradoxical (seemingly contradictory but nonetheless possibly true)	.04	.11	.17	.57	-.04
25.weird feelings	-.21	-.07	.41	.54	-.08
26.angry	-.36	-.10	-.13	.52	-.15
5.intense feelings	.22	.06	.26	.37	.04
37.the other was empathic towards me	.12	.23	.05	-.02	.75
6.the other person respected me	.41	.24	.10	-.10	.64
61.the other person was available to me	.31	.26	.26	-.07	.53
Variance explained (%)	17.06	13.82	11.85	6.25	5.05
Eigenvalue	9.21	6.93	6.40	3.37	2.73
Reliability ^a	.94	.91	.90	.79	.82

Note. Boldface indicates items with salient loadings $\geq .40$ or ambiguously loading items.

^aCronbach's alpha calculated using items with a loading $\geq .40$ and without ambiguities.

Table II. Results of discriminant function analysis showing item correlations, means, standard deviations and effect sizes

	Corr RD Pres	Corr RDI index	RD Event mean	RD Even t SD	Non- RD Event mean	Non- RD Event SD	Effec t size
24. The both of us were connected in some way	0.47	0.79	4.03	0.95	3.08	1.15	0.90
11. Love	0.46	0.71	3.60	1.31	2.38	1.34	0.92
52. Respect for other	0.40	0.75	4.36	0.78	3.78	1.16	0.60
46. Intimacy	0.40	0.75	3.89	1.12	2.93	1.22	0.82
6. The other person respected me	0.40	0.66	4.41	0.74	3.81	1.14	0.64
41. Mutuality	0.39	0.75	3.84	1.03	3.08	1.21	0.68
61. Other was available to me	0.39	0.67	3.92	1.23	3.25	1.35	0.52
43. I was at one with other	0.38	0.78	3.39	1.39	2.64	1.38	0.54
8. A sense of being in the moment	0.37	0.69	4.59	0.64	3.99	1.13	0.67
12. A meeting of minds	0.37	0.73	3.65	1.17	2.97	1.17	0.58
39. A still atmosphere	0.37	0.55	3.02	1.40	2.08	1.07	0.76
28. The other person trusted me	0.36	0.71	4.23	0.85	3.78	1.16	0.52
60. A transformative atmosphere	0.36	0.73	3.80	1.19	3.20	1.29	0.48
51. A timeless atmosphere	0.36	0.74	3.22	1.43	2.33	1.36	0.64
23. Magical	0.35	0.67	2.61	1.42	1.94	1.25	0.49
62. Soulful (deep feelings or emotions)	0.35	0.75	3.84	1.16	3.22	1.35	0.49
55. Unique atmosphere	0.34	0.64	3.95	1.10	3.13	1.30	0.68
50. Equality	0.33	0.72	3.70	1.21	3.12	1.30	0.46
3. a sense of flow (a sense of smooth and continuous change in myself)	0.33	0.64	3.28	1.26	2.62	1.34	0.51
31. Self value	0.33	0.68	3.73	0.98	3.30	1.14	0.41
33. An awesome atmosphere	0.32	0.64	2.81	1.49	2.13	1.29	0.49
48. Spontaneous	0.32	0.67	3.75	1.16	3.10	1.22	0.55
54. I was being real	0.31	0.66	4.47	0.82	4.03	1.04	0.47
45. Immersed	0.31	0.63	3.66	1.29	2.99	1.37	0.50
10. Spiritual	0.31	0.67	3.20	1.52	2.50	1.37	0.48
4. There was give and take	0.30	0.63	3.58	1.08	2.86	1.27	0.61
21. Revitalised	0.29	0.64	3.07	1.16	2.72	1.30	0.28
1. Liberated	0.29	0.49	3.35	1.24	2.81	1.35	0.42
40. I was transcendent (going beyond my ordinary limits)	0.29	0.63	2.97	1.50	2.31	1.31	0.47
37. The other empathic towards me	0.29	0.47	3.59	1.36	2.98	1.42	0.44
2. We had shared things in common	0.28	0.50	3.09	1.39	2.32	1.29	0.57
36. Expansive (unrestrained)	0.28	0.65	3.30	1.35	2.42	1.31	0.66
15. Centred on the present	0.27	0.58	4.14	0.95	3.63	1.22	0.47
47. In touch with self	0.27	0.60	4.03	0.90	3.73	1.03	0.29
64. Enlightened	0.26	0.68	3.55	1.23	3.19	1.36	0.28
63. Aware of experience	0.26	0.58	4.24	0.82	3.90	1.06	0.36
59. Empowered	0.25	0.61	3.41	1.21	3.08	1.30	0.26
30. A silent atmosphere	0.25	0.37	2.53	1.52	1.97	1.09	0.43
35. Empathy for the other person	0.24	0.59	3.85	1.37	3.41	1.46	0.31
16. Energised	0.23	0.60	3.74	1.15	3.28	1.34	0.37
56. Exhilarated	0.21	0.66	2.89	1.32	2.58	1.26	0.24
38. Happy	0.19	0.49	2.89	1.39	2.58	1.28	0.23
29. An inexplicable atmosphere	0.17	0.43	2.91	1.49	2.33	1.36	0.42
20. In an altered state	0.17	0.38	2.80	1.50	2.53	1.28	0.14
5. Intense feelings	0.16	0.33	4.30	0.71	4.03	0.98	0.23

<i>14. A sense of privacy in the relationship</i>	0.15	0.52	3.90	1.10	3.43	1.26	0.40
<i>17. Courageous</i>	0.10	0.56	3.50	1.17	3.40	1.31	0.08
<i>32. Sexual</i>	0.08	0.15	1.33	0.79	1.29	0.76	0.05
<i>34. Vulnerable</i>	-0.03	-0.05	2.87	1.38	2.80	1.42	0.05
<i>27. Paradoxical (seemingly contradictory but nonetheless possibly true)</i>	-0.05	0.13	1.89	1.27	1.90	1.15	0.00
<i>25. Weird feelings</i>	-0.17	-0.04	1.78	1.19	2.05	1.24	0.22
<i>22. Scared</i>	-0.20	-0.20	2.02	1.15	2.33	1.28	0.17
<i>13. Opposing feelings at the same time</i>	-0.21	-0.10	2.19	1.39	2.56	1.41	0.26
<i>26. Angry</i>	-0.37	-0.40	1.41	1.41	1.93	1.31	0.47

Note *Italicized items were dropped from the revised instrument*

Table III. Client and therapist differences on RDI factors

Factor name	Therapists		Clients		Effect size
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Respect, Empathy & Connectedness	3.84	0.70	3.16	1.04	.78*
2. Invigorating / Liberating	3.14	0.88	2.87	1.17	.26
3. Transcendence	2.68	1.05	2.41	1.02	.31
4. Scared / Vulnerable	2.04	0.88	2.41	0.93	.44*
5. Other Person Empathic / Respectful	3.24	0.92	3.78	1.32	.48*

*p < .05

Table IV. Role x Gender Effects on Relational Depth Variables

Variable	Role	Gender				Overall	
		Male		Female		Mean	SD
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
RD Presence	Therapist	1.20	0.88	1.48	0.93	1.40	0.92
	Client	0.95	0.78	1.27	1.00	1.23	0.97
	Overall mean	0.85	0.85	1.38	0.97	1.32	0.94
RDI Index	Therapist	3.30	0.76	3.56	0.75	3.48	0.75
	Client	2.88	0.82	3.04	1.06	3.01	1.02
	Overall mean	3.18	0.80	3.30	0.95	3.28	0.92

Appendix: Relational Depth Event Content Rating Scale

What is a Relational Depth Event?

A relational depth event might be described as a moment, a series of moments, an experience or feeling where the participant appears to be describing *‘a state of profound contact and engagement between two people [between themselves and the other person], in which each person is fully real with the Other, and able to understand and value the Other’s experiences at a high level’* (Mearns & Cooper, 2005).

Instructions

Assign a score from 0 to 3 to the narrative descriptions of events, depending how clearly relational depth is deemed present (0: “clearly not present”; 1: “probably not present”; 2: “probably present or present but not strongly”; 3: “clearly or strongly present”).

If, after rating, there are discrepancies between raters (e.g. if one rater assigned a score of 1 and another a score of 2), the final score should be an average (e.g. in this case to 1.5). If discrepancies are more than 1 (e.g. one rater assigned a 1 and the other a 3), raters should discuss the case until consensus is reached.

Scoring:

3 – Relational Depth event clearly or strongly present. This would typically be an event which clearly suggested a ‘two-wayness’ and high levels of depth.

2 – Relational Depth probably present (not certain or not strongly present; implied or inferred or strongly suspected even though not explicit in the description). Evidence of two-wayness & depth but not certain, explicit, or clear.

1 -- Probably not relational depth (some evidence, but not enough; a "hint" of the variable). There might be evidence of sharing and emotional language but no evidence of connectedness or depth.

0 -- Clearly not relational depth. No evidence at all of two-wayness, emotional language or sharing.

Further clarification of rating scale:

During training and discussion raters agreed that, as a general rule, a clear or strong presence of relational depth should typically include the participant mentioning themselves and the other person in a meaningful way and that the occurrence of words like ‘we’ ‘us’ might indicate this. An event in which relational depth was probably present might typically include some mention of the other person but may not be as clear as strong presence of relational depth. Events where relational depth was probably not present would be characterised by little or no mention of the other. Events where relational depth was clearly not present would be characterised by no mention of the other person or by mention of the other person in a negative way.

Example descriptions and scoring

Score/rating of 3

‘I was deeply understood as I have never been before. It was the first time that someone really understood me. It was magical, powerful and liberating..’ (Rate 3)

‘My therapist acknowledged the full extent of the issues I have been facing. She intuitively extended her hands to me and I hugged her. At this point in the therapy we became closer and a level of understanding was thereafter assumed’. (Rate 3)

‘A relationship within which a 'pause' of silence there was a powerful sense of great depth and feeling shared in the physical space between us’. (Rate 3)

Score/rating of 2

‘The therapist challenged me on the way I had been using 'merging' to avoid facing an issue. Although I didn't like it, I immediately felt the trust he had put in me in taking the risk to make the challenge. We both shared our feelings in the present and agreed a contract for the future’. (Rate 2)

‘The client has expressed great distress and lack of hope, as well as fear. I feel very touched by her despair and state a real longing to be of help to her but now really knowing what to offer, other than my conviction that she is a person of worth...’. (Rate 2)

‘me getting pregnant opened new topics and made me feel more close to my therapist who is a mother and also shared personal and professional topics with me...’. (Rate 2)

A session where I was able to be myself as a small child and to gain the ability to comfort myself without feeling embarrassed by the process and where I felt emotionally held by the therapist...’. (Rate 2)

Ratings of 1

Gaining deeper insight into the way I experience stress by sharing and exploring this with my therapist (Rate 1)

Experienced clarity and contact with a clear definition, connectedness with my own sense of spirituality which I had never experienced before (Rate 1)

‘I was able, within the safety of the room, to allow myself to feel and fully experience the anger that I had been storing in my body for some time’. (Rate 1)

‘Vision.. the client paints a completely new type of art after we talked about her changing using imagery in our words’ (Rate 1)

‘Client tells me that he is afraid of terminating therapy because that makes him losing a mentor, especially after losing his mom and dad’. (Rate 1)

Ratings of 0

‘The moment when the client realised the reasons for her panic attacks were around her negative automatic thoughts’. (Rate 0)

‘During some visualisations in the therapy, I had a strong sense of being in the wrong place in my life. At the same time, it felt like this was something I could handle, and tackle in the future, rather than now. This occurred towards the end of the period of therapy I undertook’ (Rate 0)

'I had destructive, sadistic fantasies about the therapist. She invited me to explore this with her, but I did not dare to express my fantasies in detail'. (Rate 0)

APPENDIX II

Table 1a. Results of varimax-rotated principal axis analysis on the 54 retained relational depth items for clients

Item	Factor		
	1. Respect	2. Invigorated Transcendence	3. Weird Scared
52. Respect for other	.83	.27	-.06
6. The other person respected me	.82	.25	-.10
28. The other person trusted me	.80	.12	.04
37. The other was empathic towards me	.80	.30	-.07
61. Other was available to me	.80	.25	-.06
41. Mutuality	.72	.28	-.06
46. Intimacy	.72	.16	.30
24. The both of us were connected in some way	.69	.31	.05
50. Equality	.68	.32	-.06
31. Self-value	.67	.45	.00
4. There was give and take	.63	.26	-.09
11. Love	.63	.31	.24
14. A sense of privacy in the relationship	.63	.12	.12
8. A sense of being in the moment	.62	.37	.11
12. A meeting of minds	.62	.38	-.01
62. Soulful (deep feelings and/or emotions)	.60	.43	.31
43. At one with the other	.60	.36	.13
54. I was being real	.59	.45	.01
35. Empathy for other person	.55	.15	.13
47. In touch with self	.53	.52	.05
45. Immersed	.53	.13	.40
55. A unique atmosphere	.52	.27	.44
39. A still atmosphere	.50	.28	.17
63. Aware of experience	.47	.44	.19
26. Angry	-.45	-.32	.32
32. Sexual	.17	.12	.11
21. Revitalised	.26	.86	-.01
16. Energised	.28	.79	-.03
56. Exhilarated	.24	.78	.17
64. Enlightened	.41	.71	.03
1. Liberated	.41	.70	-.21
38. Happy	.29	.70	-.02
59. Empowered	.47	.68	-.12
3. A sense of flow (a sense of smooth and continuous change in myself)	.30	.65	-.08
60. transformative	.47	.65	.08
23. Magical	.22	.62	.43
48. Spontaneous	.36	.59	.18
10. Spiritual	.38	.59	.22
40. I was transcendent (going beyond my ordinary limits)	.30	.56	.46
33. An awesome atmosphere	.29	.53	.34
17. Courageous	.42	.52	.00
36. Expansive (unrestrained)	.44	.49	.30
51. A timeless atmosphere	.34	.47	.45
15. Centred on the present	.41	.45	.10

2. We had shared things in common	.39	.44	-.10
25. Weird feelings	-.25	-.09	.70
29. An inexplicable atmosphere	.10	.14	.67
22. Scared	-.05	-.36	.60
20. In an altered state	.01	.37	.57
5. Intense feelings	.12	-.03	.51
34. Vulnerable	.03	-.44	.51
13. Opposing feelings at the same time	-.08	-.15	.49
27. Paradoxical (seemingly contradictory but nonetheless possibly true)	.05	.14	.47
30. A silent atmosphere	.05	.16	.37
Variance explained (%)	24.32	19.76	8.56
Eigenvalue	13.13	10.67	4.62
Reliability ^a	.96	.95	.72

Note. Boldface indicates items with loadings > .50 as well as ambiguous items.

^aCronbach's alpha calculated using items with a loading \geq .50 and without ambiguities.

Table Ib. Results of varimax-rotated principal axis analysis on the 54 retained relational depth items for therapists

Item	Factor		
	Transcendence / Invigorated	Respect	Scared / Vulnerable
23.Magical	.78	.25	.07
33.An awesome atmosphere	.73	.28	-.04
40.I was transcendent (going beyond my ordinary limits)	.69	.32	-.08
29.A inexplicable atmosphere	.69	.17	-.26
11.Love	.66	.28	.21
51.A timeless atmosphere	.64	.39	.13
30.A silent atmosphere	.63	.13	-.12
39.A still atmosphere	.61	.10	.14
20.In an altered state	.61	.11	-.10
56.Exhilarated	.56	.35	.19
36.Expansive (unrestrained)	.56	.44	.11
10.Spiritual	.56	.28	.13
62.Soulful (deep feelings and/or emotions)	.56	.52	-.13
3.A sense of flow (a sense of smooth and continuous change in myself)	.55	.30	.40
60.A transformative atmosphere	.54	.45	.06
55.A unique atmosphere	.51	.36	-.10
21.Revitalised	.50	.31	.26
64.Enlightened	.49	.46	.00
59.Empowered	.46	.36	.25
61.Other was available to me	.46	.36	.19
1.Liberated	.46	.20	.36
32.Sexual	.23	.03	-.04
52.Respect for other	.03	.72	.17
35.Empathy for the other person	.04	.71	.08
54.I was being real	.10	.66	.10
46.Intimacy	.35	.65	-.03
24. The both of use were connected in some way.	.37	.62	.12
41.Mutuality	.25	.61	.24
8. A sense of being in moment	.24	.61	-.02
28.The other person trusted me	.15	.60	.10
45.Immersed	.33	.58	-.06
15.Centred on the present	.19	.57	-.05
43.At one with the other	.39	.55	.17
12.A meeting of minds	.31	.53	.41
50.Equality	.15	.52	.23
5.Intense feelings	.20	.52	-.25
47.In touch with self	.11	.50	.11
63.Aware of experience	.29	.49	-.06
17.Courageous	.25	.44	-.12
16.Energised	.32	.42	.06
48.Spontaneous	.36	.42	.10
14.A sense of privacy in the relationship	.21	.42	-.27
6.The other person respected me	.25	.41	.31
4.There was give and take	.18	.37	.31
31.Self-value	.25	.36	.20
37.The other was empathic towards me	.20	.32	.30

22.Scared	.08	-.04	-.66
27.Paradoxical (seemingly contradictory but nonetheless possibly true)	.21	.02	-.64
34.Vulnerable	.31	.19	-.62
13.Opposing feelings at the same time	-.12	.01	-.60
38.Happy	.37	.10	.58
25.Weird feelings	.43	-.04	-.55
26.Angry	-.08	-.08	-.46
2.We had shared things in common	.15	.34	.46
<hr/>			
Variance explained (%)	17.40	19.20	4.25
Eigenvalue	9.39	9.29	4.26
Reliability ^a	.92	.90	.59

Note. Boldface indicates items with loadings > .50 as well as ambiguous items.

^aCronbach's alpha calculated using items with a loading \geq .50 and without ambiguities.