

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the Lancaster University Doctorate in Clinical
Psychology, December 2015

Doctoral Thesis:

**How do Adolescents Experience Relationships During Admission to a Psychiatric
Inpatient Unit?**

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Word Counts

	Abstract	Main Text	Appendices (including tables, figures and references)	Total
Thesis Abstract	278	-	-	278
Literature Review	200	7,777	8,331	16,308
Research Paper	238	7,708	6,979	14,925
Critical Appraisal	-	3,922	706	4,628
Ethics Section	-	3,396	8,301	11,697
Total	716	22,803	24,317	47,836

Abstract

This thesis, comprised of a literature review, research paper and critical appraisal, employs qualitative methods to explore the experiences of adolescents who have been admitted to an inpatient psychiatric unit and those who may come into contact with mental health services as a result of their self-harm.

The literature review focusses upon young peoples' experiences of self-harm. This review aimed to contribute to current understanding of self-harm and consider how young peoples' qualitative experiences relate to the findings of quantitative literature. Existing literature was synthesised in accordance with Noblit and Hare's (1988) meta-ethnographic approach. The findings of this review are discussed in relation to current theoretical perspectives and the clinical implications are explored.

The research paper explores ten adolescents' experiences of their relationships during admission to a psychiatric inpatient setting using interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Participant's reflected on the complexity of their relationships with professionals. These reports highlighted the tension between their perceptions of professionals who were, simultaneously, perceived to be friends and experts. Young people also reflected upon the intense and meaningful relationships they developed with their peers and the impact of witnessing their friends' distress. Finally, young people experienced their admission as a period of respite from relational stressors within their usual environment. Admission was also experienced as an opportunity to repair ruptured relationships and experience different ways of relating to others. These themes are discussed with reference to psychological theory and implications for clinical practice are considered.

Finally, in the third section of this thesis I discuss my epistemological position, further consider the strengths and weaknesses of the research and reflect on the challenges I

encountered when conducting this research.

Declaration

This thesis records work undertaken for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the Division of Health Research at Lancaster University from August 2014 to December 2015. The work presented here is the author's own, except where due reference is made. The work has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere

Name: Rachael Ellis

Signature:

Date: 18th December 2015

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to those who have supported and inspired this work. Firstly, however, I would like to acknowledge that I am thankful for this experience which has taught me an immeasurable amount about my capacity for hope, resilience and the importance of my own personal relationships.

“In the end, only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived, and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you” (Bhuddist saying).

My thanks are extended to the young people who bravely and generously shared their stories. I am incredibly grateful for the support, enthusiasm and patience offered by my research team, Sue and Ian. I am also indebted to Jane for her honest guidance, Anna for her ongoing contribution to trainee mental health and the reminder of the course team who have generously offered their support and advice.

I remain incredibly thankful for my Grandad who, as a rambler, taught me the rewards to be gleaned from a challenging climb and my Nana who has kept me in her thoughts and her prayers. Mum and Dad, you are marvellous and your love is, seemingly, boundless. Paul, your tolerance of my nonsense is nothing short of awe inspiring. I owe you every weekend back from now until forever! I am also thankful for my friends, for their willingness to listen, their draft reads and, most importantly, for their love and humour.

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